

MEDIA RELEASE

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FIRST AUSTRALIAN STATE TO EXTEND THE LEAVING CARE AGE TO 21 BIPARTISAN SUPPORT IS A 'HISTORICAL MOMENT' FOR TASMANIAN CHILD PROTECTION

Tasmania's major parties in the upcoming state election have shown rare and historical bipartisan support for young people preparing to transition from care, by extending the leaving care age and support to the age of 21 years.

Human Services Minister Jacquie Petrusma announced the policy on Wednesday in Launceston, effectively allowing young adults to remain in care until the age of 21.

Similarly Labor has also promised an extension to the home stretch program from 18 to 21 as part of a broader housing affordability announcement.

CREATE Foundation CEO Jacqui Reed said that this represents a new era. "Young people's welfare and stability comes first in Tasmania, with the first ever bipartisan support of a reform that enables young care leavers to have the choice to remain with their carers until they turn 21", she said.

Young people who transition from care often face additional challenges, such as higher rates of homelessness, and unemployment. "These challenges only add to the difficulties for many young people at a critical time in their lives, when they are often at their most vulnerable through no fault of their own", Ms Reed said today.

Chair of the Home Stretch campaign Paul McDonald agrees, and added "this is a historical moment for all children and young people in Tasmanian state care". Mr McDonald says that Tasmania's lead on this issue should be an example to all states and territories though Australia.

Both Mr McDonald and Ms Reed call upon all states and territories to now follow suit and extend the leaving care age to 21 years

CREATE Young Consultant Irish Rai, has firsthand experience of the Tasmanian care sector, and says that extending care to 21 years is critical to ensure the state's vulnerable young people are not placed at even more risk. "Extending the leaving care age to 21 will mean that young people can learn the important life skills everyone needs to be able to live independently", she said.

Acting Tasmanian Coordinator for CREATE Foundation Danni Ashton, said that witnessing the bipartisan support to extend the leaving care age to 21, "has been an

amazing feat for every young person who has spoken up at CREATE Foundation's Youth Advisory Groups and contributed to consultations here in Tasmania". These young people have shown the importance of participation and what effective systemic advocacy can achieve", she said.

CREATE Foundation is the national consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience (including kinship care, foster care and residential care).

For more information on CREATE, please visit our website at www.create.org.au

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Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

- 46,488 children were in out-of-home care across Australia at 30 June, 2016
- 35% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care
- 46% of boys with care experience have had contact with the juvenile justice system
- 29% of young people who have experienced out-of-home are unemployed·36% of children and young people are split from their brothers and sisters in care
- 35% of young people in care have 5 or more caseworkers during their time in care
- 67% of young people in care are not aware of leaving care plans

For further comment from CREATE's CEO Jacqui Reed and/or a young person with care experience please call Andrea Doney 0402050418 and andrea@admarcoms.com.au

