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## **icare Foundation invests a further \$900,000 in wecare program**

The critical role of family carers in supporting their family members was given further recognition today with the icare Foundation's reinvestment of \$900,000 over three years in the wecare program.

More than 130 NSW families caring for loved ones seriously injured at work or on the road have benefited from icare's wecare program so far, which is available to family members of participants in the Lifetime Care and Workers Care schemes as well as participants in Dust Diseases Care.

During COVID-19 the wecare program will be delivered to more families via Telehealth across Skype, Zoom and telephone.

icare's two wecare programs, the Carer Mentoring Program and the Children and Young People's Mentoring Program, are run in partnership with Carers NSW.

Carers NSW CEO Elena Katrakis thanked icare Foundation for its continued investment in the wecare program, which began in 2016.

"Through this new investment, the icare Foundation is enabling more family carers to increase their knowledge, resilience and wellbeing, as they care for loved ones after an injury or diagnosis," Ms Katrakis said.

"Some of our carers are as young as five years of age and these children within families experiencing the serious injury of a loved one have the opportunity to gain the vital skills and support they need to adjust to the complexities of caregiving in a positive way."

The Children and Young People's Program is for family members aged 5 to 18 years who are children or siblings of icare participants and workers.

This program is tailored to the needs of the child or young person and is delivered over four to eight weeks. The sessions involve establishing a connection, and providing education, referral and coping strategies in fun age-appropriate activities.

The Carer Mentoring Program for adult family members is delivered as six to eight mentoring sessions over 24-28 weeks. Experienced and supportive mentors work alongside the family carer to provide information and support to strengthen coping strategies.

icare General Manager Care Innovation and Excellence Suzanne Lulham said this reinvestment in Carers NSW demonstrates our continued recognition of the need to support family members in managing the impact of a traumatic injury or illness experienced by a loved one.

"Through this new investment we anticipate approximately 140 families and 70 children and young people will go through the wecare program over the next three years. As these family members provide the bedrock of care for so many of icare's participants we are very excited about welcoming them to this wonderful program."

“Despite the social distancing restrictions posed by COVID-19, I am pleased the telehealth service provision enables the continued availability of the wecare program for NSW families caring for loved ones during this uncertain time.” Ms Lulham said.

**CASE STUDY – The Emeny family**

July 7, 2018 began as any normal day would for the Emeny family. Mum Carolyn and Dad Michael were busy working in the family business and seventeen-year-old Jarrod was getting ready for his regular rugby game, but the day would end in heartbreak.

Jarrod was driving a familiar route from his family’s Mudgee property to his much-loved sport of rugby when the vehicle he was driving suddenly swerved, left the road and slammed in to a tree.

He fractured several vertebrae, damaging his spinal cord and in that instant Jarrod became a paraplegic. His cousin, Matt, was first on the scene, and it fell to the Rural Fire Service volunteer to deliver the news to Jarrod’s mum, Carolyn.

Recovering in rehab, Jarrod was beginning to accept the fact that his life would never be the same, but his two older siblings were not coping and nor was his father. Carolyn sought help for her family from her local GP.

Carolyn’s GP put her in touch with Kim, one of the mentors from Carers NSW who, in partnership with icare, deliver the wecare program.

The Emeny family were in the first cohort of 130 families to join the wecare program when the program received icare Foundation’s initial investment. Kim worked with Carolyn and Michael in the Carer Mentoring Program and Lizzy, another mentor with wecare, worked with Jarrod’s sister Jessica, in the Children and Young People’s Mentoring Program.

As the Emeny family began their journey of recovery and learnt how to support Jarrod, wecare’s support was pivotal. Regular phone calls and even visits to Mudgee by Kim and Lizzy, has given them the tools they needed to prevent the family from, in their own words, imploding.

wecare recognises the critical role family carers play in the months and years following the serious injury of a loved one, either at work, or in a motor vehicle accident.

Following Jarrod’s car accident, Kim met with Carolyn and Michael individually on a monthly basis during her trips to Mudgee with face to face meetings that usually last for a couple of hours. There were also regular phone calls and Kim was available to chat between scheduled sessions if needed.

Lizzy worked with Jessica through a mixture of face to face and Skype sessions due to Jessica’s busy schedule with study and work. Lizzy and Jessica also kept in contact regularly for updates between sessions which assisted in providing relevant and structured support.

Carolyn says “Our family could not have come through this without the help from wecare. The program is all about giving you the emotional strength to help you cope as a family. We are all very grateful.”

In the two years since the accident, Jarrod has come on leaps and bounds. He has passed his HSC and secured employment in customer service with Bunnings. In March 2020, Jarrod

commenced his bachelor's degree in Business at the University of Wollongong and enjoys living by himself in residence on campus.

He plays basketball for the Wollongong Roller Hawks and was selected to play wheelchair basketball for the state and the country in the NSW and Australian Under 23 teams. Jarrod's motivation and achievements to date are not only remarkable but inspirational for many.

Ends.

**Notes to Editors**

The renewed investment in the wecare program follows a positive evaluation by Urbis, which found that each dollar invested in the program delivered a social and economic benefit worth \$7.20. Source: [icare Foundation Social Impact Report \(2019\)](#)

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