

24/7 load of a teen carer

HANNA has been caring for her mother since she was eight.

The 18-year-old “unenrolled” herself from Year 12 in second term after her mother’s health deteriorated rapidly.

Her mum suffers from physical and intellectual disabilities, including bipolar disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder.

“I have to be on the ball 24/7 to check up on her,” Hanna said.

Over the past six months, she and her mum have not been able to access disability support, with the bills piling up.

“She went downhill really quickly, so I had to leave school to financially support her and be there for her,” Hanna said. “I worry a lot and I’m anxious for the future.”

In Year 10, she suffered depression, requiring medication after mounting school work and caring duties took their toll.

“When I told the school I’m my mum’s full-time carer, they just looked at me. I don’t think they took me seriously,” Hanna said.

Eliza, 17, has also had to make sacrifices as the carer for her single mum, who suffers from schizophrenia.

“When you’re so used to doing everything on your own, you just can’t – or won’t – reach out for help,” she said.

Eliza, who is currently completing Year 12, said her school had been very supportive and accommodating of her caring role.

Hanna and Eliza are among 45 people caring for family members with a mental illness who receive support from UnitingCare Wesley Bowden.

Eliza, left, and Hanna, who care for their mums. Picture: Keryn Stevens

