

MEDIA RELEASE



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Young carers put at educational disadvantage

A new report by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) has highlighted how young carers in education are often disadvantaged due to the responsibilities of their caring role. The research has found that young carers in Year 9 have significantly lower performance in reading and numeracy compared to their peers.

'This research on young carers from the AIFS is very important,' said Carers Australia CEO, Ara Cresswell.

'We know that young carers suffer educational disadvantage, which is likely to affect their prospects later in life. It has been very difficult to find rich, large-scale data, such as that embodied in this research, to identify the extent of young carer educational disadvantage.'

While this study only focuses on 14-15 year olds, the results are likely to reflect the circumstances of a much larger age cohort of young carers. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there were about 59,000 young carers under the age of 15 in 2015. On average, they were more likely than older young carers (those aged between 15 and 24) to be worried and depressed, tired and to have interrupted sleep.

'A great deal more needs to be done to provide formal support to young carers so they can fully participate in school. The Government's Young Carer Bursary Program goes some way towards this, but these bursaries are only benefitting just over 300 young carers aged between 12 and 25 nationwide in 2017.

'There is a nationally funded Young Carer Information and Referral program, which provides assistance to help young carers keep up educationally. However, few young carers identify as such and most will not be aware of these support services. There is much schools can do to assist in identifying young carers in their midst, appreciate the challenges they face, and provide them with that extra bit of assistance they need.

'At the moment we are, as a society, failing young carers. In recent years there have been initiatives to assist them. However, they don't yet go far enough, and an appreciation of young carers and the challenges they face needs to be more deeply entrenched in the community.'

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