La Trobe wins Myer Large Grant

La Trobe is a joint recipient of a Myer Foundation large grant to improve education for young Victorians in out-of-home care. Led by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW), the $724,000 project aims to raise transition rates to tertiary education and to improve educational achievement.

The project includes training for foster carers and social workers; education resources for people in care; and new university programs for care leavers.

There are around 6,000 children living in out-of-home care in Victoria. La Trobe research highlights that very few of these children will transition into tertiary education. Rather, many will face a 'soft bigotry of low expectations', and will not be encouraged to study beyond school.

The Myer Foundation grant will enable action to address this research. La Trobe will be funded to employ a Care Coordinator to raise educational awareness and aspirations among young people living in out-of-home care. The Coordinator will manage outreach programs including campus visits, guest lectures and master classes. The programs will include new resources to demystify university and provide a taste of campus life.

La Trobe students from care backgrounds will also be supported through mentoring, academic and student support. The University will promote and monitor the achievement of these students, and conduct further research in collaboration with the students. La Trobe's project involvement will be led by Dr Andrew Harvey, Director of the Access and Achievement Research Unit, Dr Patricia McNamara, Adjunct Senior Lecturer in Social Work and Prof. Pamela Snow, Head of the La Trobe Rural Health School.

Under the project, the Centre for Excellence will develop certified training packages for carers, teachers and case workers. A resource and information exchange will also be developed for young people in care. These resources will assist prospective students to explore their tertiary education options.

Federation University of Australia is the third member of the consortium, and project partners will include Anglicare and Mackillop. The project is collaborative, systemic, and state-wide, and will include care leavers serving on the advisory board.

This work supports La Trobe's broader strategy to increase access to disadvantaged groups. La Trobe remains one of the top Australian universities for enrolments of low socio-economic and regional students, and is committed to serving all Victorians.