

MEDIA RELEASE

20 September 2016



Evidenced-based and intensive support approaches to avoiding long-term welfare dependence have merit

Carers Australia can see merit in the Government's announcement of the Try, Test and Learn Fund to explore interventions which may help people at risk of long term dependence on income support, including young carers, to break the cycle. However, this should not come at the expense of a reduction in necessary income support for any carer and those they care for while the trial is underway and before benefits are realised.

Carers Australia CEO, Ara Cresswell, said, "Young carers have been correctly identified as some of those most at risk of welfare dependence throughout their lives. They are more susceptible than other young people to the problems of workforce accessibility given the nature of their caring role.

"It is crucial, however, that any programs geared towards securing better life outcomes for young carers do not do so at the expense of those supports currently relied upon simply to maintain a means of living. It is also important to understand that many young carers face a range of complex challenges which impact on their capacity to engage in education and employment and these must be addressed under any program to support them into work.

"Young carers often experience extreme social isolation, financial hardship and high levels of emotional stress due to caring responsibilities way beyond those expected of other young people their age. An intensive program of support will be required to address all these disadvantages and replacement care will need to be provided to those they care for if the trial is to work.

"It is very important that the employment outcomes for young carers and other groups engaged in the trial must be sustainable and monitored over the long term. Fixed term budget savings from a reduction in welfare benefits in and of itself are not a good indicator of the success of the social investment approach.

"In 2012 there were 306,000 young carers under the age of 25 in Australia, 23,200 of whom provided the majority of care in the household. Of these, in March 2016 there were 9,623 receiving the Carer Payment and Carer Allowance and an additional 2,197 receiving the Carer Allowance only."

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