



## LARYSSA KING NAMED AS SA YOUNG WINNER

**Laryssa King has been selected as the Young Carer winner in the South Australian finals of the National Carer Awards.**

Laryssa is a Young Carer 'leader helper' who cares for and supports other young carers in a group she initiated in SA called 'Team Friendship'.

At just 11 years old, Laryssa has been described as an exceptional young person with a big heart and wonderful emotional intelligence. She's on the Student Representative Council at school and is a natural leader. At home, Laryssa is kind, helpful, caring, attentive and helpful to her six year old brother James who has a diagnosis of Autism.

Mum Chantel says Laryssa cares for her younger brother in a totally unique way, "She plays a game called the "fun school" where she sits with him and coaches him through things like reading which he is much less motivated to do without her by his side," she said.

Laryssa has helped James to grow in confidence and explore life outside his routines.

"When we go out together as a family, he literally hangs off his sister and looks to her for social cues when he is unsure how to respond to something," she said.

To bring the outside world in, Laryssa would take a whole range of photos and bring them home to go through in detail with her brother. This became an important part of his early education.

Instinctively they have such a strong bond. He continues to rely on her involvement and guidance, and she is so patient and interested in supporting him

She cares for her brother as a protective big sister, but also cares for her peers.

Laryssa's "Team Friendship" has grown from two people to more than 20 in the last 12 months. The culture of the group is warm, welcoming and inclusive, focussing on teams, friendship, purpose and fun.

Laryssa is constantly thinking of ideas to support the group, ways of welcoming new Young carers and trying to make it more inclusive and relaxing. She now shares the leadership with 5 other young people to ensure they have the opportunity to include a range of ideas. The group meets weekly during school terms and also in the school holidays for bigger events.

Laryssa's energy and passion has created a positive enthusiasm that influences other Young carers. The group also provides a great opportunity for parents (carers) to connect where they may not have otherwise.

The person who nominated her said "I think that she is a brave young lady who is not afraid to speak out and create positive change."

Through Laryssa's 'Team Friendship' , she encourages young carers to come together and combat the isolation they can feel as well as to provide important connections for fostering partnerships and allowing the voices of young people to be heard.

Chantel said they are so proud of their daughter, as she can so readily anticipate her younger brother's needs, understands what he's into and when he might be feeling sensitive.

She said they feel blessed to have her involved in the family and she often receives praise from other parents of Young carers about how she makes them feel at ease.

"We may be biased, but we think she's just awesome," Chantel said.