



## **Young Carer Bursary Programme (YCBP):**

### **Feedback and advice from Mental Health in Multicultural Australia (MHiMA)**

**29 April 2014**

The Department of Social Services (DSS) sought advice from MHiMA about key design issues that would help in the development of the YCBP's design. This paper was developed via collaboration between members of MHiMA's Consumer and Carer Working Groups and MHiMA staff.

#### **Feedback has been provided in response to the following questions suggested by the DSS:**

*1. Which young carers are most in need of a bursary to help keep them in education or reduce their part-time work hours, and why?*

CALD young carers need a bursary to assist in keeping them in education or reducing their part-time work hours in order for them to complete their education. Caring for a family member(s) takes a significant amount of time out of a day for a young CALD carer, most of whom do not access support services due to stigma and/or shame issues.

Young CALD carers in regional areas are even more disadvantaged due to the lack of availability of public transport outside of business areas.

Young CALD carers may also be the primary carer and have more than one family member with a disability.

All of these considerations put an enormous burden on a young CALD carer who is attempting to complete their education and a bursary will definitely assist.

*2. How should eligibility for the bursary be assessed and determined?*

A letter of support from the local education provider or career advisor, who may address the difficulties the young CALD carer is facing, including the risk of withdrawal from education. An example would be a child not being able to complete an in-school apprenticeship due to a parent not being well enough to take the child to TAFE or work. This is compounded in regional areas whereby there may be no/limited public transport available.

CALD community leaders should also be encouraged to nominate a young CALD carer. Community leaders should also be encouraged to provide letters of support for the young carer.

Another option, or in combination with letters of support from community and education providers, would be for interested young carers to lodge an expression of interest themselves to apply for a bursary.

Other factors to consider include: time spent in the role of young carer; whether the young carer is engaged in full-time or part-time study or work (including which of the two options the young carer would ideally like to be in, were it not for their caring role); and determinants being made as to the severity of the mental illness and/or if there are other determinants at play. An example is a parent with a mental illness and a severe physical disability.

Assessment tools used to determine the severity of the mental illness and/or other determinants be available for comment at the development stage. Also, assessments need to be conducted in a dignified manner for the consumer and young carer and if required, interpreters who are accredited and trained in medical terminology should be used.

The consumer who is cared for, be it on the Disability Support Pension or the National Disability Insurance Scheme, should not be put through the rigours of an assessment (mentioned in the previous two paragraphs). It puts extra pressure and strain on the carer and consumer being cared for and this needs to be avoided at all cost.

A selection committee should be established to examine all applications and letters of support. This committee should take into consideration factors such as language and culture, e.g., increased stigma of mental illness in some communities, shame, loss of face, family expectations across different cultures, which may impact on young carers' willingness to seek help or identify as a carer.

*3. What would be the best way to identify and target the programme to young carers in most need of assistance? Should priority be given to any young carers in particular?*

Priority needs to be given to CALD young carers who have been in the caring role for more than a set number of years (for example 2 years) and are having to modify their education options due to the caring role.

The programme could be targeted via a range of ways, such as: social media campaigns; high school principals / tertiary staff and counsellors; through existing services and organisations (e.g., COPMI) – although many young carers are not necessarily engaged in such services.

It is important to inform priority and hard-to-reach groups about the programme, such as people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) and people living in regional and remote areas. Consider setting up a 'register' of young carers or an informal database of young carers to promote such programmes through newsletters.

*4. What types of assistance do young carers need to keep them in education and what should the bursary be used for?*

- Technology connections and supplies required for education (e.g., education fees, books, digital tools/equipment, phone/internet access). Some regional areas have limited technology access.
- Funding of care for the consumer (person being cared for) so that the young carer can reduce absentee rate from school. For CALD consumers this should include the cost of interpreters.
- Travel assistance e.g., taxi vouchers where required especially in regional areas.
- Young carers may also need the help of a mentor to provide them with mutual support, counsellors' services, and information about available support services.
- As carers also often provide a great deal of emotional support, it is important that young carers get sufficient emotional support/assistance themselves. This may be especially important for some young carers – such as some carers from CALD backgrounds – who, due to greater stigma of mental health issues as well as barriers such as language, may be responsible for providing the bulk of emotional support to the person they are caring for.

*5. Should there be a prescribed list of eligible activities/items? Should any activities/items be excluded?*

Primarily, the items should be for direct support for education or further studies which are accredited. This could include supplies for someone studying art, camera for photography and sports equipment for physical training.

There also needs to be an option to support young carers in apprenticeships especially in the purchase of tools and books. The wages of an apprentice are often too low to allow purchases of tools and books. This in turn creates financial difficulties for the family and hence, the young carer may stop the apprenticeship and chose full-time work. Hence, losing their apprenticeship and the qualifications it endows, which can lead to a vicious “circle” of impoverishment.

Activities/items which directly or indirectly support young carers' ability to study or work and/or support their health and wellbeing should be supported. Items / activities which are promote the health and wellbeing of the person they care for (e.g., access to a phone) which reduce stress or ill-health for young carers should also be eligible.

Cultural background, strengths and needs to be included for CALD young carers. There may be activities/items which may be unique to the young carer and their situation. Hence, each case needs to be individually assessed.

Items which should be excluded include things which do not support health and wellbeing, such as alcohol, drugs, cigarettes.

*6. How would young carers expect to hear about the bursaries?*

1. Through Government agencies such as State and Territory Disability Services Commissions
2. Carer peak bodies
3. CALD specific non-government agencies
4. Educational services such as secondary school and tertiary institutions (e.g., via principals, teachers, counsellors, staff, institution websites etc.)
5. GPs and health services
6. Promotion through social media such as Twitter accounts and Facebook
7. Promotion by radio and TV
8. Community leaders
9. Brochures (ensuring these are translated into other languages)
10. Dissemination of the above information needs to also go out into the wider community and not just the mental health sector
11. Not forgetting those who may not be literate in English, that there are other methods of obtaining the Young Carer Bursary Programme information

*7. Are there other innovative methods for reaching young carers (including CALD and Indigenous young carers) to let them know about the programme?*

1. Use of social media
2. Promotion by radio and TV
3. Via their communities (e.g., through local community events, attending church)
4. For young carers from CALD backgrounds, the person they care for could inform health services (e.g., their psychiatrist, care coordinator, support worker) that a young carer is involved and ask that information be passed on to assist the young carer.

*8. How can we ensure hidden carers hear about the programme – particularly those who do not regard themselves as carers?*

Deploy stigma reduction programs to encourage hidden young carers to seek support if required. In addition, nominations could be allowed by:

1. School teachers
2. School Chaplin
3. Community leaders
4. Family members including the person being cared for
5. Other interested/concerned parties known to the young unidentified carer

*9. What would be a transparent and fair process to manage unsuccessful applications?*

1. To enable a transparent and fair process for unsuccessful applications, there needs to be transparency and accountability at the application stage.
2. Allow unsuccessful applicants a rights of an appeal.
3. An informal interview addressing the reasons why they were unsuccessful.
4. Ensure the young carers are informed of other State and Territory financial supports or be referred to local support agencies.

*Other comments:*

- It would be good if such a programme could provide ongoing funding to support young carers (i.e., not be time-limited by one year for example).
- Successful applicants could provide a brief story of how the bursary had assisted them (e.g., in terms of being able to progress / complete study or work).
- It is important that such a programme is evaluated thoroughly.

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