

1 February 2008

Free course to help carers of people with mental health problems

Help and support is on offer for families and carers of people with mental health problems through a free two-day education course being run by Carers NSW on 1 and 2 March 2008 in Coffs Harbour.

The course is offered through the Family and Carer Mental Health Program funded by NSW Health, and is delivered in partnership with North Coast Area Health Service.

Zorica Kis, Carers NSW education and training officer, said the weekend course will give people the skills they need to care effectively for a person with mental health problems.

"The course offers carers the opportunity to meet others in similar situations, learn more about mental illness and how to access relevant local services, develop coping skills and much more, all in a supportive environment," said Ms Kis.

"Often people who care for someone with mental health problems do not call themselves carers, but a carer is anyone, whether they are a friend or family member, providing financial, physical or emotional support to a person with mental health problems.

"It is vital these carers obtain support. By improving their skills and knowledge through this course, carers are able to help themselves as well as the person they are caring for," she said.

One recent course participant (who prefers to remain anonymous), a carer for two family members who both have mental health problems, found the course to be invaluable.

"I've been caring for fifteen years and have been through periods of nearly giving up hope on my situation improving. Participating in the course was really empowering as it helped me realise I am not alone, and that there is a lot of help available out there," said the participant.

"I particularly valued the opportunity to meet and share experiences with other carers. Firm friendships were forged, with some of us planning to meet each month to support one another.

"There were many positive outcomes from the course, with the most powerful being an improvement in the relationship with my family member. Not only do I now have more information and support at my fingertips, but I have learnt to better communicate with my family member's caseworkers and crucially, learnt to take better care of myself so I can carry on caring effectively.

"All in all, I couldn't recommend the course highly enough. It is an inspiring weekend that will reassure you there is help and support out there if you are caring for someone with mental health problems, and that, above all, you are not alone," said the participant.

What: Two-day education course for carers of people with mental health problems in Coffs Harbour.

When: Saturday 1st March and Sunday 2nd March 2008, 9.30am to 5pm (lunch and refreshments provided)

To register: telephone Zorica Kis at Carers NSW on (02) 6650 0512 or 0419 193 595 or zoricak@carersnsw.asn.au

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