

**What's the**

**Answer?**

Young people's  
**solutions** for  
improving  
transitioning to  
independence from  
out of home care

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### *Disclaimer*

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

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- the CREATE workers who supported the young people to participate.

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## Part A: BACKGROUND TO THE ACTIVITY

### National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

*Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on 30 April 2009. The overarching aim of the National Framework is the achievement of the high-level outcome that "Australia's children and young people are safe and well" measured against the set target of "a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia over time" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a:11). The National Framework, comprising six (6) supporting outcomes with inherent strategies and indicators of change, provides the first long-term, comprehensive national approach to child protection in Australia.

The Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference (CDSMC) has been given overall management for the staged implementation of the National Framework through a series of three-year action plans. Within the first of these plans, *Implementation Plan 2009-2012* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009b), twelve (12) national priorities have been identified as major foci for both the government – at Commonwealth, state and territory levels – and non-government sectors to action. To progress the implementation of the national priorities, the National Framework Implementation Working Group (NFIWG) was established with various sub-working groups formed to accomplish specific areas of action.

### Transitioning to independence – a national priority

*Transitioning to independence*<sup>1</sup> is one of the 12 national priorities identified in the National Framework's *Implementation Plan 2009-2012*. For this priority, the specific areas of action to be addressed in relation to young people transitioning from out-of-home care<sup>2</sup> to independence are:

- increasing support through non-government organisations to assist young people leaving care to better establish their independence; and
- providing better support for young people as they leave care through State and Territory government initiatives (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009b:18).

While work towards achieving these outcomes commenced as early as July 2009, when the Commonwealth Government increased the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) from \$1 000 to \$1 500, other key strategies identified as essential for this priority are:

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<sup>1</sup> Under the National Framework, the national priority of Transitioning to Independence is drawn from:

- Supporting Outcome 4 – Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing.
- Strategy 4.3 – Improve support for young people leaving care.

<sup>2</sup> *Developing national standards for out-of-home care* is another of the national priorities being addressed in the first three-year implementation phase. Given the variance of current out-of-home care standards across jurisdictions, a central aim of this priority is to capture nationally-consistent data to facilitate the identification of service delivery gaps and best practice models for development. As such, the outcomes of the national priority *Transitioning to independence* have direct relevance to the development of national standards for out-of-home care which aim to improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people in care.

- reviewing and reporting on TILA to ascertain whether improved outcomes have been achieved for young people leaving care; and
- on-going development and implementation of nationally consistent approaches to non-financial support for young people leaving care (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009b:18).

## Developing a Work Plan for transitioning to independence

To progress the development of nationally consistent working arrangements and approaches for the provision of support services for young people in care transitioning to independence, the National Framework Implementation Working Group (NFIWG) – Transitioning to Independence Sub-Working Group (herein, referred to as the NFIWG Transitioning to Independence Sub-Working Group) is developing a Work Plan that will be submitted to NFIWG for consideration.

Consultation with key stakeholders was initiated through a discussion paper developed by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA, 2010), which drew on national and international seminal research work on transitioning from care. The paper proposed an implementation framework based on a series of short-, medium- and long-term goals for a nationally consistent approach to transitioning to independence. The proposed framework was based on the premise that the success of transitioning from care to independence for young people leaving care is optimised when the types and levels of support provision take into account:

- the individual needs of young people in-keeping with the cumulative effects of their pre-care family experiences and placement history;
- the phased process of transitioning (beginning with a preparation phase, then moving to the transition phase and culminating in an after care phase); and
- a planned approach to transition identifying the required supports for each phase based on individual needs the key areas of:
  - safe and sustainable housing
  - education
  - employment
  - financial security
  - social relationships and support networks
  - health – physical, emotional (including self-esteem and identity), mental and sexual
  - life and after care skills. (FaHCSIA, 2010:4-6,8-12)

CREATE Foundation was one of the key stakeholders consulted given that it:

- is the peak national body representing the voices of all children and young people in out-of-home care and advocates to improve the care system, through consultation with children and young people, ensuring that their voices are heard by key decision makers in government and out-of-home care sector stakeholders; and
- has produced two seminal research reports that specifically addressed transitioning from care (McDowall, 2008 & 2009).

However, in accordance with the partnership arrangements set down in the *Implementation Plan 2009-2012* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009b:30), consultation with “... young people themselves, as opposed to just those who represent them ...” needed to be sought as it is considered essential “... to getting the implementation and delivery of the National Framework right, because it is children and young people who will be most affected by it.”

## Including the “voice” of young people with a care experience

CREATE Foundation has established a reputation for empowering young people through its various programs (eg. Create Your Future) but, especially, through our National Youth Advisory Council (NYAC) and Youth Advisory Group (YAG) in each state and territory, to advocate effectively to enhance the care experience for children and young people.

NYAC and YAG’s advocacy has been very strong in the area of transitioning from out-of-home care to independence, given CREATE’s recent research work in transitioning from care which found that approximately 65% of young people transition from care without a plan (McDowall, 2009:63) and resulted in the *What’s the Plan? Campaign* targeting young people aged 15-18 years with the specific objective of increasing the number who participate in the development of their Leaving Care Plan.

To ensure that young people with a care experience were given the opportunity to have their voices heard and their opinions included in the draft Work Plan for the national priority *Transitioning to independence*, CREATE Foundation was funded by FaHCSIA to undertake the activity *National Youth Advisory Council input into a national strategy to improve Transitioning to Independence from Out of Home Care*.

The activity required that CREATE facilitate contributions from members of the National Youth Advisory Council (NYAC) and other young people, representative of the diverse range of needs of this group, in:


- the development of a strategy to identify key priorities and practical solutions in assisting young people transitioning out of care to gain full independence; and
- support the NFIWG Transitioning to Independence Sub-Working Group to provide advice and direction on initiatives that will lead to better social and economic outcomes for young people.

## The CREATE Activity

To provide young people’s input into the draft Work Plan for transitioning to independence in order to support the work of the NFIWG Transitioning to Independence Sub-Working Group, CREATE determined that the activity would involve the capture of the views of young people with a care experience about the process of transitioning from out-of-home care to independence by conducting a series of consultations.

As CREATE has captured already the “voices” of 678 young people relating to issues associated with transitioning from out-of-home care to independence using three (3) surveys in two (2) recent and current research projects<sup>3</sup>, this activity would comprise:

- Australia-wide consultations with each State and Territory’s Youth Advisory Group (YAG) based on key themes identified in recent CREATE Report Cards and other published research. These discussions focused on confirming that the issues raised were of current concern, exploring the positive aspects of a young person’s transition, articulating the barriers which mitigate against transitioning successfully, and investigating the availability and appropriateness of support services.
- A one-day NYAC Forum in which delegates identified and discussed actions and practical solutions relating to the key issues raised by the young people in addition to those outlined in the FaHCSIA discussion paper for the three-phased approach of transitioning to independence.



The YAG consultations included special groups of young people leaving care including those with disabilities and some with experience in Juvenile Justice (see Case Studies for examples of these responses). In addition, the proceedings of the NYAC Forum were video recorded and a DVD prepared from edited highlights.

## The CREATE Report: *What's the Answer?*

This report, *What's the Answer?*, presents the solutions that the young people consulted in this activity consider pivotal for effecting improvements in the transitioning process from out-of-home care to independence if better social and economic outcomes are to be achieved.

In the next section of this report, Part B: Key Issues, some of the main discussion points surrounding transitioning from care are introduced. Part C: Methodology, presents an outline of the methods used in the consultation process, with further details provided in Appendices A-F. The results of the consultations are presented in Part D: Key Findings and Recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup> The three (3) survey instruments and two (2) research projects referred to are:

- Project 1, 2009: Create Report Card 2009 – Transitioning from Care: Tracking Progress
  - STILL IN CARE Young People's Survey (15-18 years of age) – 275 respondents
  - LEFT CARE Young People's Survey (25 years maximum age) – 196 respondents
- Project 2, 2010-11: 'What's the Plan?' Campaign
  - Young People's (over 15 years) Baseline Survey – 207 respondents



## Part B: KEY ISSUES

### Background

In summarising her extensive review of the international literature, Tweddle (2007) highlighted what, unfortunately, have become common characteristics exhibited by youth who are transitioning from the care system to independence. Compared with their peers in the general population, they are more **likely to be**:

- undereducated (not have completed high school)
- unemployed or underemployed
- earning lower wages (if employed)
- parents at a younger age
- incarcerated or involved with the criminal justice system
- homelessness at some stage of their lives
- living in unstable housing arrangements
- dependent on social assistance
- experiencing mental health issues
- without medical insurance (in the US)
- at a higher risk of substance abuse.

Not all young people experience this full range of negative outcomes when leaving care. Individual differences are observed, as Stein (2008) points out, because of different starting points and the diversity of family background and care experiences. He identified three different outcome groups, emphasising that each would require different types and amounts of support during and after transition. Stein defined these clusters as the (a) Moving on, (b) Survivors, and (c) Strugglers groups. “Moving on” included those young people who “welcomed the challenge of living independently and gaining more control over their lives” (p. 300). These young people made effective use of the help they had been offered and kept positive links with carers and some family members. The “Survivors” tended to include younger care leavers who had experienced disrupted placements and more movement after exiting, often related to homelessness and unemployment. They benefitted most from assistance from specialist caseworkers and mentors. His most disadvantaged group, the “Strugglers”, experienced the classic difficulties associated with care leavers and required most after-care support. Their needs should not be overlooked even though they seem to benefit least from this assistance.

### Costs of Inaction

As summarised in the Transitioning to Independence sub-working group’s Discussion Paper for NFIWG, Morgan Disney & Associates (2006) have estimated that these different cohorts of care leavers cost governments within Australia an average of \$40,000 per person per annum, with 55% being in the high-needs, high-cost categories.

These workers projected that the overall cost of support for the group of care leavers they studied, across their life course (ages 16 – 60), is over \$2 billion.

However, it must be emphasized that these data were calculated only for those 1150 young people leaving care in 2003-4. If support were to be provided from 18 to 25 years, in 2010 there would be a total of seven cohorts of care leavers eligible to receive assistance. The total number of young people in this group, based on the data published in *Child Protection Australia* for the years 2003 to 2009, is over 13,000. Using the Morgan Disney average, this would amount to a total annual cost of \$520 million, required because of the system's failure to provide adequate initial support. This is a "hidden" cost in addition to the \$2.4 billion annual expenditure by government in dealing with the consequences of child abuse and neglect (Bromfield, Holzer, & Lamont, 2010).

Research in the United States, summarised by Courtney, Dworsky, and Pollack (2007), demonstrated that better outcomes for young people in care were achieved (with a consequent result of significant cost savings because of reduced demand for expensive support services) in states where young people had the option to remain in care after 18 years. This critical research provided the major rationale and impetus for the introduction of special legislation (H.R. 6893: *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*) designed to extend the *John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program* (CFCIP; introduced in 1999). Section 201 of this Act encourages states to maintain eligible young people "in care" until age 21 years by providing matching federal funding. This is a model that could be considered for introduction in Australia as well.

## The CREATE Report Card 2009: Transitioning from Care – Tracking Progress

The CREATE Report Card 2009 (McDowall, 2009) records the most recent data collected throughout Australia from interviews with 275 young people (15 years and over) preparing to leave care and 196 who already were attempting to achieve independence. These young people answered questions designed to reveal how the care systems, developed by state and territory governments, were either equipping them for transition or supporting them in adulthood. The overarching finding was that, while most jurisdictions had appropriate legislation and/or policies in place, and funded a range of services developed to support the identified needs of the young people, the care leavers were not receiving the assistance they required. "On paper" relevant issues appeared to be addressed; unfortunately, in practice, the good intentions distilled from many inquiries and reviews are not translated into useful support for the young people.

Inadequacies were uncovered in all domains of importance in the lives of care leavers, including those articulated in the *Looking After Children* framework: Housing, Education, Employment (and Finances), Health, Identity, Life Skills, and Relationships. In each area, problems were encountered in three critical Phases of the process of leaving care: (a) the Preparation Phase, which could reflect a gradual introduction during the whole time in care of the concept of "moving on" after reaching 18 years, but must involve clear, detailed planning from when the young person turns 15 years; (b) the actual Transition Phase that includes the leaving of a care environment and the establishment of an independent life; and (c) the After Care Independence Phase in which the young people are living their "interdependent" lives within the community (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006), drawing on services and support when necessary.

## Preparation Phase

This for many young people could (and perhaps should) be the longest Phase in which the impact of several of the life domains already would be established. Ongoing Health needs and Education should have been addressed as part of life in care, as should Identity and key Relationship formation, and Life Skills development. After age 15, formal Leaving Care planning, in consultation with the young person, should begin; all necessary documentation (birth certificates, personal files, references) should be assembled, and any areas of special need and possible supports identified. All such requirements are to be articulated in a Transition from Care Plan

However, the CREATE Report Card data indicated that 64% of young people surveyed had no knowledge of such a Plan being in place for them. While governments insist that Plans do exist, if the young people have not been involved in their development, the benefit of the process in setting guidelines for the care leavers' future is lost. Research could focus on why Planning is breaking down. Possibly caseworkers are lazy or are unaware of their responsibilities in these areas; this is highly unlikely, given the motivation required to work within human services and the legislative framework in which they operate. It is much more likely that if shortcuts are taken it is because of the need to set priorities (acute cases entering the system receiving most attention) because of unrealistic caseloads. Also, large numbers of unallocated cases (eg. see data provided in a Report by the Ombudsman, Victoria, 2009) make it unclear who would take responsibility for transition planning for such a young person. Relevant organizations (possibly including the Commonwealth government in an overseeing role) must direct more attention to improving the planning process (McDowall, 2010).

Findings from the CREATE Report Card also revealed deficits in specific domain areas that need to be addressed. For example, in Health, 9.5% of care leavers still found managing their health care difficult. Also, females were significantly more likely than males to access health services. For a service that is so necessary and visible within the community, every effort must be made in the preparation phase to ensure that all potential problems young people might face are identified and resolved.

In addition, education planning should be well advanced while the young person is in care. The observation that only 35.3% of care leavers in CREATE's sample completed year 12 indicates that greater support and encouragement should have been provided to assist those in care to complete their education successfully. A related problem is highlighted by the fact that, of the 27% of young people still in care who already had left school, one-fifth did so because they had been expelled. Support through appropriate alternate programs could help get these young people back on track to becoming productive community members.

There also is an expectation that other aspects such as Cultural Identification, Relationship formation, and Life Skills development would be well advanced while young people are in care. It was clear from the CREATE Report Card that young people, particularly Indigenous and those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, valued contact with siblings and grandparents and wanted more involvement with these family members.

Planning needs to ensure that young people recognise the importance of contact with their community and chosen family, and whatever connections they wish to establish are facilitated. Assessment of their level of Life Skills acquisition when approaching transition (and implementing remedial action if necessary through appropriate programs) would ensure that, in future, 12.6% of care leavers do not report finding the preparation of meals and looking after themselves challenging.

## Transition Phase

In the period of Transition, the time for actually leaving care, can be characterized as a “getting established” phase when emphasis is placed on finding a new home base for the young person and addressing immediate financial assistance issues. Data from the CREATE Report Card indicated that support in this period also was lacking. Of the group that had left care, 50% had to leave their placement on turning 18 years; 40% of those didn’t know where they were going to live on leaving. Overall, 34.7% had experienced periods of homelessness in their first year of independence for an average of 31 days. Almost 70% received some form of Centrelink payment (53.7% wholly dependent on this support); 21.3% found the management of finances quite or very hard. Positively, 25.5% were financially self-sufficient; however, 28.5% were unemployed. A further 13.8% were continuing their studies at tertiary institutions.

These observations highlight areas where more support is needed when establishing a new life for a young care leaver. Achieving the aspiration that “no young person should exit care into homelessness” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) still remains elusive. Special attention needs to be given to achieving familiarity with the Centrelink procedures, given that so many of the young care leavers initially depend on that support. In addition, extra effort should be directed at reducing unemployment in this cohort by helping them find suitable employment or making it easier for them to enroll in suitable education or training programs. Accessibility of transport becomes vital during this period.

## After Care Independence Phase

The critical facets of this Phase of transitioning could be classified as Monitoring and Review. A major problem here is that, because of the relatively low priority given to supporting those who already have left care, often it is not clear who should assume responsibility for tracking the progress of these young people. The CREATE Report Card strongly advocated the establishment of dedicated Transition from Care (TFC) workers in major child protection centres within each state / territory. Using the figure of 13000 young people in the community, eligible for receiving support after leaving care, then the number of specialist workers required across Australia (assuming a notional caseload of 30) is 433. Table 1 shows the estimated distribution of workers required over jurisdictions based on the CPA statistics (AIHW, 2009) and the respective costs if the Commonwealth provided 50% subsidy to the states and territories to encourage the establishment of these specialist positions (the overall allocation required for this support would be approximately \$14.56 million).

**Table 1: Projected Costs to Commonwealth for Providing 50% Subsidy to States / Territories for the Provision of Specialist Transition from Care Workers**

STATE	YP TFC 2008-9	YP TFC %	No. of Workers	50% Cost (based on salary package of \$67,200)
NSW	967	40	172	\$5,789,276
VIC	568	23	101	\$3,400,526
QLD	491	20	87	\$2,939,539
WA	141	6	25	\$844,145
SA	149	6	27	\$892,039
TAS	56	2	10	\$335,263
ACT	34	1	6	\$203,553
NT	26	1	5	\$155,658
<b>Total</b>	<b>2432</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>\$14,560,000</b>

Specialist TFC workers would be responsible for monitoring the outcomes achieved by care leavers in their region. This would require workers keeping in touch with young people and having a record of their contact details. This is not done consistently at present. CREATE has worked on many projects in partnership with child safety departments in which it was necessary to make contact with young people to send them information; unfortunately, often this was not possible because young people could not be located (in some cases this applies even to those still in care).


Another essential function TFC workers would serve is to review young peoples' progress, identify their current support needs, and in consultation with the young people, review and modify existing plans and proposals. Such reassessment is deemed necessary due to the statements by care leavers in the CREATE Report Card that most of the important issues in their lives, such as those mentioned above, were either not covered in their initial leaving-care plan, or the proposed actions were of little or no value in supporting their transition.

As well as ensuring that particular departmental workers are assigned responsibility for maintaining "official" contact with care leavers over the proposed seven-year transitioning period (18 to 25 years), it also would be important to establish mentoring relationships between the young people and community members to provide a continuous support base for care leavers as they move towards independence. CREATE's Report Card cited the Victorian tripartite model (Mentoring, After-care services, and Brokerage funding) as one worthy of emulation throughout Australia since it deals with the essential layers of support needed by those transitioning from care.

## Conclusion

The issues discussed above and the key general solutions proposed make the point that inaction in providing adequate initial support for care leavers will result in significant costs to government now and in the future. As McDowall (2008) observed, making programs available at the time of transition "would minimize the need for...later interventions and would result in considerable economic savings and generate better outcomes for the young people" (p. 18).





The remainder of this Report details the procedures followed in consulting with young people about current critical transitioning issues, and proposes a number of actions that the care leavers comprising *CREATE's National Youth Advisory Council* suggested could be taken by governments to address the identified problems.

## Part C: METHODOLOGY

### Overview

To confirm that the issues identified in Part B of this Report were of current significance for young people, and to give care leavers the opportunity to raise other points they felt worthy of discussion, a series of consultations were conducted. The first tier of consultations utilised CREATE's Youth Advisory Groups (YAG) as they provide a state- and territory-based forum for young people with a care experience to establish the issues and priorities that must be addressed and resolved if the process of transitioning to independence is to be improved overall. These key priorities then formed the basis of the second tier of consultations involving CREATE's National Youth Advisory Council (NYAC) in a one-day workshop which culminated in the identification of practical solutions that could be applied by the Commonwealth and/or State and Territory governments, non-government organisations and agencies to effect quality outcomes for young people transitioning from out-of-home care to independence.

### Stage 1: Initial Consultations (YAG Focus Groups)

#### Participants

This consultation targeted only those YAG members who were either preparing to leave care, actually transitioning, or were living independently. The total number involved in the consultation process was 27 representing all states (however, there were no individuals from either territory). Participants were aged between 14 and 23 years (mean age 18.5 years), with the majority being female (n=18). Three identified as Indigenous (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander) and two identified as having "Other Cultural Background" (Spanish/Italian and Solomon Islander). The remainder of the group were Caucasian Australians. Members had experienced a range of placement types while in care

#### Instrument

Five key questions were developed to elicit the priorities that young people with a care experience identified as needing to be addressed to improve the transitioning system. They were asked to discuss: (a) What makes a successful transition? (b) What are the barriers to young people accessing services and supports? (c) Would you prefer to go a specialised service (e.g. an after care service just for young people who'd been in care) or prefer to go to a mainstream service (e.g. a general youth service)? (d) Do you think there's a stigma attached to specialised services, or do you think young people are okay with accessing services tailor made to out-of-home care and aftercare supports? (e) What do you think about the idea of transitioning to 'independence'? Is it a good thing to be aiming for, or should we be focussing more on connecting young people to their community, friends, family, and other supports? Or should we be doing both? (see Appendix A).

## Procedure

The focus group questions were emailed to the CREATE staff member in each state who coordinated the YAG session. The questions were presented to the various YAG meetings in a focus group format, with CREATE staff documenting the responses. The raw data were then forwarded to CREATE's Policy and Advocacy Officer (PAO) for collation and categorisation of issues (see Appendix B).

In addition to the YAG group sessions, the PAO conducted detailed one-to-one interviews with a young person (five in total) representing each of the following special interest groups: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD); Disability; Indigenous; Mental Health; Youth Justice. An interview sheet was developed to collect the demographic data and responses of the interviewee to five (5) questions relating to planning for the process of transitioning, specific/specialist needs related to transitioning, barriers faced and suggestions for governments to overcome those barriers (see Appendix C). The responses of each interviewee were recorded as individual case studies (see Appendix D).

## Stage 2: NYAC Forum

### Participants

Ten NYAC delegates (six male and four female) participated in the one-day forum in Brisbane; three were from Queensland, two from the Australian Capital Territory, with one delegate from each of New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Western Australia was not represented. The participants were aged between 18 and 25 years (mean age 21 years). The majority (n=8) gave their cultural background as "Australian", the others being Indonesian and Maori/Samoan.

### Instruments

A series of prompt questions (see Appendix E ) was developed by CREATE's PAO, to address the key issues and priorities drawn from the literature and identified by the young people in the Stage 1 consultation. These also were aligned with the key priorities and strategic directions outlined in Appendices D and E in the Discussion Paper developed by FaHCSIA (2010:21-24) for the NFIWG Transitioning to Independence Sub-Working Group.

### Procedure

The NYAC delegates received the key questions as pre-forum discussion documents, and were encouraged to consider their responses individually, or with support from a CREATE staff member in their state. The NYAC discussion forum was facilitated by CREATE's PAO using the base questions to elicit informed comment.

The discussion forum was divided into three sections: Preparation Phase, Transition Phase, and After Care Phase. Each section began with establishing a context by asking participants what the important considerations were for that particular phase.

The facilitator then stated how that phase had been defined by Maunder, Liddell, Liddell and Green (1999) and sought feedback from the participants as to whether they thought this was an accurate depiction. The group's discussion then explored issues relevant to each phase. During the session, the PAO documented the responses and later collated the raw data (see Appendix F).

## Part D: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Unfortunately, this Report highlights the same issues concerning transitioning from care that were identified over 20 years ago. Young people continue to experience poor outcomes with the gap widening between mainstream Australians and those with a care experience.

As the corporate parent, governments have a responsibility to protect, and provide equal opportunities for young people leaving the care system to what are available for the general population. Stigma attached to young people with a care experience impacts on the way in which government and society view them. Expectations are lower, and poor outcomes are considered "acceptable".

So what are the answers to improve the system to respond better to young people at arguably the most vulnerable time in their lives? This Report examines the responses provided by young people across Australia who are transitioning from care, and offers practical, achievable solutions to the problems they encounter.

*Part D: Key Findings and Recommendations* is broken into three phases: Preparation, Transition, and After Care Independence; within each of these, the specific domains of Planning, Housing, Education, Employment, Financial Security, Social Relationships and Support Networks, Health (Physical, Emotional, Mental and Sexual), and Life Skills are addressed. In the following tables, the Issues raised are summarised in the left-hand column while the Solutions advanced by the young people are presented on the right.

These Solutions provide a good basis for further consideration for future potential actions. There is a strong need for further discussions, testing and prioritisation of these solutions by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, and the Community Services Sector.

## PREPARATION PHASE

ISSUES	YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOLUTIONS
<b>Planning</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young people transitioning from care report that they do not have leaving care/transition plans; 65% have no plan for their future.</li> <li>▪ Young people are often not involved in the transition planning process.</li> <li>▪ Young people are often not informed about their transition.</li> </ul> <p><i>"It was terrible. I was told a week before I turned 18 that I was leaving care."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a national transition from care planning process in consultation with young people including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ a Template for a Leaving Care Plan</li> <li>▫ a Checklist of actions to be completed before transitioning</li> <li>▫ an Exit Care Interview with the young person six months before transitioning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Employ specialised transition-from-care workers in each region.</li> <li>▪ Develop a Participation Strategy to engage children and young people in planning.</li> <li>▪ Adopt a consistent approach to transition planning and commence the process at 15 years of age.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young peoples' capacity and willingness to live independently is not explored fully in the planning process. Young people in the general population now live at home for longer (over 25 years of age).</li> <li>▪ Housing/accommodation options are not explored early enough in the planning process resulting in limited housing options at the point of transition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Financially compensate carers to continue to provide support for young people up to age 21 to stay with existing carers if this is the young person's preference.</li> <li>▪ Develop formal partnerships to determine a suite of housing/accommodation options available for young people with a care experience.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teachers are not trained to understand the impact that abuse and neglect have on young people with a care experience.</li> <li>▪ Young people in care have a higher rate of suspension or expulsion from school than the general population.</li> <li>▪ Education support plans are often not developed, and when they are they may not be effective.</li> <li>▪ Young people's academic results are lower than those of young people in the general population.</li> <li>▪ Lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities within CP Departments and Education Departments means young people fall through the cracks.</li> <li>▪ Child Protection orders finishing whilst a young person is completing his/her senior certificate, or turning 18 during the semester, and the young person's schooling is interrupted if they have to leave their care placement. Many young people are unable to finish their schooling as they have</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review training for teachers focussing on understanding and managing the impact of abuse (on behaviour) for young people in care in educational settings.</li> <li>▪ Review Educational Support Plans to ensure they are effective <u>and</u> implemented for all young people in care.</li> <li>▪ Develop educational tutor programs for young people with a care experience as an essential part of their educational support plan, not an adjunct to it, reducing lengthy delays in obtaining necessary permissions.</li> <li>▪ Extend placements for all young people turning 18 during their final year of school until their formal high school education is completed.</li> </ul>



<p>to focus on getting accommodation and a job to support themselves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of stable housing impacts on young people being able to focus and participate fully on their education.</li> </ul> <p><i>“Kids would get a better education and get better employment if their placements were more stable”</i></p>	
<p><b>Employment</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited career planning with young people, and a general lack of information about what employment options are available to them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An essential component to be included in an appropriate Transition from Care Plan.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Financial Security</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young people liaising with Centrelink to access, for example, Youth Allowance are challenged when providing evidence of care status and having ID.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a system that can “flag” young people with a care experience. Young people would have the right to opt out of this system if they wish.</li> <li>▪ Workers to receive training/information about the specific challenges and needs of young people in care.</li> <li>▪ Employ dedicated Centrelink workers who are responsible for supporting young people transitioning from care (one in each office at a minimum).</li> <li>▪ Provide training for Centrelink workers and fund the development of a video that provides the perspective of young people in the transition process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social Relationships and Support Networks</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of planning and support for young people reunifying with birth families.</li> <li>▪ Young people lack support to develop relationships and connections to their communities.</li> <li>▪ Providing information about supports and services needs to be more than just words; it needs to be practical and “hands on”.</li> </ul> <p><i>“Community contact and support is very important to Indigenous young people”</i></p> <p><i>“... The interaction between one’s self and their community is how a young person grows into a contributing adult”</i></p> <p><i>“You need to be independent to have confidence to engage with your community”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that, where appropriate, the reunification with selected birth family members commences before a young person turns 18. This could be through a program of gradual visitations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health (Physical, Emotional, Mental, and Sexual)</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access to free counselling and mental health support services is difficult, and young people are often “put off” by the prohibitive cost.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement an Exit Health Check for young people transitioning from care as part of the planning process.</li> </ul>

*"...it should be made that a young person can't leave care if they haven't got supports in place."*

### **Life Skills**

- Young people often have frequent placements during their time in care and learning basic life skills is often not a priority.
- There are varying expectations from caseworkers, carers and young people about what life skills are and when they should be taught, and by whom.

*"Young people transitioning from care need as much support as possible; everything from finding somewhere to live to what to wear to interviews".*

*"You don't have to start formally planning before 15, but young people should be taught life skills – just like other young people. More life skills training has to happen with carers".*

*"More mandatory training for foster carers. This training would include how to teach young people life skills, and helping to change the culture of foster care from carers seeing their role as a job, to that of a parent"*

- Provide more life-skills programs, with particular attention to regional areas.
- Review carer training to ensure that specialist courses are developed in life-skill development for young people.

TRANSITION PHASE	
ISSUES	YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOLUTIONS
<b>Planning</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition planning processes are not often clear to workers.</li> <li>Information about the transition phase and resources is fragmented and difficult for young people to navigate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritise training for workers in all aspects of the transition-from-care planning process.</li> <li>Develop a national communication strategy.</li> <li>Promote already funded transition-from-care website <a href="http://www.createyourfuture.org.au">www.createyourfuture.org.au</a> to young people, workers and carers.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people are not treated as a priority for subsidised or government housing.</li> <li>Private rental is challenging as young people are often unable to pay market rates for housing/accommodation.</li> <li>Government housing for young people is often in low-income, high unemployment areas.</li> </ul> <p><i>"Rent is really high so more rent assistance would help."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a priority-housing category for young people with a care experience within public housing, and SAAP services.</li> <li>Review existing rental subsidies to provide an appropriate level of support to young people to help them access housing in the private rental market.</li> </ul> <p><i>Best Practice Example: Lead Tenant model (TAS)</i></p>
<b>Education</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A low rate of young people with a care experience complete high school compared to the general population. The low expectations of government compound this issue, i.e., young people in care are expected (and accepted) to have lower educational attainment.</li> <li>Young people associated with Juvenile Justice often have poor educational outcomes and disrupted schooling.</li> <li>Life-skills training is an "add-on" rather than being a part of the mainstream educational curriculum.</li> <li>Early parenthood often prohibits young people completing their education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop strategies to increase the proportion of young people in care completing Year 12 to ensure that Year 12 attainment for young people in care is the same as that of the general population.</li> <li>Develop alternative education pathways, including training and volunteering opportunities <u>specifically</u> for children and young people with a care experience.</li> <li>Include life-skills development as part of the mainstream high-school curriculum to develop hands-on practical life skills courses/training for young people.</li> </ul> <p><i>Best Practice Example: Create Your Future Program</i></p>
<b>Employment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people find it challenging to keep a job when their accommodation, housing, or placements are unstable.</li> <li>Lack of tailored support to assist young people to be competent and confident in seeking jobs.</li> <li>No access to records such as birth certificates, and care history, make it difficult for young people to apply for jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the Job Services Network to ensure that its functions meet the specific needs of young care leavers.</li> <li>Instigate traineeships /internships within various government departments for young people who have been in care.</li> <li>Commit to a quota of traineeships/internship placements.</li> <li>Introduce nationally a model of brokerage funding similar to that operating in Victoria (brokerage is important to provide funds to enable the young care leaver to be competitive in</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of support for young people to guide them to enter the job market.</li> <li>▪ Cost of clothing and grooming for interviews is prohibitive for some young people.</li> </ul>	<p>seeking employment, eg. to be well clothed and groomed at interview).</p>
<b>Financial Security</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The TILA process is confusing and difficult to access for young people AND workers AND carers. Young people report that workers often give them the wrong information.</li> <li>▪ Young people in care report that they have been declined TILA, and have no other options available to assist in their transition to independence.</li> <li>▪ Funds for TILA ran out before the end of the financial year due to an increase in applications (TILA is not exclusively for young people with a care experience).</li> <li>▪ Lack of budgeting and financial management skills often lead to poor financial decisions. Advertising that targets the youth market with easy credit and mobile phones exacerbates the situation.</li> </ul> <p><i>“(TILA) It’s confusing and full of jargon...There’s a lot of misinformation around...The paperwork is hard”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young people need to have access to dedicated transition funds (brokerage) in addition to TILA.</li> <li>▪ Young people’s feedback indicated that a review of TILA might consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Is the amount of the allowance sufficient to support young people in transition from care?</li> <li>▫ Is the amount of the budget allocated to TILA sufficient so that all young people under 25 years who have left care are able to access the full allowance?</li> <li>▫ Is the process of applying for TILA “user friendly” for young care leavers?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Life-skills training needs to incorporate practical financial management.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Relationships and Support Networks</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young people need supportive adults who care about them in their life, not just peers or paid workers.</li> <li>▪ Young people need to be connected to each other and their community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish mentoring programs for young people transitioning from care.</li> <li>▪ Support connection experiences (eg. <i>clubCREATE</i> which all young people with a care experience are eligible to join) to link young people in care with each other and their community.</li> </ul>
<b>Health (Physical, Emotional, Mental, and Sexual)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young people lack confidence in accessing health services, and it can be daunting to seek out support when they are unwell.</li> <li>▪ Young people do not know which doctors will bulk bill. Having to pay upfront for health services is challenging for young people on limited incomes. Public hospitals have lengthy waiting lists and for young people with jobs, or studying this is not a viable option.</li> </ul> <p><i>“There are a decreasing number of health services that bulk bill- particularly mental health”.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young people could be accompanied when being introduced to services (including doctors, dentists, mental health professionals, Medicare, health care funds, drug and alcohol supports).</li> <li>▪ Develop a brochure that informs young people about bulk billing surgeries (this information can also be included on the <i>CREATE Your Future</i> website and in Leaving Care Kits).</li> </ul>

<p><i>“Young people are more confident and willing to access a service if a trusted caseworker/carer/mentor attends the service visit with them”.</i></p>	
<b>Life Skills</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There are limited programs that help young people to develop life skills, and they are difficult for young people to access (as many run in school/work hours).</li> <li>▪ Life skill training and development programs are delivered in a fragmented manner and are often metropolitan based.</li> <li>▪ Established mentoring programs are often not specifically developed for young people in care or transitioning from care. Those that are, are rare and offer few places.</li> </ul> <p><i>“The basics need to start with foster carers, just like other young people learning skills at home. This would include opening a bank account, cooking, cleaning.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Offer life-skills programs in flexible delivery modes (i.e. week-ends and after hours) so that programs are responsive to young peoples’ needs.</li> <li>▪ Map existing life-skills training and development programs that offer specialist training for young people with a care experience and ensure that strategies are in place to distribute the information to NGO’s, Centrelink and young people with a care experience.</li> <li>▪ Continue to support the national <i>CREATE Your Future</i> training package, website, grant-scheme and carer training package. It is important not to duplicate programs and services, and to work toward an integrated system offering economies of scale.</li> <li>▪ Implement mentoring programs that are specifically developed to support young people with a care experience.</li> <li>▪ Provide high levels of training and support to community mentors.</li> </ul> <p><i>Best Practice Example: Create Your Future Program</i></p>



## AFTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PHASE

ISSUES	YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOLUTIONS
<b>Planning</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young people often leave care with no plan for their future and have limited support systems when things go wrong in their lives.</li> <li>▪ Young people leave care in an ad hoc manner not in a planned way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide “Leaving Care Kits” for <u>all</u> young people leaving care.</li> </ul> <p><u>Note.</u> Before the kits are distributed a “checklist” could be completed relating to the young person’s readiness to transition, ie. do they have a plan, do they have a place to live, do they have the necessary life skills, do they have ID and so forth. Once the form is completed in consultation with the young person it should be forwarded to a central point so that a Leaving Care Kit can be dispatched. The kits should contain state-based information about services, entitlements, and link young people to additional resources such as the <i>CREATE Your Future</i> website (already funded by the Commonwealth).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct an audit of this process annually.</li> </ul> <p><i>Best Practice Example: QLD “Go Your Own Way” Leaving Care Kit</i></p>
<b>Housing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young people are often not equipped to live independently.</li> <li>▪ High rates of homelessness.</li> <li>▪ Lack of suitable long-term accommodation.</li> <li>▪ Young people often leave care and move into temporary or crisis-type accommodation (refuges).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop life-skills courses.</li> <li>▪ Utilise the <i>CREATE Your Future</i> life-skills programs.</li> <li>▪ Develop policy to prevent young care leavers from exiting into short-term emergency or refuge type accommodation. Accommodation should be long-term and stable.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of practical information about alternative pathways to get into TAFE and Uni.</li> <li>▪ Young people are too busy surviving to continue their education post 18 years.</li> <li>▪ Young people in care often don’t have people to support and encourage them to study.</li> <li>▪ Vocational education programs are difficult to get into, and young people are competing with mainstream students to get places.</li> </ul> <p><i>“I would like to do TAFE but I don’t have money or transport to get there”.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop quotas for young people with a care experience in TAFE and universities. Young people should be given priority status as in the model adopted by SA.</li> <li>▪ Waive HECS fees for young people with a care experience.</li> <li>▪ Provide automatic tutoring support for young people with a care experience who enter tertiary education.</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High rates of unemployment amongst young people with a care experience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prioritise strategies (and set acceptable targets) to reduce the number of young people with a care experience who are unemployed.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of training/course options that are tailored to meet young people with a care experience needs.</li> <li>▪ Information and training about how to get a job and keep it and develop the skills to do so are hard to locate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monitor outcomes and report progress in reducing unemployment.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Security</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High level of dependence on financial support from the Government – public housing, mental health services, juvenile justice, income support/allowances.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take action to reduce unemployment in the care leaving cohort to reduce financial dependence.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Relationships and Support Networks</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young people have limited access to adults in their lives to guide them once they have left care; this is very important especially when things go wrong.</li> </ul> <p><i>“A successful transition is being linked into community where the young person is from ...”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that young people are connected with members of their cultural and/or social community while in care through interactions supervised by transition-from-care workers and engagement with mentoring programs. With such relationships established, young people would have an additional layer of continuing support after leaving care.</li> </ul>
<b>Health (Physical, Emotional, Mental, and Sexual)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Services do not understand specific needs of young people post-care</li> <li>▪ Lack of dedicated transition workers familiar with the total range of support services available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct an annual review of support services available in the various regions. Any deficits in services should be identified and steps taken to develop necessary resources to meet the unmet need.</li> <li>▪ Ensure that transition-from-care support workers are adequately trained so that they are familiar with the range of support services available.</li> </ul>
<b>Life Skills</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young people often find it stressful when they are out of the “system” as they have no one to turn to when they need advice or guidance and things “go wrong”.</li> <li>▪ Many young people are unable to achieve successful independent living, and find it hard to maintain a job, have stable housing/accommodation, budget and take care of themselves.</li> <li>▪ Young people’s trajectory to be welfare dependent and unemployed is affected by the system’s inability to prepare them for adulthood (which is also affected by the fact that governments in many states expect them to be self-sufficient at the age of 18).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When reviewing the suite of support services available for care leavers, make sure they provide a variable range of approaches, realising that one size will not fit all the young people who come from different cultural backgrounds, have varied skills and abilities, and have divergent aspirations. However, with a combination of diverse mentoring and community programs in place, it is imperative that mechanisms for coordinating service delivery exist.</li> </ul> <p><i>Best Practice Example: Rapid Response System, SA</i></p>

## Summary

The solutions identified by young people are simple, and easy to implement, and more importantly will facilitate better outcomes. Legislation and policies exist that are well intentioned, articulate and considered. However, it is clear that reducing the chasm between policy and practice is where change must begin to make a positive impact on the system.

The Commonwealth needs to exercise strong leadership and State/Territory governments must demonstrate a high degree of "political will" to implement and enforce policies and make it a priority to monitor and hear the voices of young people to ensure that the intent of policies translates to good practice on the ground. This Report highlights that, for practice to improve, resources and funding must be made available across government. Young people exiting care **MUST** be given priority status.

The planning phase is particularly important. It needs to be well considered and interactive. Stringent monitoring processes must be developed to ensure compliance with policy; for example, every young person must have a leaving care plan (a plan for their future). To enable quality planning, resources must be allocated to workers directly involved with young people, and specialist workers should be located in each region to oversee and monitor the transitioning of young people to independence. Importantly, specialist workers need to be the responsibility of both the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments.

The community and the corporate sector are willing and able to be involved in improving the lives of young people transitioning from care, but have few mechanisms and opportunities to do so. Mobilising the community to become mentors would make a huge impact on reducing the workload of workers, and would provide long-term stable support for young people post-care giving them every chance of succeeding. Moreover, it is cost effective!

A whole-of-government commitment would change the future for young Australians leaving the care system.

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## Appendix A

### Stage 1: Initial Consultations YAG Questions

1. What makes a successful transition? What does it look like?
2. What are the barriers to young people accessing services and supports?
3. Would you prefer to go a specialised service (eg. an after care service just for young people who'd been in care) or prefer to go to a mainstream service (eg. a general youth service)?
4. Do you think there's a stigma attached to specialised services, or do you think young people are okay with accessing services tailor made to out-of-home care and aftercare supports?
5. What do you think about the idea of transitioning to 'independence'? Is it a good thing to be aiming for, or should we be focussing more on connecting young people to their community, friends, family, and other supports? Or should we be doing both?



### Stage 1: Initial Consultations YAG Responses

#### A successful transition

##### Worker

- An active caseworker – someone you can talk to who involves you in the process.
- A case worker ensuring that everything is well organised in advance.
- We need to still have contact with our caseworkers after we've transitioned.
- Access to support worker who is independent of the system, eg. general youth worker.
- DoCS being organised with files, paperwork, timeliness.

##### Leaving care plan

- Individualised leaving care plan which gets reviewed.
- A successful transition should be well planned out and that if things don't work out, there needs to be a contingency plan. A successful transition is smooth and easy on the young person.
- Having a well thought out plan.
- Try and let the young people have more of a say.
- The best part I felt was I didn't have to worry. I was supported to organise housing, work and finance as my case plans were reviewed and met my needs. Not having to worry allowed me to focus on achieving the best out of what I was supported with and having a normal life.

##### Accommodation

- Help to secure longer term accommodation.
- Not leaving the adolescent homeless. Allowing a teen to stay with their foster family paying rent and having a part/full time work, allowing the teen to save money and gain rental references.
- Having a secure place to live.
- Subsidised housing for a fixed term and renewable if needed.

##### Service supports

- The young person knowing about and having access to all appropriate services (having received this information prior to transitioning, not during or after).
- Knowledge of other crisis supports available – and developing crisis or contingency plans.
- Introduction to agencies and services , relevant to adults including the Electoral Commission, Medicare, housing services, Centrelink, employment services, and other NGOs which are mandated to work with people 18 years and over.
- This 'introduction' of young people to the services is a long process –it can't be effective if it's rushed. One or two years' gradual work is required to effectively establish young people's familiarity and expertise with managing these diverse networks confidently.
- Ability to access services if needed.

- Young people transitioning from care needs as much support as possible; everything from finding somewhere to live to what to wear to interviews.

### **Social connections**

- Social connectedness and emotional support.
- An effective support network available to care leavers AFTER exiting State care, because it had been gradually built up DURING their care.
- A strong support network.

### **Health**

- The young people having received a health check before exiting care.
- The young person receiving a health 'passport' that details their entire medical history from whilst they have been in care.
- Medical supports and services already in place, prior to leaving care.
- Connection to mental health supports.
- Sexuality support.

### **Official identification**

- Help to access ID.
- The young people being given their OFFICIAL documents, eg. birth certificate, and that these are not a photocopy.
- Have all of your records.

### **Tangibles for independent living**

- Having the basic living equipment immediately: washing machine, fridge, bed, linen, pots, pans, cutlery, plates, and dining room table and chairs.

### **Education**

- Assistance engaging or learning about education opportunities.

### **Financial support**

- Financial support systems in place/accessible.

### **Skills**

- Knowing basic living skills.

## **Barriers to young people accessing services and supports**

### **Lack of effective plan/planning**

- Caseworkers focus on crisis work often means young people at transition age aren't the focus.
- Caseworkers are often not informed and/or trained as to how to put together an individualised leaving care plan.
- Young people not being involved or participating in care plans.
- Inadequate planning and time to properly conduct transition from care planning and services – attempts to put transition from care supports and services in place is too rushed.

- No (effective or informed) choice about participating in transition from care processes, especially planning – and especially because young people may not be ready to undertake this level of planning (too young or not yet mature enough to take part effectively).
- Lack of participation in transition from care planning because young people have unaddressed mental health issues.

### **Lack of information/awareness**

- Lack of information on support and services i.e. what, where and how to access.
- Unaware of Centrelink entitlements or how to appeal decisions.
- Lack of knowledge of the services and/or how to engage with or obtain referrals to the services.
- The Department's failure to inform young people about Transition from Care programs, processes and Departmental obligations.
- Inadequate support/advice/advocacy for young people in obtaining support to transition from care.

### **Lack of appropriate services/referrals**

- Inappropriate referrals, ie. refuges not safe or not teaching life skills.
- Lack of specialised services.
- The waiting list.
- Lack of resources.
- A lack of After Care support workers.

### **Lack of skills / confidence**

- Fear and lack of self confidence.
- Not wanting to access services because of past knock backs or negative experiences.
- Not having an advocate or someone to take you. Young people are more confident and willing to access a service if a trusted caseworker/carer etc. attends the first service visit with them.

### **Lack of finances**

- Inability to pay for services and a decreasing number of health services that bulk bill- particularly mental health.
- We don't have the money to access some of the services.

### **Lack of transport**

- Drivers licence is not seen as a priority – young people need more hours paid for and assistance to get rid of fines, get ID and access to a car.
- Lack of transport in rural areas and lack of licence = inability to access work and education especially on weekends or after hours.
- We can't get to the services. Don't have any money for the bus. Have had to ask Salvo's to pay for half my bus fare so I could get to Centrelink.
- Having to travel long distances to access a service – outreach workers would help this

### **Lack of official ID**

- Not having 100 points of ID.
- Eligibility barriers or nor having adequate paperwork/ID.

## Age

- Age – not being 18 can limit what you can access as permission is required, or the service only targets specific age groups.

## Disadvantage due to care background

- Penalties imposed upon young people by the ‘system’ which would be much less likely to have been incurred (or possibly, have less detrimental impact) if the young people did not have out-of-home care experience. This is in part attributed by them, to the likelihood of young people lacking adequate supports (such as parental or family financial support) as a consequence of their Child Protection history and/or out-of-home care.

## Specialised Services and Mainstream Services

### Specialised services

- Specialised services were seen to:
  - offer connection – including social connection – to people with similar life experiences
  - promote acceptance and belonging to young people who may feel like they’re not the only one whose been in care
  - offer service staff who would ‘get me’ and understand the implications of lived care experience, because they deal with those implications and experiences daily: we have many different issues to young people who haven’t been in care
  - attract adequate resources to provide effective services – as the special needs of young people post-care were seen to be more onerous (and likely to be unsupported by mainstream services)
  - have the ability to make a dramatic difference to my lives and situations given the service’s ability to address care related issues with the young person. There should be a one stop shop which young people could access prior to leaving care to begin to identify needs and access required information (this may include entitlements for leaving care plans or information on other services) and begin process of referrals etc. This is necessary as caseworkers tend not to work closely with this age group and they are not yet able to access after care services.
  - be different for everyone. I like going to CREATE because it makes me feel comfortable to be around other people who have the same experiences.
- Specialised services attracted criticism because:
  - there’s a huge stigmatisation / discrimination in that attending specialist services can attract a negative stigma which young people leaving care would be completely ‘over’ after getting out of State care
  - it may have a negative outcome when trying to secure mainstream housing and jobs, through the prejudice placed upon us by the wider community in regards to trust, stability and ability to function
  - when it comes to health and getting a job, I want to just be around everyday people
  - it makes us look different when we have to go to a “special” service tailor made for us
  - there’s definitely a stigma there, that is why I prefer a mainstream service but it is also a personal thing. Everyone is different.

- When young people were further asked to give further feedback about the potential stigma attached to specialised services, the following responses were given:
  - there is a definite stigma associated with accessing specialised services: its impact or significance varies for each young person, with the greatest impact happening during the teen years amongst peer groups, but it has less effect when you're older
  - there's more stigma attached to residential units than to young people in out of home care
  - I think there is a huge stigma attached to young people in out of home care, but I don't think there is a stigma attached to services that are specialised to assist young people in out of home care
  - workers need to support young people and make sure that a negative stigma doesn't stop young people accessing services they need
  - I think services need to be run to best serve clients, and if that means specialising then that is what must be done; stigma can be removed
  - the adolescents are not incompetent, yet they may still need extra help
  - there isn't any particular stigma attached to using existing specialised services, although the name of the service could have an impact on this and more general names are better e.g. one of the government transitioning service in South Australia is Northern Youth Support Services, a name that does not specifically identify it as being for young people in care
  - attending specialist services can attract a negative stigma which young people leaving care would be completely over after getting out of State care; but accessing specialised services would still be okay. The logistics and public awareness of attending or engaging with the service, could affect young peoples' willingness to engage with the service.

## Mainstream services

### Preferred service

- Mainstream services were seen to offer:
  - more variety and a normality which can be stabilising for young people
  - more access and availability
  - better processes and policies which make bigger and more established bureaucracies accountable for their service provision or lack of service, eg. obtaining a receipt number for enquiries, means your needs and requests are centrally logged and not lost in the system.

### Not preferred

- Mainstream services attracted criticism because:
  - they're more likely to ask a lot of questions you can't answer or request irrelevant information, eg. like parent's permission / information
  - workers without specialist out of home care knowledge wouldn't know about relevant entitlements, unless they had special education and training. They should have specialised professionals within a non-specialised service.
  - there wouldn't be same guarantee of a 'youth culture friendly' reception from services focussing on all ages
  - the resources provided to mainstream services, would not allow the level of service provision – so services wouldn't be available to all applicants, at levels appropriate or required of young people leaving care
  - they have higher case loads and longer wait times.

## No preference

- I don't care if it's specialised or not, all I care about is that its accessible, well promoted to young people, and that it has the adequate funds and resources to do its job and provide the assistance to young people.
- Because of the diverse benefits and drawbacks to both options and the unique needs of young people, the most effective system is to offer young people the option of attending both kinds of services.
- Both are important.
- Young people should be able to choose as long as they have all the information about what is available.

## Transitioning to Independence and/or Interdependence

- The Government should be focussing equally on both 'independence' and 'connecting to community' but that currently they are highly focused on the 'independence' strand at the expense of connecting to community. Furthermore that there should be less focus on forcing you to 'grow up' and more of meeting the young person where they are at with the appropriate supports and services.
- Being independent is about having support from people that aren't the Department. Gaining independence is great but I know that I have been better off since I have had good friends and have been involved in the community. As they say 'you alone can do it but you can do it alone'.
- Both are important. Young people need to be connected with their family but it is even more important to become independent to transition into adulthood, eg. work, rent, etc.
- You cannot be a productive part of the community without being connected to it but a part of being independent is knowing how to be part of a community.
- The focus of independence and community establishment needs to be individualised, with both being addressed throughout the young person's development.
- The word 'independence' can be interpreted as "not relying on anybody else" – this is in fact discriminatory against children and young people in care. To describe any individual as 'independent' is denying their right to access supports.
- Community contact and support is very important to Indigenous young people.
- The interaction between one's self and their community is how a young person grows into a contributing adult. You need to be independent to have confidence to engage with your community.
- Independence is a vital part of living in today's society, it is crucial that young people in care are given the support to become adults in a world where your feet are the only ones that support you. I believe independence is an empowering and valuable part of the transition out of care. It gives young people the power to live their lives in their own direction which has been deprived of them by departments who have made all the decisions for them for years. Independence is a reality for everyone at some stage; you can't live with friends or family forever.

## Stage 1: Initial Consultations One-to-One Structured Interviews

### Section 1: INTERVIEWEE'S DETAILS

**1. Gender**

Male  Female

**2. Years of age**

\_\_\_ years old

**3. Cultural background**

- Aboriginal
- Torres Strait Islander
- Both Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander (ATSI)
- Australian (other than Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Placement type**

- Foster Care
- Kinship Care
- Group Home
- Residential Care
- Permanent Care
- Semi-independent Accommodation
- Independent Living
- Other (please give specific details) \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 2: INTERVIEWEE'S RESPONSES

1. Did anyone speak to you about what would happen when your Child Protection Order finished at 18 years of age?

Yes  No

Comments:
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2. Did you (do you) have a Leaving Care Plan?

Yes ⇒ go to Q.2(a) & Q.2(b)

No ⇒ go to Q.3

Don't know ⇒ go to Q.3

Comments:

2(a) How involved were you in developing your Plan?

Very involved

Quite involved

Reasonably involved

Some involvement

Little involvement

Not at all involved

2(b) How useful did you think your Plan was/is?

Very useful

Quite useful

Reasonably useful

Of some use

Of little use

Not at all useful

3. What were your specific needs when you thought about your transition from care to independence?

Comments:

4. What were the specific barriers to accessing support services that you needed to support you when transitioning?

Comments:

5. Do you have any suggestions for actions that the Commonwealth and ... (name of State Government) ... governments could take to overcome some of the barriers that you faced when transitioning from care?

Comments:

# Stage 1: Initial Consultations

## One-to-One Structured Interviews

### Case Studies

#### Case Study 1: A Culturally Diverse Perspective

##### Background

Helena is a 25 year old female, mother of four who lives in Victoria. She entered care when she was 11 years old, primarily residing in foster care. While in care, Helena became interested in Islam but was discouraged from pursuing her religious interest as she was living with Catholic foster carers at the time. Shortly after exiting care at 18 years of age, Helena converted to Islam. She found her engagement in religion gave her stability which she was lacking upon transitioning from care.

##### Leaving care planning

No one spoke to Helena about what would happen once her Child Protection Order finished at 18 years, nor did she have a Leaving Care Plan.

##### Barriers

Helena found that the main barriers to accessing support services were due primarily to lack of information and her faith. Firstly, the lack of information resulted in her not knowing what was available and what she was entitled to. Secondly, as Helena had not been able to test her faith while in care, she had to discover her faith by herself first upon leaving care. She felt that this prevented her from accessing support from religious organisations immediately upon leaving care. Helena also discussed the difficulty of accessing TILA. Although she got together all the required documentation of her care status, received the necessary quotes for equipment and then engaged agency support to assist her application, she received a rejection letter eight weeks later as she was not within 24 months of exiting care – reflecting the recent changes to TILA.

##### Solutions for government

From her experiences while in care, Helena suggested that there a number of actions that governments could take to better support all young people transitioning from care, in general, as well as for young people from CALD backgrounds, in particular.

- Provide more encouragement and dedicated time for workers to find out the interests and passions of children and young people.
- Have better placement matching for children and young people of varying faiths.
- Develop targeted foster care recruitment strategies for people of different religious persuasions, such as Muslim and Jewish carers, as this will be an issue of even more importance with the emergence of new and emerging refugee populations.

- Link young people in with local community linkages, such as a Youth Islamic Centre or local churches, as they are a positive influence and have social support frameworks in place, such as people you can turn to after you've left care.
- Start the planning process earlier.
- Have dedicated workers to support young people after 18 years of age.
- Provide more accommodation options for young people transitioning from care, based on their different needs including transitional housing and share accommodation.
- Provide more support for young people with a care experience who become young mums and dads.
- Make the TILA processes fairer.

## Case Study 2: A Disability Perspective

### Background

Georgia has an intellectual disability and, being 18 years old, is currently completing Grade 12 at a special school in Victoria. Georgia had been living in a residential unit with three other girls, but is now residing in supported accommodation with two other women, aged 44 and 46 years. She is happy in the supported accommodation, as she thinks her current living arrangements are so much better than before – she has more freedom and gets along well with the older women.

### Leaving care planning

Georgia did have workers talk to her about what would happen once her Child Protection Order finished. She did have a Leaving Care Plan. The planning commenced when she was 17 years old. It was during this process that the workers asked her where she wanted to live and she was supported to visit her current accommodation before permanently residing there. To help Georgia to develop life skills to assist her to live independently, such as cooking and cleaning, a support worker has been arranged to 'come in' on a regular basis.

### Solutions for government

Georgia based her suggestions for solutions to better support young people with a disability transitioning from care on the positive aspects she has experienced with her transition process. She wants all young people with a disability who are transitioning from care to independence to have:

- greater participation and choice for young people in leaving care planning
- gradual transitioning for young people to post care accommodation
- more programs and workers to support young people in developing life skills.

## Case Study 3: An Aboriginal Perspective

### Background

Mandy is a 19 year old Kabi Kabi woman (Aboriginal language group of South East Queensland), and also identifies as an Australian South Sea Islander (ASSI). She was in and out of care from the age of one, primarily residing in foster care. Within Mandy's last two years of care (aged 16-18 years), she had three foster care placements, and five residential placements. When she turned 18 years old, she stayed for four months in a mental health hospital, transitioned to a hotel for a week, stayed with a friend for approximately six months, and then became homeless. After six months of homelessness, Mandy moved back home to her birth family.

### Leaving care planning

Workers did talk to Mandy about what would happen once her Child Protection Order finished. Her formal transition planning did not commence until she was 17 years old. As no attention was given to her cultural heritage within the planning process, nor efforts made to link her to her extended family and cultural communities, once she entered hospital her Leaving Care Plan was of no use to her. Furthermore, no one from the Department came to talk to her about her options.

### Needs

Mandy's specific needs regarding transitioning from care to independence centre round her identity and connection to her extended family and cultural communities. She stated there were no efforts made to link her in with her extended family in Rockhampton, Cairns and Brisbane.

### Barriers

Mandy considers that her barriers to accessing support services were:

- a lack of information regarding Indigenous specific organisations
- a lack of acknowledgement of her ASSI background as being part of her cultural heritage
- a lack of ASSI specific organisations. She also stated that it was difficult to establish her Aboriginal/ASSI cultural identity when she is fair skinned; it is especially difficult for young people who have lost connections to family and community after being in care as they struggle to answer the question, "Who's your mob?".

### Solutions for government

For governments to better support young people from her cultural group transition from care, Mandy suggested a number of actions.

- Introduce a 'relationship program' to support young people with essential insights and understandings they need when they reunite with their birth families.
- Developing new policies and practice guidelines to acknowledge ASSI cultural backgrounds of children and young people.
- Enforcing policies regarding connecting children and young people to culture, as well as the Child Placement Principle.

## Case Study 4: A Mental Well-being Perspective

### Background

Tania is a 20 year old female living in Queensland who entered foster care when she was two years old due to neglect and left when she was 18 years old. When Tania was 14 years old, she started seeing a counsellor – she wasn't given options of who she could see, just who was available. Tania believes that she would be worse off without counselling and the help provided as her mental health wasn't the best and sometimes she thought about escaping from it all. She believes that if she didn't have the counsellor – who was often the most stable person in her life – she wouldn't be alive today.

### Solutions for government

Tania's suggested action for all governments to better support young people transitioning from care is that all children and young people in care have access to free counselling. She stated that:

As a child or young person in care, you don't really get help unless you ask, or scream for it. But a young person isn't always going to know that counselling may help, or say that they need it. They need to be able to access counselling without feeling ashamed. This support needs to be thought of as long-term, not something that can fix things in a few weeks or months and it shouldn't stop just because you turn 18 and the community thinks you have become an adult. If you stop counselling it's very hard to pick up again because you have to find a therapist, somehow find the money for it and start again. You have to share your story all over again.

## Case Study 5: A Youth Justice Perspective

### Background

Toby is a 20 year old Aboriginal male who is married and lives with his wife and son in Victoria. He was involved with the Youth Justice system when he was 15 years old. In that time he had at least sixty charges brought against him including assault, theft of a motor vehicle, possession of stolen goods, possession of weapons, possession of drugs, and criminal damage.

When he was eight years old, Toby entered foster care as a result of violent behaviour towards his siblings. When he was 10 years old he was reunified with his family before returning to high risk residential placements at the age of 15 years.

Upon transitioning from care, he was given very little notice about needing to vacate the residential facility, and became homeless for six months, before living with his grandparents, and then his wife. He now goes to church regularly, and wants to use his experiences to help others through writing a book using voice recognition software (he is illiterate having only completed Grade five).

### Leaving care planning

Workers had spoken to Toby about needing to leave care at that age of 18 years, but he thought that he wouldn't have to leave if he didn't have stable accommodation to transition to. He was given very limited options within his planning for leaving care – he was told that he would have to live with someone else with a similar background to his. However, as he did not want to be around negative influences, he refused this accommodation option, which left him homeless for six months.

## Barriers

Toby stated that young people with a Youth Justice background experience barriers to accessing support services through a lack of trust and lack of social skills. He indicated that young people in Youth Justice are forced to become independent from an early age and, as a result, are reluctant to ask others for help. He also stated that young people don't need counselling and are reluctant to engage with more 'workers', although they do need emotional support through stable, supportive relationships.

## Solutions for government

From a juvenile justice perspective, Toby suggested a number of actions for Governments to better support young people transitioning from care.

- Provide more accommodation options for young people transitioning from care.
- Provide more independent housing in low crime areas.
- Provide mentors for young people.

### Stage 2: NYAC Forum Questions for Consideration

#### Preparation phase

1. What are the important things that need to be considered when first starting to plan with a young person their transition to independence?
2. If there was a standard (same) Transition from Care Plan, what should be in it?
3. Should planning start before a young person turns 15? What should happen before a young person turns 15?
4. Should there be dedicated Transition from Care workers? If you think so, what actions do we want Governments to take?
5. What actions should be taken to assist young people in care to stay at school?
6. What actions should be taken to assist young people in care and post care to get a job?
7. What actions should be taken to assist young people in care and post care to receive Youth Allowance?


#### Transition phase

1. What are the important things that need to be considered when a young person is getting closer to leaving care? What do they need?
2. What actions should be taken to help young people further develop their independent living skills?
3. What do you think of mentoring programs for young people? If you think it's a good idea, what actions should be taken to support this?
4. What actions should be taken to get information about services and supports to young people?
5. What actions should be taken to better connect young people to supports and services?
6. What actions should be taken to better support young people who choose to return to their birth families when they transition from care?

#### After care

1. What are the important things that need to be considered for a young person to feel confident once they have left care?
2. What actions could be taken to overcome barriers that young people experience in accessing services? Some of these barriers include: lack of social/emotional support, lack of finances, lack of information/awareness, lack of appropriate services/referrals, lack of effective planning, lack of official ID, lack of transport, lack of confidence.



- 
3. Do you have any issue with disclosing your leaving care status when it comes to accessing services?

## **Last thoughts**

1. What makes a successful transition? What actions should Governments put in place to achieve a successful transition for all young people across Australia?

### Stage 3: NYAC Forum Forum / Workshop Outcomes

#### Preparation Phase

##### Important considerations for Preparation Phase

- A better transition plan.
- What individualised support they'll require based on their mental health or disability.
- Start referring young people to services.
- Link in with Youth Allowance.
- Life skills development.
- Guidance and encouragement.
- Mentors.

##### Transition from Care Planning

- Specific things a young person wants – needs goal setting with realistic timelines.
- Hopes, dreams and desires – and later link this to their career path.
- Ensure a young person has spoken to a Careers Advisor.
- 'Tick and flick' support checklist including community support and health supports. Should be made that a young person can't leave care if they haven't got supports in place.
- Health needs – all young people need to be linked in with a doctor.
- Minimum entitlements. eg. tangibles such as washing machine, whitegoods, laptop.
- There needs to be better relationships made between young people and Departmental case workers.
- The planning should not just be about talking, but doing, eg. having the case worker or another nominated person take the young person around to community services.
- All young people in Australia should receive a Leaving Care Backpack/Kit at 15 years. It would include: recipes, information about rights and responsibilities, information about services, stationary, information about financial support such as TILA, list of contacts.
- Improved legislation. Someone needs to enforce the law that all young people have a plan, that it's been reviewed, and implemented.
- There needs to be responsibility and accountability within Child Protection Departments that all young people have transition plans – this should be somebody high up within the Department.
- An organisation with more power than the Commission should be ensuring all young people have a plan and their rights met. This could be an Ombudsman; or alternatively, the Commissions should be given more power.
- Need for individual advocates: people who know the law and have the power to enforce it.
- More Youth lawyers. Many young people do not realise that they can access lawyers.
- Train young people with a care experience to act as advocates for other young people in care.

## Preparation planning prior to 15 years

- Planning should start before a young person turns 15.
- Heaps of 13 year olds are more mature these days, than I was at their age. We should start planning then.
- Start planning when the legislation states: at 15. The problem is the Department isn't sticking to the legislation.
- Start at 15. Just let young people be young people.
- You don't have to start formally planning before 15, but young people should be taught life skills – just like other young people. More life skills training has to happen with carers.

## Dedicated transition from care workers

- Employ more people.
- Make funds available for dedicated workers.
- For a case worker to work through the 'red tape' and address the 'everyday things'; and for a transition worker to address planning and preparation for the future with a young person.
- Two workers – one to do administrative work.
- Make steps to recruit and retain more workers. Young people should have the same worker, working intensively with them from 15-18 years, gradually decreasing their support to 25 years.
- Post care support up to 21 or 25 years. Involve young people in deciding how much support they want and for how long.
- Look at South Australian model of dedicated transition workers and look to extend to every state/territory.
- Extend the Queensland Commissioner for Children, Young People and Child Guardian Community Visitor Program to every state/territory. More informal planning could occur at this level, eg. a Community Visitor kicking a ball with a young person asking them casually, "Where do you see yourself heading?" (This could be seen as 'secret planning').

## Education

- Education Support Plans in every State/Territory. If States already have them, they need to be reviewed and made more effective.
- A specific role (either in Child Protection Department or Education Department) or oversee and ensure the implementation of Education Support Plans.
- Support workers in the schools to act as a 'go-between', e.g. to help connect young people to their teachers.
- More effective communication and relationships between Child Protection Departments and Education Departments. This could include an online program between the two Departments to better share information.
- Roles and responsibilities between Child Protection Departments and Education Departments need to be much clearer, to each other and children and young people and carers.
- Providing young people with tutors – paid or voluntary.
- Mentors for education – one-on-one basis and talk to groups of young people. They could sit in or outside of the Child Protection Department.
- Include issues and challenges facing children and young people in care in teacher training.
- Anti-bullying training for all children and young people, eg. Years 7 and 8.
- Stable placements for all children and young people.
- Extend placements for all young people turning 18 during their final year of school. Extend until 30 January or until their tertiary education is finished.

- Different educational pathways and options for young people, including pathways directly from school to TAFE.
- Young people in refuges need to be made aware of their entitlements, and workers need to be actively and physically linking young people in with education.
- Better acknowledgement from Child Protection Departments regarding educational achievements of children and young people, eg. rewards for good work.
- Involve young people in choosing electives.
- Early conversations with young people regarding the importance of school/education.
- Show young people where they could end up if they don't focus and try to do well e.g. homeless shelter, jail, rehab.
- Show young people where they could end up if they do focus and try to do well e.g. have successful professionals who'd had care experiences come to talk to groups of young people about how they got to be where they are.

### Employment/training

- More information for young people regarding Centrelink; Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations (DEEWR); and job providers. This information would include young people's rights and entitlements.
- More funding for skills development programs. This could include training for young people to connect them into the workforce, help with resumes.
- Extend the CREATE Your Future Program to every state/territory and in the regional areas.
- Training/Graduate Program for young people who have been in care, eg. to become Child Safety Officers/Case Workers; Youth Work traineeships.
- More traineeship information to young people.
- More work experience opportunities.
- Acknowledgement and support for young people who chose to work or get an apprenticeship instead of going to school. This could include a financial support program to help cover expenses of an apprenticeship.
- Fund/allowance that recognises the disadvantage faced by young people in care. This allowance could be used for reasons that include interview clothing, education, and employment and training purposes.
- More readily available access to records including birth certificate and tax file number.
- Post care worker support.
- Access for young people to speak with a Careers Advisors, and for this to be an essential component of a transition plan.
- Access for young people to speak with a Financial Advisor.

### Youth Allowance

- Young people need to know about their entitlements.
- Better relationships/communication between Child Protection Department, Centrelink and community support services.
- Dedicated worker in Centrelink to link with Child Protection Departments.
- A 'flag' to come up on Centrelink file for a young person with a care experience. Workers would've received training/information about the specific challenges and needs of young people in care. Young people would have the right to not have this 'flag' if they wished.
- Greater awareness of challenges of young people in care – pamphlet, training for Centrelink workers, video for workers made by young people.

- The need for greater differentiation between TILA, Youth Allowance, and dedicated funds from the Child Protection Departments.
- Better process for when a young person ceases to live with their birth family – payment to go to the young person instead of the birth parents.
- Increased funds for young people in or post care. Special payment for young people in care/post care. This would have to be determined on a case-by-case basis, based on a young person's living situation.
- The rate of Youth Allowance needs to be reviewed. The cost of food goes up, but Youth Allowance does not.
- Centrelink allowance or discounts for Post Office boxes (because of all the placement changes young people have).
- On their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, case workers should take young people to Centrelink to sign up for Youth Allowance.
- Young people should be deemed independent by Centrelink at 15 years.

### Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA)

- It's confusing and full of jargon.
- There's a lot of misinformation around.
- The paperwork is hard.
- You need letters from the Department – that can be really hard to get.
- Young people need to be linked in to an NGO – it's especially difficult for states that don't have post care support services
- If a worker is not supportive, it is very hard.
- Child Protection Departments have been known to use it as a 'transition package' – instead of contributing their own funds.
- You can only get it once.
- More training should be given to workers regarding how to support young people to access TILA.
- This was the first time I'd heard about it.

## Transition Phase

### Important considerations for Transition Phase

- Transition plan is implemented and evaluated.
- The transition plan is reviewed every 3 months – either in the last year or the second last year.
- Young people are involved – the young person's view is heard and enacted upon.
- Life skills are being developed with their foster carer or in a program.
- Connected to supporters.
- If a young person is moving back with their birth family, the transition has started earlier e.g. greater visitation on weekends.
- Young people receive material supports.
- Health checks – including physical, mental, and dental; funds needs to made available for this.
- Their housing application is in (at 15 years they should be in the public housing waiting list).
- Young people are in appropriate housing (there needs to be dedicated housing for young people in and post care).

### **Independent living skills**

- There needs to be extra funding for more programs.
- The basics need to start with foster carers, just like other young people learning skills at home. This would include opening a bank account, cooking, cleaning.
- More mandatory training for foster carers. This training would include how to teach young people life skills, and helping to change the culture of foster care from carers seeing their role as a job, to that of a parent.
- Involve volunteers/mentors/paid workers in training young people.
- Have someone go to a young person's home and do an assessment, undertake skills development sessions with the young person, and leave information.
- Include life skills training in flexi/alternative schools.
- Actively refer young people to services.
- Driving lessons.

### **Mentoring programs**

- More funding for mentoring programs.
- Mentoring programs through CREATE.
- Paid and volunteer mentors – depending on the needs of the young person.
- Support for paid mentors to receive a qualification.
- Flexibility within mentoring programs for young people to nominate someone to undertake training to become a mentor e.g. community soccer coach.
- Mix of ages of mentors.
- Participation of young people in interviewing for a mentor.

### **Information about services and supports**

- Leaving Care Kits for all young people.
- Booklet informing young people of their rights regarding transitioning to independence, given at 15 years.
- Contact book given to young people: nation-wide, state-wide, and locally based services and supports.
- Case workers need to be better networked to their communities.
- This needs to be part of all young people's transition plan.

### **Connecting young people to services and supports**

- Physically taking young people in to services – this should be part of every young person's transition plan. This would include doctor, dentist, mental health, Medicare, health care fund, drug and alcohol supports.
- Link young people in to youth activities, and involve the carers.
- More funding for programs for young people to connect with other young people in or post care.
- Mentoring programs: young people need supportive adults in their life, not just peers.
- Need to have two young people linked in to a young person's life, who aren't paid. Include in transition plan.
- Interactive websites with games.
- Stable placements.
- More dedicated training for foster carers, all workers.

## Reunification with birth families

- The transition needs to commence before a young person turns 18. This could be through gradual visitation.
- Safety plans are in places and young people are aware of services in their area.
- A second back up plan is in place.
- Support from the Department – they keep their door open.
- Case workers visit young people to ensure everything's okay and the young person is safe; and then reassesses the house and situation.
- Young people are given mobile phones with saved numbers for services/assistance.
- A family tree for all young people, and/or Life Story books.
- Support groups in the community for birth families who are being reunified.
- Family counselling/mediation support from the Department prior to transitioning.
- Support from a mentor.

## After Care Phase

### Important considerations for After Care Phase

- Transition plans need to be monitored/evaluated.
- Exit interviews conducted with young people who have transitioned (independently evaluated).
- There needs to be appropriate support – enough support that the young person needs.
- Support to 21 or 25 years.
- Need for greater financial stability.
- Support for housing.
- Carers to be financially supported to care for young people after transitioning from the system (if both parties choose).

### Disclosure of care status

- It's the individual's choice.
- I had no problem after care, but I did have a problem whilst in care.
- I didn't have a problem, but it can be hard to prove. Need to have documentation/evidence online as well as in hard copy.
- Need to reduce with stigma within society.
- Specialised services will meet your needs better, eg. specialised counselling
- There needs to be a whole of government response. The young person shouldn't have to keep on telling everyone they've been in care. They should look to review and expand South Australia's whole of government model. Priority access should be given to young people in and post care for: housing, drivers licence and lessons, TAFE and uni (books, resources, tutoring, priority placements), dentist, health care, Centrelink (fast track paperwork and payments).

## Overcoming barriers

- **Lack of social/emotional support**
  - Mentors.
  - More support for family contact.
  - Mental health workers.
  - More referrals.



- Connections to community the young person comes from.
- Counsellors.
- **Lack of finances**
  - Improve the TILA system.
  - Improved communication between Centrelink and Child Protection.
  - Financial advisors.
  - Budgeting skills.
  - Review the rate of Youth Allowance.
  - Support young people to open savings accounts/
  - Information for young people regarding emergency support services, eg. Smith Family.
  - Discount card, like the Foster and Kinship card in Queensland.
- **Lack of information/awareness**
  - Case workers need more training what information is out there, and how to pass it on to young people.
  - Leaving Care Kits.
- **Lack of appropriate services/referrals**
  - More funding = more programs.
  - Better worker training, to improve the referral process.
  - Review the effectiveness of referral tools to ensure proper assessments are taking place.
- **Lack of effective planning**
  - More participation of young people.
  - Departments need to make participation a commitment. Every State/Territory Department to have a Participation Strategy, as well as a National Participation Strategy.
  - Develop alternative ways of case planning.
  - Improve worker training, including options and ideas of how to engage young people.
  - Fun days and info nights for young people, giving them tools for participation.
  - Young people need to be given copies of their plan.
- **Lack of official ID**
  - Case workers to support young people to acquire an 18+ card.
  - Drivers Learners Licence at 16 years as part of a young person's transition planning.
  - All young people to be given their birth certificate before they transition.
- **Lack of transport**
  - Minimum 10 driving lessons as part of a young person's transition plan.
  - Discounted/concessional card.
- **Lack of confidence**
  - TFC workshops/camps.
  - More information given about TILA.
  - DVD for young people with available services in their area.
  - Case workers to physically take young people to services in their community.

- TFC Groups. A regular group that meets; they talk about services and issues, and then doing something fun to connect with each other.
- Confidence workshops.
- More encouragement and financial support for young people to get involved in sport, recreation and community activities.

## A successful transition

- Adequate transition plans when exiting.
- Everyone stuck to the transition plan; that we got to the goal.
- Financial support, financially secure and stable, sufficient income.
- Adequate and appropriate housing; affordable and safe.
- Feeling safe and secure in your own home and that it is your home.
- Linked in to community where the young person is from or entering: services, cultural support, religious, participating in the community.
- Post care support.
- Linked in with support services.
- Sufficient transport.
- A safe place to call home, food in their tummy, and clothes on their back, enough money left over to buy milk and bread, and a friend a phone call away.
- Supported emotionally and financially.
- Health (dental, medical) is taken care of.
- Engaged in education or employment, or working towards that goal.
- Has ID e.g. proof of age card, birth certificate.
- Young person is working towards life goals.
- Clear and confident.
- Happy, supported and stable.
- When the young person can look back and see how far they've come and that they've gone in a positive direction, and that they're contributing to society.

### Best Practice Examples

#### Best Practice Example: Leaving Care Services, Victoria

<b>STATE:</b>	Victoria
<b>TARGET GROUP:</b>	Young people transitioning from care, 16-21 years
<b>FOCUS:</b>	A suite of services and resources for young people transitioning from care including mentoring, specialist support services, support funding, and a helpline.
<b>TOTAL BUDGET SPEND:</b>	\$3.65 million

#### Leaving Care Mentoring (LCM)

The LCM program aims to provide young people transitioning from care with the opportunities to interact with adults in community settings. This helps promote personal relationships that safeguard against social isolation after the young person has left care.

Leaving care mentoring is now available in five (5) regions, North West, Barwon, Eastern, Gippsland and Loddon Mallee.

All mentors are volunteers from the community, and are specifically trained to work with young people leaving care.

#### Post Care Support, Referral and Information Service

This service is established and active in each of the eight (8) Department of Human Services (DHS) regions to support young people between 16 and 21 years who will require support after leaving state care.

State-wide funding for post care support is \$1.9 million per annum.

## Service providers

Agency	Services
Baron Youth	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care
Berry Street Victoria	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care, Mentoring
Berry Street Victoria	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services
Braxton Youth & Family Services	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care
Trophy Youth & Family Services	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care & Mentoring
Central Hume Support Services	Mentoring
Central Hume Support Services (Creating Connections)	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care
Child & Family Services Balart	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care & Mentoring
Gippscare	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care
Goulburn Accommodation Program – The Bridge Youth Services	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care
JSS– BROSANAN CENTRE	Mentoring
Mallee Accommodation & Support Program	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care and Mentoring
North East Support & Action for Youth (NESAY)	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care
PYFS- Peninsula Youth & Family Services	Financial Assistance for young people post care
Quantum Support Services	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care
Salvation Army Eastcare	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care
Southern Directions Youth Services (MOIRA)	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services
Southern Directions Youth Services (MOIRA)	Financial Assistance for young people post care
Southern Directions Youth Services (MOIRA)	Mentoring
St Luke's Anglicare	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care and Mentoring
Whitelion Inc	Mentoring
Whitelion Inc/Berry Street	Mentoring
Wimmera Uniting Care	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services and Brokerage for young people post care & Mentoring

## Leaving Care Brokerage

Brokerage is flexible support funding for care leavers, both for those transitioning from state care and those young people up to 21 years who need financial support subsequent to their leaving state care.

Whilst brokerage is usually accessed via a young person's leaving care worker or post care support worker, all regions have given and undertaking to support any young person who may come their way regardless of region of origin.

Young people can use financial help for:

- **Accommodation** costs associated with setting up or maintaining your accommodation
- **Education/training/employment** - so that you can successfully complete training or education
- **Access to health and community services** that are not supported by Medicare

For quick or emergency funding the limit is \$500. For non urgent matters, there is not a limit within reason.

The total brokerage budget is \$1.7 million per annum. There is no cap on the number of times a young person may apply for brokerage either during transition or post care, however it will depend on need and/or budget availability.

## Leaving Care Helpline - 1300 532 846

A helpline for young people aged 16-21 years who are leaving, or have left out of home care in Victoria. The Leaving Care Helpline is open from 10am-8pm weekdays, and 10am-6pm weekends and public holidays; and can refer young people to services in their area and to specialist Leaving Care Support Programs.

The leaving care hotline is for all 8 regions and is based in the city of Melbourne.

It is anticipated that 1200 contacts will be made per year to the hotline.



## Things that matter Checklist

CREATE in partnership with DHS worked with young people to develop the Things That Matter Checklist for young people leaving care, covering the top 10 things young people in Victoria wanted to know about leaving care



Here are some common questions that young people often have about leaving out of home care in Victoria. You can use these questions to help talk things through with your carer or case worker.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>1</b> When will my Custody or Guardianship Order finish for the last time?</p> <p><b>2</b> What will happen to me then?</p> <p><b>3</b> Who will help me to plan for when I leave care? Can I go to the meetings?</p> <p><b>4</b> What can I do if I don't agree with what is planned for me?</p> <p><b>5</b> Who will help me get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; My birth certificate</li> <li>&gt; A Medicare card</li> <li>&gt; A passport</li> <li>&gt; A bank account</li> <li>&gt; Youth allowance</li> </ul> <p>Is there somewhere safe where I can keep my birth certificate and other important documents?</p> | <p><b>6</b> Where can I live when I leave out of home care?<br/>Who will help me find accommodation?<br/>Will there be someone there that can help me if I need it?</p> <p><b>7</b> My foster parents want me to stay with them after I am 18 years old. Can I?</p> <p><b>8</b> Where can I go for help after I leave out of home care in Victoria?<br/>Who are the agencies?<br/>Can I meet with someone before I leave?</p> <p><b>9</b> Can I get help with buying some things I need before I leave care?</p> <p><b>10</b> Can I get help if I run out of money after I leave care?</p> |
|---|--|

website: [www.cyf.vic.gov.au/leavingcare](http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/leavingcare)  
 Leaving Care Helpline: 1300 532 846

## Best Practice Example: Leaving Care Program for Young People with a Disability

<b>STATE:</b>	New South Wales
<b>ORGANISATION(S):</b>	Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Department of Community Services, New South Wales Housing and Human Services Accord
<b>TARGET GROUP:</b>	Young people with a disability transitioning from care
<b>FOCUS:</b>	Leaving care program for young people with a disability offering transition planning, case management, access to support, accommodation, vocational opportunities and skills development, a mentoring service and community participation

The New South Wales Leaving Care Program (LCP), developed in partnership between Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) and Department of Community Services and the New South Wales Housing and Human Services Accord, provides person-centred support to young people with a disability leaving care.

ADHC is notified two years before a young person's exit date from care, in order to facilitate referral to the LCP and enable transition planning to occur. Young people are then assessed and a leaving care case plan put into place. Housing and other support agencies are engaged, with the program being managed on a regional basis throughout New South Wales.

An evaluation of the program has been conducted by the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) and the Disability Studies and Research Centre (DSRC). The key finding of the evaluation found that the LCP is an important and well funded program that is generally meeting its objectives of supporting young people with disabilities leaving care to manage this transition. A wide range of stakeholders were consulted and there was general satisfaction with the program. The consultation highlighted a number of program strengths and best practices including that the program was flexible, well resourced and had encouraged inter-agency relationships that were having positive outcomes for participants.



## Best Practice Example: Young People Leaving Care Transition Program

<b>STATE:</b>	Tasmania
<b>ORGANISATION(S):</b>	Disability, Children, Youth and Family Services and Housing Tasmania
<b>TARGET GROUP:</b>	Young people transitioning from care, up to 18.5 years
<b>FOCUS:</b>	Supported accommodation and preferential access to public housing

A Transition Program has been developed between Disability, Children, Youth and Family Services (DCYFS) and Housing Tasmania which seeks to transition young people leaving care to independence without experiencing periods of homelessness. The Transition Program offers young people leaving care an additional level of support and preferential access to public housing as a counterbalance to their inherent lack of family and community support resources.

The preferential access to public housing provided under the Transition Program bestows an obligation on the young person leaving care to participate in the support arrangements deemed necessary for them to achieve independence and sustain a stable tenancy.

The Transition Program uses Direct Tenancies as a vehicle to ascribe responsibility for the outcomes of the Transition Program between DCYFS, Housing Tasmania, the young person leaving care and eventually an external support organisation.

The Transition Program requires that a young person agree to enter into a Direct Tenancy for two fixed periods of approximately six months each in duration.

*Direct Tenancy 1* – The first period will be from when a suitable property can be found at approximately 17 and a half years through their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Through this period DCYFS will be the support organisation under the Direct Tenancy lease (if young people are leaving their care placements younger than 18 years, then this initial period of the Direct Tenancy would extend to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday regardless of their age at entry).

*Direct Tenancy 2* – The second period of six months will start from their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and would be supported by a key support service identified by DCYFS.

By the end of the fourth month of Direct Tenancy 2 a review will be undertaken of the tenancy with all three parties. If the tenancy is deemed successful then at the end of Direct Tenancy 2 the young person will be given the option to enter into an independent tenancy within the dwelling. If the tenancy is deemed successful but the location is not conducive to a successful long term tenancy then the tenant will be given priority access to transfer to a more suitable location.

At this stage, the tenancy will be operated under the normal policies and procedures applicable to all tenants of Housing Tasmania.

## Best Practice Example: Centrelink Program, Woodridge CSC

<b>STATE:</b>	Queensland
<b>ORGANISATION(S):</b>	Centrelink
<b>TARGET GROUP:</b>	Young people transitioning from care, 15 years +
<b>FOCUS:</b>	A pilot project to provide individualised needs based service delivery to young people with a care experience.

### Information brochure

Tailored reference material has been developed including a brochure for young people leaving state care regarding Centrelink services, specifically Youth Allowance. Young people with a care experience were involved in the design and content of the material; ensuring use of appropriate language; ensuring the brochure is easily accessible by young people.

### Information Proforma

To overcome the need to provide copies of their care orders, a simple proforma has been developed that holds all the information needed to determine the young person's rate of payment and that Centrelink can fax to Child Safety and they fax back. This eliminates any additional running around by the young person and initial feedback from both Centrelink and Child Safety indicate that it's effective and time efficient.

### Information Sharing

Although not directly targeted at young people leaving care but still very relevant is the work being undertaken with Department of Communities, Housing and Homelessness Services. Woodridge CSC are formalising that customers who have previously provided identity documents to Centrelink, can use the Centrelink record of these documents as proof of identify for their housing applications. This means if customers have lost documents since their Centrelink claim they can use Centrelink records reducing the need for continuously supplying proof of identify (in early stages of implementation).

### Information Seminars

Centrelink and Department of Communities, Child Safety Services have committed to running information seminars specific for young people leaving care. The aim of the seminars are to support young people leaving care to ask questions about Centrelink, helping to demystify the service and ensure the target audience is being reached. Child Safety identify young people to attend (carers are also encouraged to attend) and one of the staff from Centrelink presents a semi-structured seminar about Centrelink, payments etc. As part of the seminar, the young people are given a tour of the office, introduced to the Indigenous Services Officer and Multicultural Services Officer and registered on the self service PCs. Feedback from young people at the seminars has been positive.

Don't let not having enough ID stop you from lodging a claim with Centrelink. Ask about options that may allow you to receive payments while you get the necessary ID.

### Are there any other payments I can get?

There may be other Centrelink benefits that you can get, depending on your situation. When you lodge your claim for Youth Allowance, we will automatically assess your eligibility for any extra benefits.

For example, if you're under 21 and have limited capacity to work because of illness, injury or disability, you may be eligible to receive a Youth Disability Supplement. Also, if you're paying rent, you may be entitled to Rent Assistance payments.

### What other help can I get from Centrelink?

Centrelink has many services and specialist staff to help you. Here are just a few:

- **Social Workers**—can offer you counselling and support in difficult times
- **Indigenous Customer Service Officers**—can help you access our services and receive your correct entitlements if you are Indigenous
- **Multicultural Service Officers**—can help you access our services if you are newly arrived in this country or belong to a migrant or refugee community.

### How do I find out more?

If you'd like to know more about Centrelink payments and services, you can either go to [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au), call **13 2490**, or visit your local **Centrelink Customer Service Centre**.

### Useful contacts

Centrelink	<b>13 2490</b>
Child Safety general enquiries	<b>1800 811 810</b>
Child Safety after hours Service Centre (24-hour)	<b>1800 177 135</b>
CREATE Foundation	<b>1800 655 105</b>
Kids Helpline	<b>1800 551 800</b>
Lifeline Community Care 24-hour Crisis Counselling Line	<b>13 1114</b>
Homeless Persons Information QLD	<b>1800 474 753</b>

### Useful websites

[www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)  
[www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)  
[www.createyourfuture.org.au](http://www.createyourfuture.org.au)

This brochure has been prepared by Centrelink staff in Browns Plains and Woodridge. We would like to thank the CREATE Foundation and their members for their contribution. The CREATE Foundation connects and empowers children and young people in care and improves the care system through activities, programs, training and policy advice.

## Young people in state care

Do you know about Centrelink's Youth Allowance?



If you are not living with your parents and are, or have been, in the care of the Queensland Department of Communities because of a court order, then this information is for you.





## What is Youth Allowance?

It's a fortnightly federal government payment designed to help young people such as yourself study, train, look for work or do an apprenticeship. If you can't work or study because of an illness, injury or disability, you might still be able to get a Centrelink payment.

## How old do I have to be?

Usually between 16 and 20 years of age. However, you may also apply:

- if you've finished Year 10 but have not yet turned 16 (only applies to Queenslanders)
- if you're between 21 and 24 years old and studying or doing a full-time Australian apprenticeship. (If you turn 25 while on Youth Allowance, you can keep getting it until you finish your course or apprenticeship.)

## What else do I have to be?

You must be an Australian citizen or holder of a permanent or protected special category visa, as well as **either**:

- looking for full-time work
- studying full-time
- doing a combination of approved activities (including part-time work and training), **or**
- doing a full-time Australian apprenticeship.

## How do I claim Youth Allowance?

There are a number of ways you can claim Youth Allowance. You can visit [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au), call **13 2490** or go to a **Centrelink Customer Service Centre**. You can get the address of your nearest centre from the phone book or the Centrelink website.

## How much can I get?

For a full list of payment rates, you can download a copy of the *Youth Payment Rates* factsheet at [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au). You can also ask a Centrelink Customer Service Officer.

## What if the department is paying for my food and rent?

If you're eligible for a Centrelink payment and the Department of Communities is paying for such things as your food and accommodation—or it may be giving you an allowance of some kind—you can still claim a payment with Centrelink.



## What if I'm paying for my own food and rent?

If you're eligible for a Centrelink payment and aren't receiving any financial assistance from the department, you will receive the higher rate of payment.

## Will I need to confirm I have been in—or am still in—state care?

Yes, you'll need to confirm your circumstances so that we can assess your eligibility for payments. However, with your consent, we can contact the department for you to get this information.

## What ID will I need?

If you were born in Australia, you'll need to provide your Australian birth certificate, plus 100 points of ID. You can use such things as student ID and current Medicare or ATM cards, as well as up to three different school or TAFE reports and certificates.

If you weren't born in Australia, you'll need to provide either your passport or Citizenship Certificate, and 100 points of ID. If you don't have a passport or Citizenship Certificate you should talk to Centrelink about other ways of proving your Australian residency.

If you have access to the net, you can download the *Proving your identity to Centrelink* form at [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au). This form has the full list of documents you can use.

## Best Practice Example: 'Go Your Own Way' Leaving Care Kit

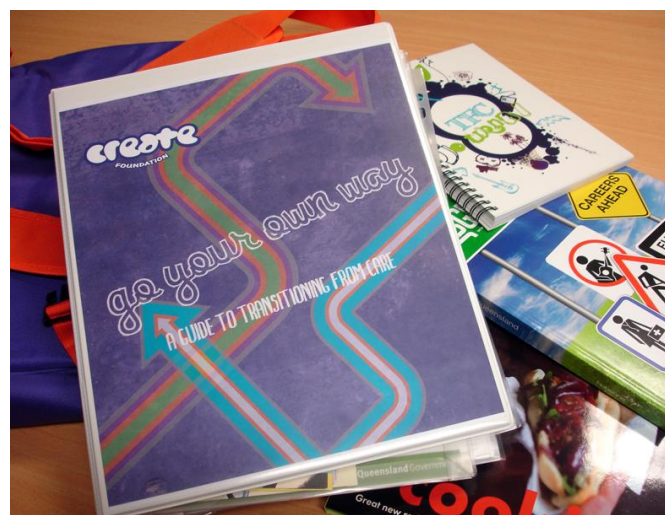
<b>STATE:</b>	Queensland
<b>ORGANISATION(S):</b>	Department of Communities, Child Safety Services and CREATE Foundation
<b>TARGET GROUP:</b>	Young people transitioning from care, 17 years
<b>FOCUS:</b>	A satchel containing information and resources to help support and prepare young people to transition from care

Transition from Care has been identified by both the department and CREATE as a key component of case planning. The department assigned November 2009 as Transition from Care month and, in conjunction with CREATE, developed resources to highlight the significance of transitioning young people from care.

'Go Your Own Way' kits contain resources to help young people answer common questions about independent living and also practical tools to help them support themselves. Some of the resources in the satchel include:

- booklet on services available to smooth the path to independence developed with CREATE Young Consultants input
- cookbook written for teenagers by celebrity teenage chef Sam Stern
- 'Transition from Care' journal containing artworks and words of advice from CREATE Young Consultants who have been through their own transition from care.

Department of Communities, Child Safety Services provided CREATE with \$70,000 of non-recurrent funds in 2009-10: \$50,000 to purchase the satchels and resources that are included, and \$20,000 for the development and the distribution of the kits over an 18 month period. One Thousand (1,000) 'Go Your Own Way' kits will be distributed over a three-year period, from August 2010 to August 2013. The kits are packed and posted from CREATE's national office by volunteers (providing additional in-kind support), and are then provided to Child Safety Service Centres to give to young people when they turn 17. CREATE also provides backpacks to fostering agencies and residential care agencies on request.



## Best Practice Example: Rapid Response - Whole of Government Services

<b>STATE:</b>	South Australia
<b>ORGANISATION(S):</b>	Government of South Australia
<b>TARGET GROUP:</b>	Children and young people in care, 0-18 years
<b>FOCUS:</b>	Whole of government response to address the health, housing, wellbeing and educational needs of children and young people under guardianship.

Rapid Response places children and young people under guardianship firmly at its centre. Its focus is on providing a holistic, coordinated approach to all aspects of their lives including:


- physical health
- psychological and emotional health
- developmental progress
- disability needs
- education
- housing needs
- transition out of state care, that is post guardianship supports and services.

Rapid Response is based on service guidelines designed to:

- reduce waiting times
- reduce ineligibility because of criteria restrictions
- improve communication between key players, especially the service provider, the carer and the child or young person
- address gaps in services.

The aim of Rapid Response is to address the health, housing, wellbeing and educational needs of children and young people under guardianship in five areas:

1. Case Management: provide a system of robust case management, case planning and review.
2. Assessment: increase the capacity of the system to provide psychological, developmental, physical health and educational assessments.

- 
3. Service response: increase the capacity of the system to provide services required by children and young people under guardianship through all relevant government departments (including therapy or psychological services, medical and allied health services, country services, hospitals, dental services, disability services, education, sport and recreation, and housing).
  4. Information sharing and privacy: increase information sharing and continuity of information relevant to the child's and young person's education, health, wellbeing and life opportunities.
  5. Regional guardianship service networks: adopt collaborative, holistic, multi-agency regional service networks responding to children and young people under the guardianship of the Minister.

The Rapid Response framework and action plan can be located at:

<http://www.dfc.sa.gov.au/pub/tabId/283/itemId/375/moduleId/1127/Rapid-response-framework-and-action-plan.aspx>



## Best Practice Example: CREATE Your Future

<b>STATE(S):</b>	Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania (CYF Program and Workshops are conducted)  New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria (CYF Workshops only are conducted)
<b>ORGANISATION(S):</b>	CREATE Foundation
<b>TARGET GROUP:</b>	Young people in care or with a care background, 15-25 years
<b>FOCUS:</b>	An holistic life-skills program specifically developed for young people transitioning from care. The program uses workshops, an intensive eight week program, grants scheme, and website. Areas covered include job readiness, education, employment, health, cooking skills, budgeting, community, hygiene, how to get a job, conflict resolution and self-confidence.

As the Peak consumer body for Children and young people in care, CREATE Foundation (CREATE) is committed to the issue of Transitioning from Care. Young people continue to identify transition from care as a major issue, and as such have identified and requested more practical life skills training as a potential solution.

### History

In light of the findings of the 2008 CREATE Report Card, Transition from Care, CREATE management commissioned a review of the existing CREATE Your Future Program. At the 2009 Inaugural National Youth Advisory Council Summit, young people again identified Transition in the top four issues faced by young people in care, and recommended that more workshops and practical skill training was required.

To meet the needs of the target population In April 2009 CREATE Your Future was redeveloped in line with what young people across the country were clearly telling us they needed.

The initial model has been redeveloped into an innovative new program with one-off funding from the Commonwealth Government (FAHCSIA). The program was developed into a national package, that takes a more holistic hands-on approach to working with disengaged and highly disadvantaged young people. The website was also updated.

### Program Aims, Objectives and Outcomes:

1. Improve the potential life outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care
2. Empower young people to feel equipped to transition from the care of the State /Territory
3. To have an understanding and demonstrate competency in the following areas:

Types of employment	Applying for work	Community supports available and how to access them
Cover letters	Preparing for an interview	Basic budgeting and spending tips
What type of work might be suitable	Challenge participants views and have an understanding of attitudes and barriers towards learning	Government and Community support services available in the local area
Looking for work Demonstrated ability to compose a cover letter, resume and address key selection criteria	Resumes Personal Presentation for Interviews	Washing Clothes Personal grooming for interviews
Dressing appropriately for interview	breaking through the barriers that hold participants back from success	How to access the local services
Perception/self/others	Basic cooking skills	Understanding of Youth Law, their resources and how to access them in the community
Requirements for 100 points of Identification Addressing Key Selection Criteria	Ability to plan and cook a meal from start to finish Taking responsibility for personal actions and the impact on everyday life	What it is like to work in a Trade environment Trade Employment
How to attain a drivers licence	Medicare and Bulk Billing	Basic awareness of private health insurance
Basic understanding of resume development Purchasing food on a set budget	Demonstrated ability to use internet job search sites Personal budgeting	Invitations and guest lists for celebration event Understanding of Ambulance Cover
Event planning and budgeting, enhanced communication skills and team work Learning Styles	Personal future goals regarding education/employment	Centrelink Services and how to access them
Career and education options	Rental Ad Acronyms	Basic Nutrition
Career and education options	What is Community	Newly defined personal goals
Fair working conditions	Australian tax system and requirements	Employment contracts
Practical interview skills	Grooming for an interview	Centrepay

## Program Scope

The CREATE Your Future full program (workshops plus eight week intensive program) is now available in Tasmania and the ACT. Young people in South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria can now access the workshop program through the generous support of the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation (VIC), Bennelong Foundation (VIC) and The Origin Foundation VIC, SA, QLD, and NSW.

**Note: Young people in Western Australia and Northern Territory do not yet have the benefit of the CREATE Your future program in any format at this point in time.**

## CREATE Your Future Program

### 1. CREATE Your Future Independent Workshops

Workshop	Overview
<p><b>1. The Great Race</b></p>	<p>The Great Race Workshop is a team event to help identify services, agencies and key locations that young people may need to utilise within their own community. Clue by clue the team's complete challenges that lead to the discovery of certain information on reaching specified destinations. Throughout the day, participants locate and engage with community service agencies and learn about the services offered to young people in a fun and safe way. For example, to complete different stages of the race, teams may be required to locate the police station and have a photograph taken with the community programs officer or find Centrelink and find out what rent assistance is and talk to a customer service officer.</p>
<p><b>2. Think Outside The Square</b></p>	<p>The Think outside the Square workshop is a one day workshop designed to challenge participant's views to learning, and expectations and beliefs about their own abilities.</p> <p>The workshop takes participants on a journey of understanding different learning styles, challenges their way of looking at things through the use of scotomas, teaches participants to listen and challenge their own internal dialogue about how they can achieve anything they set their mind to through developing the skill of chunking.</p>
<p><b>3. Pathways to independence</b></p>	<p>The Pathways to Independence workshop is a one day workshop designed to teach participants how to fill out a TILA application, what help is available to assist them with bond, how to navigate Centrelink, how to buy the right things at the right price at the right time, the price you really pay for the privilege of a credit card, how to best manage your mobile bill, what to look out for when buying a car, and the difference between rational and emotional purchasing.</p>
<p><b>4. How to get a Job and keep it</b></p>	<p>The "How to get a job and keep it" workshop is a one day workshop designed to teach participants how to decide on what job to apply for and the steps needed to make it happen. The workshop covers goal setting, resume writing, how to address a Key Selection Criteria, dressing for success, grooming and interview techniques.</p>

## **2. CREATE Your Future Intensive Program**

The Program is a 24 day adventure of self-development, employability skills and transition skills learning. From week one of the program, young people are challenged to develop a sense of team and purpose through learning concepts like comfort zone, what is success, learning styles and team work.

The challenges continue throughout the course, and participants are actively engaged in action learning requiring them to explore the skills of chunking, keeping a food diary, looking at their community, cooking together and taking the leap of faith.

As the program continues participants find a sense of self confidence and purpose and continue to develop skills throughout the program including budgeting, cooking, resume writing, understanding basic nutrition, housing options, Centrelink, career planning, education options, goal setting, available supports including TILA applications, JPET, Medicare, Finding the super hero within, Cover letters, Grooming, job search, how to attain a Learners Permit, Understanding 100 points of ID, What to wear to an interview, addressing key selection criteria, tax file numbers, and more.

## **3. CREATE Your Future Carer Workshops**

CREATE can provide a pre program and post program workshop for carers and out-of-home care staff to explore the concepts of transitioning from care and support options for the young people in their care.

All program participants' carers will be invited to participate in a practical one-day pre program workshop designed to explore the process of leaving care and what skills will be required for young people to have a positive experience of transition. Carers will be supplied with an overview of the program the young people in their care will be participating and avenues for them to continue the learning whilst at home.

Post Program, a one day workshop will be run for carers to explore ways to continue the growth and development that has occurred for the young person, to consider individual needs of the young person in their care and strategies to assist the leaving care process. Carers will also hear from young people who have transitioned from care about their views of what was helpful.

Carers are also encouraged and welcome to share in the celebration event on the last day of the intensive program.

#### 4. CREATE Your Future Website | [www.createyourfuture.org.au](http://www.createyourfuture.org.au)

The CREATE Your Future web-site, [www.createyourfuture.org.au](http://www.createyourfuture.org.au), is the only national portal for young people transitioning from care. The information contained on the site has been developed from extensive consultation with young people, carers, and NGO's.

Content is tailored to provide state-based and national information for young people. The site has been developed in conjunction with the CREATE Your Future national training package (a holistic life-skills program and workshops).

The site has followed the domains of the (LAC) framework recommended in the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. The domains include the following:

- leaving care/transition/life skills
- health
- money/finance
- education and training
- employment
- housing
- transport
- food and nutrition.

CREATE Foundation is committed to ensuring that the site is updated and relevant to young people. However, has only received commonwealth (FAHSCIA) funding to review and update the site in 2009. Therefore, CREATE is in the unenviable position of continuously seeking corporate sponsorship to cover the cost of staff to update and monitor the site.

#### **Benefits**

Having one national website for transitioning from care will facilitate the following:

- Resources can be targeted to one site instead of having multiple websites all with pieces of information but none providing a holistic overview of transition services and information.
- Reduction in duplication and fragmentation of information systems.
- One national website can be monitored easily and the commonwealth (across government) and states/territories can be consulted along with young people to determine the website's relevance and usefulness and one central point can update it regularly.
- Offers a central point for referral for NGO's and Centrelink, etc.
- The site is updated and improved continuously ensuring you people's views, experience and expertise are used to keep the site fresh and up-to-date. However, no funding is received from government for CREATE to do this.



## 5. CREATE Your Future Grant Scheme

The grant scheme welcomes annual applications in the areas of Accommodation and Living, Education and Training, Driving Lessons, Travel/Conferences, Health and Wellbeing. Grants range for \$200 - \$3000.

## 6. Community Linkages

Our corporate partners assist with potential work site visits, and with facilitating various program aspects. Volunteers are a pivotal part in the program and value add to the process and costing.







Creating a better life for children and young people in care

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[www.create.org.au](http://www.create.org.au)

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