



## **COOPER RILEY OF RAYMOND TERRACE NAMED AS YOUNG CARER CATEGORY WINNER FOR NSW**

**Cooper Riley from Raymond Terrace has been selected as the state winner in the awards in the Young Carer category.**

Sixteen year old Cooper lives with his mother and is Kirstie's primary carer. She has lived with a chronic illness for more than 20 years which limits her capacity to manage the running of the household. Without Cooper's help, she would need to be considered for a care facility.

While other typical teens may be out socialising with friends or playing sport, Cooper has had to forgo much of this freedom to take on more mature responsibilities associated with his mother's care and supporting their needs as a family.

With his mum's illness requiring multiple hospitalisations each year, she is unable to cope with household chores nor daily life on a social level. So she has to rely on her son to provide what she needs.

Cooper's cheerful spirit and pragmatic approach gets him by and he modestly declares "I just do whatever needs to be done at home and to help Mum. That's just the way it is."

While completing his year 10 schooling this year, he has a range of duties at home including cooking, cleaning, washing, shopping for groceries, gardening and keeping the lawns tidy, and doing regular car maintenance.

Cooper says he doesn't really have time to think about what he does, nor how much work is involved, because he's generally so busy.

As well as providing extensive support at home, he also assists with bringing enough money into the household as his mother is unable to work and has limited access to financial support. Working two jobs, both as a casual at the local cinema and washing trucks on Sundays, he can spend up to 24 hours each week at work.

On track to complete his Year 10 ROSA this year, Cooper says his aim in life is to become qualified so he can earn more money and help to improve his mother's situation.

"I want to be a mechanic and I've been accepted into the Hunter Trade College where I'll study for the next two years before I start an apprenticeship. I'm really looking forward to it," he said.

Nominated for the award by his grandmother, Cooper has had to take many days off each year since kindergarten to assist his mum when she has been too sick to take care of herself or him or to get him to school.

“He deserves recognition for his input and care for the family, even when it has interfered with his schooling and his other interests,” she said.