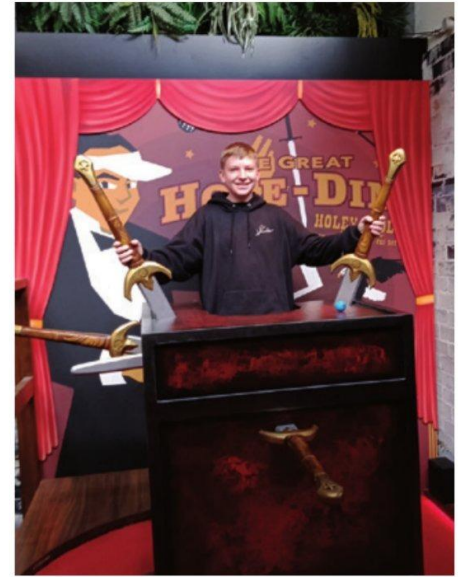


STREET CORNER



Your Side takes young carers for days out to have a break from their responsibilities.



Supporting young carers

With 235,000 young carers across Australia, the Carer Gateway helps local youth in their role.

Cheryl is only nine years old, but she helps care for her mum who struggles with anxiety and her grandparents, both of whom have dementia. Cheryl does chores around the house, helps cook dinner and supports her grandparents with mobility. Despite the challenges, Cheryl finds comfort in helping those she loves. "When I was little, my grandparents cared for me, and now I am caring for them," Cheryl says. "It's just really nice to help people you love."

Your Side, a Carer Gateway service provider, helps young carers achieve their goals and puts those aged 25 and under in touch with others in the same situation. Your Side also gets the young carers together for activities and peer support sessions.

"My favourite young carer activity has been camping," Cheryl says. "The Carer Gateway is a gate to happiness, friendship, and support and I have made a lot of new friends. My family is really happy for me."

Your Side provides a range of services to help young carers who live in areas including the Lower

North Shore and Northern Beaches. It offers tutoring to establish good study habits and balance school with caring responsibilities, respite so young carers can get to work or school and counselling.

James O'Keefe, young carer consultant at Carer Gateway, says: "While many young carers find fulfillment in their responsibilities, it's important to recognise that inadequate support can adversely affect their health and wellbeing, schooling, pathways to employment and the time they have to socialise with friends.

"Most young carers don't understand that they can get free support. We provide a one-hour assessment where the young carer tells us their needs. They may struggle to get to school or work on time or need help with things like respite, counselling or tutoring services.

"The Carer Gateway can help relieve pressures at school with tutoring, stress at home with respite or in-home help and assist young carers on advice with career pathways."

Ben, 15, plays a crucial caring role for

his older brother, who has a disability. It's a responsibility he's embraced for the last four years. Balancing his caregiving duties with school was challenging for Ben, impacting his academic performance and social life. However, he found support through the young carers program offered by the Carer Gateway. Ben now receives tutoring, leading to improved school performance, and participates in numerous young carer social events.

"My grades have got heaps better at school and I go to a lot of young carer events which is cool. I loved the pizza-making event we did the most. If you are a young carer, you should check it out," he says.

For those out of school, the Carer Gateway will help the young carer look into upskilling and employment pathways courses and even assist with driving lessons.

James says young carers dedicate their time and energy to assist family members or friends with disabilities, mental health challenges, chronic conditions, substance dependence, or frailty. "With over 235,000 young carers across Australia, it's crucial to acknowledge their essential role in caregiving," he says.

To learn more or access these services, visit carergateway.gov.au or call 1800 422 737, Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm. **P**