

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Designing an integrated carer support service

BACKGROUND

Overview of services

In 2015, Apis was engaged to work with the Department of Social Services to redesign the Government's system of support and services for Australia's 2.7m carers. Our services focused on service and business design, user research, sector engagement and strategic advisory.

Key outcomes

Apis successfully delivered a Service Delivery Model for the Integrated Carer Support Service and working with the Department, secured funding and support from the **Government** for the implementation of the ICSS.

Our work reflects and incorporates the views of key carer support sector, whom we engaged through a **National public consultation** and throughout the co-design process.

Discovery activities informed our **design concepts** of the future system (referred to as the Integrated Carer Support Service or ICSS), including a literature review (one of the largest and most comprehensive reviews of its kind – spanning **international research** across the health, education and aged care domains) and a **national survey** of more than 1,300 carers.

We undertook an 18-month **co-design** process with a Ministerially appointed expert reference group and more than 150 carers, subject matter experts, services providers and peak bodies, that resulted in the development of the **Service Concept** and **Service Delivery Model** for the future Integrated Carer Support Service.

Our proposed service delivery model provides carers with:

A '**single door**' through which to access a range of carer support services, including respite, peer support, counselling and coaching

Avenues for earlier uptake of **preventative services**, more accessible and flexible mechanisms for accessing support in their own time and creating better linkages between different services received by the carer, and

Delivers **improved carer outcomes** and reduced future costs.

Key success criteria

- ▶ Close and targeted engagement with key sector stakeholders as early as possible helped build trust and confidence in the design process, and mitigate the risk of resistance to change;
- ▶ Early commencement of discovery and co-design was essential for capturing the broad and diverse range of stakeholder viewpoints, and allowing sufficient capacity for incorporating them into design;
- ▶ Engaging extensively with a wide range of stakeholders and using a variety of communication and engagement techniques helped validate and provide a strong evidence base for the Service Concept and Delivery Model;
- ▶ Providing stakeholders with frequent exposure to prototypes and concepts, with opportunities for review and feedback through governance forums kept them

engaged in the design process, and helped expedite the approval process; and

- ▶ The use of easy to understand, visual prototypes helped to enhance stakeholder understanding of complex design concepts.

DELIVERY

Business context

In the 2015-16 Budget, the Government committed to redesign how it supports Australia's 2.7 million carers, this included \$33.7 million over four years for the establishment of Stage 1, a national carer gateway (Carer Gateway). Supported by Apis, DSS successfully launched the Carer Gateway in December 2015, delivering information and support to carers through a website and national contact centre.

The focus of Stage 2 involved working with the sector to design an Integrated Carer Support Service (ICSS). The Service Delivery Model developed through an 18-month co-design process (including two rounds of national public consultation) has formed the basis of a proposal to Government to secure funding and support for the implementation of the new service system.

Business problem

The current system of support and services available to carers has evolved in a piecemeal fashion over the course of 20+ years. As a result, the Government's investment had tended towards high-cost, reactive services such as emergency respite. Our challenge was to design a better investment approach; an approach that would improve carer outcomes and reduce future costs.

It is well documented that the caring role has a negative impact on the lives of many carers. The business problem facing our design team was to:

- ▶ Identify what services and supports were proven to be effective in lessening this impact and improving a carer's overall quality of life

- ▶ In turn preserving the important relationship between carer and care recipient, and

- ▶ Avoiding the significant replacement care costs that are incurred if the informal care (provided by carers) can no longer be provided.

Having identified these services/supports, our next challenge was to design a Service Delivery Model that would:

- ▶ Weight the Government's investment towards low-cost, yet effective, preventative services;
- ▶ Support carers in the important early stages of their caring role; and
- ▶ Target carers most in need of support (i.e. those carers for whom the caring role is having the most detrimental effect).

Approach and solutions

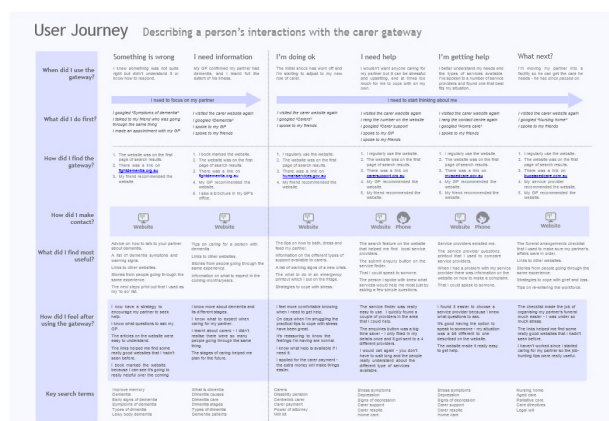
At the core of our approach was the establishment of productive working relationships with carers, subject matter experts, services providers and peak bodies through frequent co-design workshops.

This included:

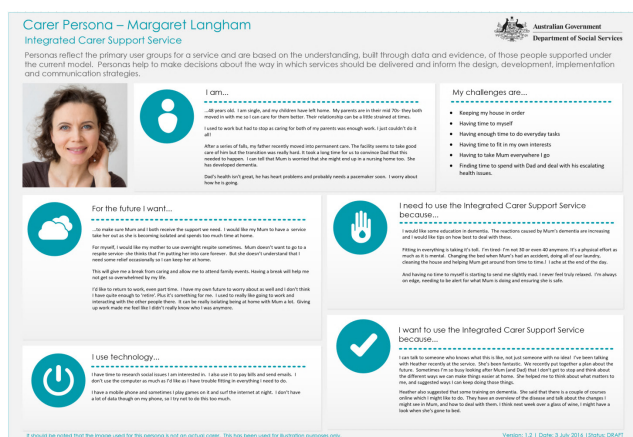
- ▶ Establishing close working relationships with influential sector stakeholders early in the process, and building their confidence and trust. This was essential to ensuring their continued engagement and support of the process and resultant design;
- ▶ Discovery activities with existing providers early in the engagement to document the current state, understand the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system, and identify the carer cohorts to be engaged;
- ▶ Filling gaps in the current state of knowledge through extensive secondary research activities, such as a global literature review and national carer surveys; and

► Allowing for public consultation and feedback on the Service Concept and Delivery Model.

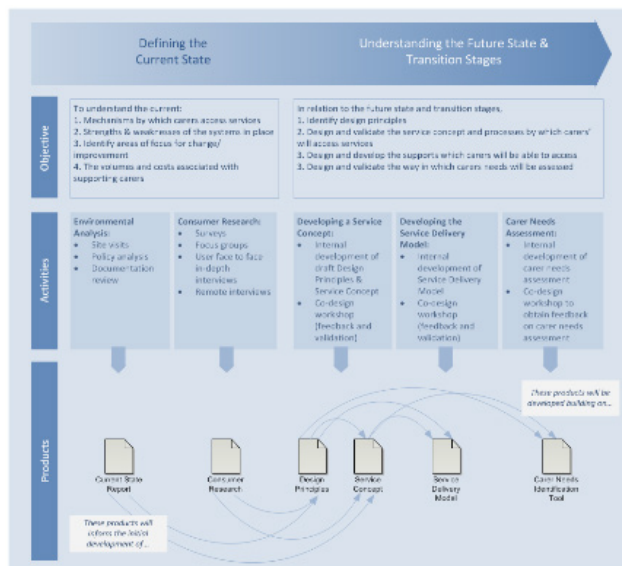
Our co-design reference group (up to 150 individuals) saw the design of the future system evolve over multiple iterations – in response to their feedback. This created a sense of joint-ownership for the final design. The quality of the resulting design was demonstrated through the overwhelming positive response we received through two rounds of national, public, consultation.



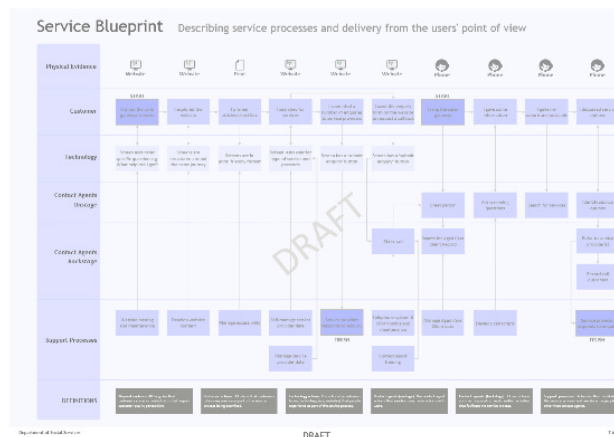
To elicit feedback, Apis relied on the use of highly visual design artefacts such as user personas, user journeys and service blueprints. These artefacts enabled our design team to quickly and cost effectively test multiple concepts with our co-design reference group.



Personas are fictional characters, which we create based upon our research to represent the different user types that might use the service, product, site, or brand in a similar way. Creating personas helps us to understand our users' needs, experiences, behaviours and goals.



Journey maps provide a framework to help think through the key moments for a customer as they experience the solution. For example how the customer first becomes aware of your solution, how they make a decision to try it, what their first interaction and engagement is like, how they might become a repeat user, and how the solution might ultimately impact their life. The Journey Map is a starting point to inform a more descriptive Storyboard.



The blueprint is an operational tool that describes the nature and the characteristics of the service interaction in enough detail to verify, implement and maintain it. It is based on a graphical technique that displays the process functions above and below the line of visibility to the customer: all the touchpoints and the back-stage processes are documented and aligned to the user experience.

We combined the fundamentals of good design (i.e. user-centric, visual prototypes and constant iteration) with project management expertise



to ensure that stakeholders had a shared understanding of the co-design process. We developed a process flow to provide stakeholders with a simple view of the delivery approach and activities for each stage of design, the associated products and how they fed into each other:

The Department, its stakeholders, and the future users of the service universally endorsed the resulting service design.

How we worked

We established close working relationships

Apis consultants worked onsite with the department as part of a blended team to ensure the transfer of knowledge and maximise the close involvement of both Departmental staff and senior executives. Strong relationships were formed with key sector stakeholders early in the engagement, which built trust and ensured their ongoing interest and engagement. An Expert Reference Group was established (which included carers) to provide these stakeholders with frequent exposure to content in a simple and understandable format and opportunities for review and feedback. This was supported by the application of project management expertise throughout the engagement, to ensure that delivery remained on track, stakeholders were informed of progress and issues quickly resolved.

We consulted early and widely

Due to the complexity of the carer landscape, Apis used various methods of communication and engagement to collect data, seek feedback on design concepts and present findings to key stakeholders. In the discovery phase, this included overseeing research with over 1,300 carers and stakeholders through focus groups, interviews (including in-home interviews), and surveys to better understand the needs of carers and the current service landscape. To capture existing service provider perspectives, Apis led site visits to over 30 carer provider organisations nationally.

As part of the Service Concept and Delivery Model development, Apis consulted extensively with subject matter experts, industry specialists and carers from across Australia, the United States and United Kingdom. A subject matter

expert working group was established and held regular workshops for this purpose. Both the draft Service Concept and Service Delivery Model were released for public consultation and feedback in 2016. Consulting early and widely, and using a variety of methods, helped ensure that a diverse range of stakeholder views were considered.

We established strong governance and executive oversight

To ensure effective and timely delivery as well as facilitate the close engagement of stakeholders, Apis established and managed strong project management and governance mechanisms as part of this engagement. This included a formal project board, Gateway Advisory Group with carer support sector stakeholders and a subject matter working group. Regular project and risk reporting was undertaken and provided to the DSS executive. In line with Apis' leadership model, partners and senior managers of the business took a 'hands on' approach to delivery of this project. This included maintaining an onsite presence at key points, representation on the Board and Advisory Group in an expert advisory capacity, and providing quality review and input into products.

STATISTICS

WPIT / HEIMS Redevelopment Business Case – Department of Human Services

Team Size	Apis team 4-5 FTE, embedded alongside APS Branch of 36 FTE
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Summary data	Programme Value = approx \$230m
	Consortiums will support 11 service areas across Australia
	Each year the consortiums will collectively support 370,000 carers
	More than 1.3 million interactions with carers