



Pre-budget submission

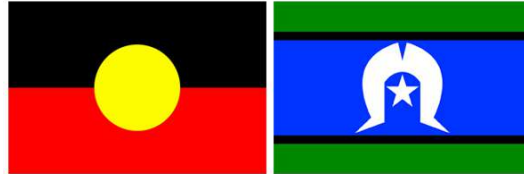
Financial Year 2022-23

Chat to us for more info:

info@littledreamers.org.au

1800 717 515





ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE

Little Dreamers acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and honour the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to land, waters and culture. Our HQ is located on the land of the Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, whose Ancestors have lived here for millennia. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Little Dreamers Australia – 2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission

Little Dreamers Australia appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the Australian Federal Government in relation to the 2022-23 pre-budget submission.

Over the past 12 years, Little Dreamers has become a game changing force in the Young Carer space, developing Young Carer led programs, advocating for legislation and policy change and providing support to thousands of Young Carers across Australia. We are working towards an equal world for Young Carers, delivering direct support programs aiming to improve quality of life. With an estimated 1 in 10 children in Australia giving up their childhood to provide unpaid care to a family member, Little Dreamers delivers proactive and empowering support programs to reduce the risk factors that they face and increase their life opportunities.

All of Little Dreamers' programs have been developed by Young Carers, for Young Carers. These programs target the five main risk factors that these young people face:

- ★ Social isolation
- ★ Poor mental health
- ★ Unemployment
- ★ Financial
- ★ Educational disadvantage

Whatever the support service, a common thread runs through everything we do - **young people should have access to the childhood that everyone deserves.**

Since the beginning of 2020, Little Dreamers has observed a 218% increase in applications for support, and a 284% increase in rural and regional communities. Young Carers have faced escalated caring responsibilities due to being at home more often and having reduced access to respite opportunities such as work, school, social activities and extracurriculars. At Little Dreamers, we continued our hybrid approach to program delivery, having programs in person where possible and online events and programs when needed.

While we acknowledge that our country has a number of priorities to consider, we believe that there needs to be a greater Government focus on and investment in supporting Young Carers. Young people with caring responsibilities face significant risk factors when unsupported, which only accumulate over time and extend

into adulthood. Early intervention and prevention of risk factors facing Young Carers should be a considerable priority.

Following extensive consultation with Young Carers and their families across Australia in 2021, this submission identifies four of focus areas and strategies for the Federal Budget 2022-23 to enhance the opportunities and support available for Young Carers and therefore, the broader community. These areas include:

- ★ **Education**
- ★ **Social awareness**
- ★ **Service accessibility**
- ★ **Social connection**

Young Carers are a vulnerable population of young people who cross government departments, often resulting in them falling through the cracks.

“Young Carers are an essential part of our community, they do so much work to support so many different people who require care. They develop incredible skills doing such work. So not only are they currently contributing to the community in massive ways, they have massive potential to contribute. Supporting Young Carers is a great budgetary investment - the money spent on Young Carer programs will come back in so many different ways. The budget would be broken if Young Carers couldn’t do their job anymore.” - Female, 21, NSW

Young Carer Fast Facts and Stats

- ★ There is an estimated 2-3 Young Carers in every classroom (Connolly, 2020).
- ★ 50% of Young Carers report having difficulty attending school every day (Moore, McArthur and Morrow, 2009).
- ★ Young Carers are almost twice as likely to be disengaged from work or study than their peers (Warren and Edwards, 2016).
- ★ 60% of Young Carers between the ages of 15-24 are unemployed compared to 38% of non-Young Carers (Nobel-Carr, 2002).
- ★ 50% of Young Carers live in households that are close to or below the poverty line (ABS, 2012).
- ★ Young Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people are over represented in the Young Carer population (Hill *et al*, 2009).

Area of interest	Funding request	Location	Action
Education	\$3,000,000	\$500,000 per state and territory	Deliver The Young Carer Project (TYCP), an already established and accredited Young Carer schools program aimed at creating Young Carer friendly schools, working with the whole school to engineer a kind, safe and supportive school environment where Young Carers can thrive.
Social awareness	\$1,200,000	National	In conjunction with the Australian Research Council and an Australian University, we will produce and deliver a nationwide Young Carer survey to obtain more accurate data so Young Carers can be adequately cared for through Government services and initiatives.
Service accessibility	\$750,000	National	In-depth consultation and regular round-table conversations to be conducted with Young Carers to help guide the government in how to make services such as Centrelink, NDIS, CarerGateway and other Government payments Young Carer friendly.
Social connection	\$3,000,000	National	Continued investment in Young Carer designed and led services around Australia. Provision of these services supports Young Carers to feel empowered, and delivers services that are consistent with the requirements of Young Carers and encourage social connection.

Recommendations - 2022-2023 budget

- ★ **Education:** implementation of compulsory education for teachers to better identify, support and engage Young Carers in the classroom;
- ★ **Social awareness:** a nationwide Young Carer survey to include Young Carers under the age of 15, to increase identification and acknowledgement of Young Carers and ensure they are recognised in Government reports;
- ★ **Service accessibility:** assessment of current Government provisions and the increase in accessibility of these services for Young Carers; and
- ★ **Social connection:** consistency and growth in the delivery of direct support programs for Young Carers.



1. Education: implementation of compulsory training for teachers to better identify, support and engage Young Carers in the classroom

This first recommendation is a call to action for the Australian education system to implement compulsory teacher training around Young Carers.

The aim of introducing Young Carer teacher training is to:

1. Deliver interactive and thought-provoking training to teachers about Young Carers in a school environment;
2. Develop a heightened understanding of the Young Carer community to help teachers identify Young Carers and understand the impacts of being a Young Carer; and
3. Increase knowledge of how to better support Young Carers in the school community.

Increased understanding and consideration of Young Carers by teachers will assist in a more clear, supportive pathway for Young Carers.

Studies demonstrate how Young Carers are falling through the cracks in the education system. The Australian Centre for Child Protection in 2019 states that 22% of Young Carers reported they were unable to attend school at least once per week due to their caring responsibilities. Another study showed that Young Carers are 1.5 years behind their peers in their NAPLAN scores (Warren and Edwards, 2016). It is hoped that the implementation of Young Carer teacher training will allow for Young Carers to feel completely supported in their school environment.

Young Carers are often left feeling stigmatised and suffer under the lack of flexibility and understanding in education, leisure and employment opportunities (Gray, et al., 2008). In addition, issues and ongoing anxiety about their caring role can leave Young Carers struggling to concentrate and attain a quality education.

“I was failing Year 12 because I couldn’t concentrate at school. I can’t cope with what’s going on at home on top of school.” - Female, NSW, 18

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on many Young Carers and their families. Young Carers have faced an increase in caring responsibilities as a result of reduced capacity and availability of support workers. This also saw disproportionate impacts on the education of Young Carers. Not being able to attend school has seen their caring role turn into a full time role, whilst operating in the same space as their education.

“I did Year 12 during COVID, I was stressed mum would get sick during a tough year. We would visit her after school which didn’t leave time for homework. We would get home at 8pm and be really tired from the stress. Having that in the back of my mind all day was really stressful.” - Female, VIC, 18

Young Carers also outlined a significant lack of understanding and recognition about caring roles within their schools, which led to misunderstanding if school requirements were not met, such as being late or not handing in assignments on time.

“We are still a big part of the population. It needs to be more central and of a high level of importance.” - 15, Female, QLD

Funding Request

Funding: \$3,000,000 (\$500,000 per state and territory)

Location: National

Action: Deliver The Young Carer Project (TYCP), an already established and accredited Young Carer schools program aimed at creating Young Carer friendly schools, working with the whole school to engineer a kind, safe and supportive school environment where Young Carers can thrive.



2. Social awareness: A nationwide Young Carer survey to include Young Carers under the age of 15, to increase identification and acknowledgement of Young Carers and ensure they are recognised in Government reports

It is the notable lack of awareness and understanding of Young Carers that underpins their place in Australian society.

The estimated number of Young Carers in Australia varies greatly as the definition of caring differs across surveys in Australia. Some other considerations to keep in mind when considering data on Young Carers are:

- ★ Surveys may be completed by another individual in the home who may not recognise or report on their caring role;
- ★ Certain age groups may be excluded from the study;
- ★ It could include or exclude whether care needs to be provided within or outside of the home;
- ★ The survey could specify a two-week time period for care provision, which may miss many Young Carers whose roles are irregular (this is often found with caring roles for someone with a mental or chronic illness or addiction).

Research shows that the identification of Young Carers is incredibly difficult and can often be missed due to discrepancies and misinformation in reporting. Across Australia, there are three major surveys used to identify and assess the number of Young Carers. These surveys use varying methods to count Young Carers, each with limitations and none providing a full picture of the true numbers of young people providing care.

“I don’t feel supported by the Government or community, not enough awareness about Young Carers. They [the Government] don’t know that Young Carers exist.” - Female, QLD, 15

With the development of a nation-wide Young Carer survey, together, we should see a more accurate understanding of the size of the Young Carer population within Australia. This will ideally result in policies, support and funding that are more proportionate to Young Carers’ needs, as well as a general increase in social awareness of the existence of Young Carers in the community.

Funding Request

Funding: \$1,200,000

Location: National

Action: In conjunction with the Australian Research Council and an Australian University, we will produce and deliver a nationwide Young Carer survey to obtain more accurate data

3. Service accessibility: Assessment of current Government services through consultation with Young Carers and the increase in accessibility of these services

This recommendation is based upon the increased need for Young Carer consultation across Government services, allowing for improved services that are accessible to Young Carers. We are requesting that consultations are conducted with Young Carers to understand how to determine ways to make Centrelink, NDIS and other Government payments easier to navigate.

A common theme found in our focus groups and survey responses is feelings of financial stress and anxiety surrounding the prospect of long-term financial disadvantage. This is often due to ongoing costs incurred when Young Carers are supporting themselves and their family. Young Carers may take on multiple jobs and commitments in order to financially support their family members. This is further exacerbated by the many barriers surrounding entry into the workforce in Australia.

Studies show that Carer Payments are rarely provided to Young Carers aged under 18, these numbers are included in the proportion of individuals receiving Carer Payments aged 18-25. Currently, 2.1% of 18–25-year-old females, and 2% of 18-25 year old males are receiving Carer Payments (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021). From a young age, we are already putting limitations on the amount of work, study and training a person can complete. Services Australia states that you cannot spend more than 25 hours per week away from caring (Services Australia, 2021). This means that we are restricting a Young Carer's ability to complete high school, attend university or work enough to reduce their long-term reliance on welfare. This study exemplifies how services intended to support Young Carers are missing the mark and are possibly leaving detrimental impacts on other aspects of their lives.

There are also services that Young Carers need to access that are outside the realm of caring, such as mental health support. This highlights the intersectionality of caring, as due to their caring role, Young Carers often also have additional needs for support and assistance. It is important that these services are directed at young people and easy for them to access.

“Finding the right care and other support made it easier for my sister and I. However, navigation of services to find the right support for dad was so difficult. I want the Government to make that easier.” - Female, VIC, 21

Funding Request

Funding: \$750,000

Location: National

Action: In-depth consultation and regular round-table conversations to be conducted with Young Carers to help guide the government in how to make services such as Centrelink, NDIS, Carer Gateway and other Government payments Young Carer friendly.

4. Social connection: consistency and growth in the delivery of direct support programs for Young Carers

Caring roles can have a significant impact on the social experiences of a Young Carer. Young Carers are often required to work alongside the demands of their caring role, whilst attempting to navigate their way through adolescence. Fostering strong social connections and exploring their sense of identity proves challenging for these young people who are meeting the demands of their caring roles. This significantly impacts their ability to connect with other young people their age and gain pivotal space to form their sense of identity.

This is why it is vital for the Government to continue to support Young Carer organisations, ensuring we can continue to foster social connection and community for Young Carers.

Humans are social creatures with a desire for connection with others. Having a point of reliability to make these connections is vital, which is why creating networks for Young Carers to meet and socialise is important to their social development.

“Support services are not accessible for Young Carers. The current Mental Health Act is based on crisis only. If someone is struggling in general, they do not get support. We need support ongoingly and not be labelled as ‘non-crisis’.” - Female, VIC, 19

“Not every carer is the same or needs the same supports.” - Female, WA, 22

Funding Request

Funding: \$3,000,000

Location: National

Action: Continued investment in Young Carer designed and led services around Australia. Provision of these services supports Young Carers to feel empowered, and delivers services that are consistent with the requirements of Young Carers and encourage social connection.

For more information and questions:

Madeleine Buchner OAM, Founder and CEO, madeleine@littledreamers.org.au



Chat to us for more info:

info@littledreamers.org.au

1800 717 515