



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Young carers fall behind in school

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Young carers suffer a substantial negative impact on their academic achievement arising from their time spent caring for others, according to new research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

The Institute's Director, Anne Hollonds said almost 40 per cent of Australian 14 to 15 year-olds report they help someone elderly or with a long-term health condition or disability with activities that they would have trouble doing on their own. For some, this help involves assisting a classmate or helping out with chores when they visit their grandparents. But those caring for a household member on a daily basis were significantly falling behind in school.

"At least one in ten 14-15 year-olds were caring for a household member, with around two-thirds of this group providing assistance with core activities including personal care, mobility and communication," Ms Hollonds said.

"While caring is a normal part of many young people's lives, for a small group being a carer significantly and negatively impacts on their schooling and by extension, their life chances."

AIFS economist, Dr Diana Warren said the research found that young carers have significantly lower performance in Reading and Numeracy in NAPLAN at year 9 compared to their classroom peers.

"These differences are substantial and suggest that time spent caring significantly undermines young carers' academic achievement," Dr Warren said.

"For example, boys who spent two or more hours per day as carers were the equivalent of 1.9 years behind their classmates in Year 9 NAPLAN Reading.

"Girls who spent two or more hours per day as carers were 1.6 years behind in Year 9 NAPLAN Reading, than classroom peers without these responsibilities.

"Young carers were also behind their peers in Year 9 NAPLAN Numeracy testing. Boys and girls providing daily care were approximately 15 months behind fellow students who were not carers.

"Even after adjusting for various demographic factors, including a mother's education and parents' employment, the findings indicate that being a young carer has a detrimental impact on educational performance, particularly for those who provide regular care for a household member."

Ms Hollonds said the research raises concerns about the far-reaching inter-generational consequences for young people with caring responsibilities that often go beyond what adults would normally expect of children.

"Targeted policies and programs are needed to provide formal support to young carers who are the most affected so they can fully participate in school," Ms Hollonds said.

"This would help ease some of the burden on them and could make a real difference to the lifetime educational prospects of these young carers."

Download a copy of the AIFS' Longitudinal Study of Australian Children 2016 Annual Statistical Report [Young Carers](#)

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