



YOUNG CARERS

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:55):
Today, I would like to talk about a group of young people in our community who play a very important role.

As members would be aware, this week is Carers Week.

Yesterday, at our local sub-branch meeting, we had a speaker by the name of Emily Ritchie, who is a support worker for young carers with Carers and Disability Link, which is based in the Barossa and which also does work in Yorke Peninsula, Clare and the Adelaide Hills. The purpose of Carers Week is to highlight the work undertaken by carers in our community and to also acknowledge the challenges they face and how, as a community, we can support the carers who do valuable work in our community.

Carers' Link Barossa and Districts was established in 1995. Since starting as a carers group, they have also added the work of supporting people living with disability to their portfolio. Carers' Link basically link people living with disabilities with carers and a whole range of services to ensure they can lead a meaningful life through the support they provide. Today, as I mentioned, I would like to focus on one group of carers, namely young carers.

I understand that there are about 30,500 young carers in South Australia. The young carer is essentially a person between the age of five and 25 whose life is impacted by the care needs of someone who experiences a chronic or long-term illness, physical or intellectual disability, mental illness, an alcohol or drug problem or has dementia or is frail or aged. When you look at carers between five and 25, to know that in our community there are children as young as five caring for another person in their family really

does weigh heavily on the sort of life they will live themselves. The young carer might be caring for a parent, a sibling, in some cases their own child, a grandparent, another relative or maybe even a close friend. The role each carer provides varies from carer to carer, depending on the needs of the person they are caring for. The work young carers provide can range from emotional support to the very practical support of paying accounts and bills for the person who needs the support, and in some cases personal needs. As you can see from the wide range of activities that these young carers perform, it can be quite challenging for them, both emotionally and physically, and they do miss out on quite a bit in life because of this work.

To support young carers, Carers' Link has actually created young carer support groups to provide activities for young carers where they can get together and not only share experiences but get support through their peers. They provide outings, information, workshops, projects and peer support. This is designed to ensure that children or young people can live, as much as possible, a normal life, in other words, experience the things that they should be experiencing day to day but for their role as a carer. The reality of being a young carer does impose on your time to do things at school or outside of school or, if you are just out of school, to do things with friends, even the capacity to be able to go and work, etc. Carers' Link also provide advocacy

services on an individual basis or through group activities to make sure that these young people get a fair go. One of the roles they play is often liaising with schools, where teachers and school administrators might be aware of the young carer's role and why that may be an issue regarding their school performance. Just put into context the work young carers and carers provide in our community, it is estimated there are 2.65 million unpaid carers in our community across Australia. If we were to pay for the service provided, it would cost about \$77.9 billion or \$1.5 billion a week. In addition to the cost to the community, the cost to individual people in our community would be much greater if they did not have this emotional and other support.