



CREATE REPORT CARD 2009

TRANSITIONING FROM CARE:
TRACKING PROGRESS



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for CREATE Foundation

create
FOUNDATION



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Cover

The skateboard image represents Connection and Transition from one ramp to another.

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CREATE FOUNDATION

Vision: All children and young people with a care experience have the opportunity to reach their full potential

Mission: Creating a better life for children and young people in care

CREATE Foundation is a national not for profit organisation. Our objectives are to ensure that all children and young people in care are respected, listened to and active participants in decisions which affect their lives. We aim to provide all children and young people in care with opportunities to create better life outcomes and to reach their full potential.

We work to effect systems changes for the benefit of all children and young people in care into the future by building community capacity with key stakeholders.

For more information on how to support CREATE Foundation programs and research projects visit www.create.org.au or email create@create.org.au.

Acknowledgements

This project has been a collaborative effort, and there are many people to acknowledge. To the young people who gave their time to complete the surveys we offer our sincere thanks. Without their support and continued investment to try and make the system more responsive to the needs of all young people in care now and into the future this report would not have been possible.

Thanks must be expressed to the many Case Workers, Team Leaders and Managers who encouraged and supported young people to participate in the survey. We also acknowledge the tremendous effort made by foster carers to contact young people who had left care and encourage them to participate in the survey. Many young people in care were informed and supported by their carers to respond to the survey and without this support their voices would not have been heard. Special thanks are extended to Greg Broadfoot who was pivotal in ensuring the voices of young people in the Northern Territory were heard.

The Report Card is an organisational priority for CREATE Foundation and each state and territory office supports the initiative. It was a challenging cohort of young people to engage, and the fact that we were interviewing young people who had left care made locating and informing them even more of a challenge. Thanks to Yvonne Amos, and our Marketing and Communications Unit for their help in developing a promotional campaign and developing resources to assist staff.

To our Project Manager Christine Flynn who had an incredibly complex project to manage, we say thanks for all her hard work in supporting staff, and her determination in making the Report Card a success. Special thanks go to Alex Cahill our Advocacy and Operations Manager who came on board towards the end of the project and injected her expertise, and enthusiasm into the project.

I would like to thank the efforts of all staff in making this Report Card the most successful since CREATE Foundation was formed in 1993.

Both the Transition Report Cards have been written by Dr Joseph McDowall. Joseph is committed to improving the lives of young people transitioning from care and his enthusiasm for this project to make a difference has been infectious. His dedication to ensuring the sample was robust will ensure the relevance of the findings. I extend our sincere thanks to Joseph for his unwavering support, and determination to use research as a tool to improve the life outcomes for young people transitioning to independence.

Without the support of our sponsors AMP Foundation the Report Card would not be a reality. Their continued support and sponsorship of CREATE has enabled us to promote the voices of children and young people to make the care system more responsive to their needs. For this we are eternally grateful.

Jacqui Reed
Chief Executive Officer
CREATE Foundation



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Foreword

Since our first Report Card: Transitioning from Care 2008 highlighted the issues facing young people transitioning to independence it is very clear that some states and territories have worked toward improving legislation and implementing policy. In addition, some new funding has been allocated. Nevertheless the amount does not appear to be commensurate with the need articulated by the young people.

Disappointingly this Report Card, our second looking at transitioning from care, highlights that there continue to be gaps in service delivery. Young people at arguably the most vulnerable time of their lives again report that they are not supported or resourced adequately to transition successfully into adulthood which severely limits their life opportunities post care. In fact, very little improvement is noted from young people's responses from the previous Report Card (March, 2008).

The issues facing the system have been inherent for many years, and a dedicated long-term strategy to improve policy and practice is needed if we are to see results. CREATE believes that a fresh approach is needed if we are to see a difference. To this end our campaign "What's the plan?" will be centred on informing and empowering foster carers and young people to advocate for their entitlements and rights under legislation and policy. Our aim is to work in partnership with foster carers and agencies to ensure that they are involved, and also aware of the entitlements available to young people in the transition process.

CREATE remains dedicated to improving the transition process and outcomes for young people leaving care and looks forward to working in collaboration with the sector and government to affect long-term sustainable change.

Jacqui Reed

Chief Executive Officer
CREATE Foundation



Biography: Dr Joseph McDowall

Dr Joseph McDowall has a Bachelor of Science with majors in Psychology and Zoology. He undertook higher degree studies in Social Psychology, completing his PhD from the University of Queensland in 1979.

Since 1974, Dr McDowall has taught at both the University of Queensland and Griffith University (from 1985) in the areas of Psychology and Photography. Specifically, he has lectured in the areas of research methods, statistics, social skills training, as well as all aspects of the theory and practice of photography.

Dr McDowall has provided consultancy services to the Department of Child Safety In Queensland. In addition to his consulting role with the DChS, Joseph also participated as co-researcher, with Ms Jacqui Reed, in a study exploring how children in foster care perceive “family”. The paper reporting the findings of the first of what was to be a tripartite study was presented nationally at the 2006 National Foster Care Conference in Australia and internationally at the National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in Portland, Oregon, USA and generated considerable interest. This study won the 2006 Child Protection Week Award for research from the Queensland government.

Being passionately concerned with child protection, Joseph, together with a small group of like-minded professionals, in 2007 formed The Care Connection, a not-for-profit company of which he is the inaugural Chair of Directors. This organisation was created to fill a void in the child protection sector, particularly focusing on connecting children and young people in care with the community to help build their self-esteem and confidence.

Dr Joseph McDowall authored the CREATE 2008 Report Card: Transitioning from Care, and has assisted in developing a computer interface to facilitate the administration of CREATE’s Be. Heard program across three states.

In 2008, he also joined the CREATE Foundation board and brings to that role a wealth of knowledge and experience of the child protection sector. His research experience and rigor in enhancing the core business of CREATE, namely hearing and responding to the voices of children, will be invaluable for our organisation.



Executive Summary

The CREATE Report Card 2009 was produced as a follow-up study to Report Card 2008 that explored the field of transitioning from out-of-home care. Initially, the 2008 Reports presented a review of relevant literature from national and international sources to contextualise the research. Then governments across Australia were surveyed to determine (a) the legislation and policies that have been introduced to regulate the treatment of those young people "aging out" of care, (b) inter-departmental partnerships that have been formalised to maximise support for care leavers, (c) the planning that is done to address the future needs of the young people, (d) support programs and services created to meet those needs, (e) funding arrangements put in place to ensure adequate assistance can be provided, and (f) monitoring mechanisms used to evaluate the effectiveness of the support and the success of transition outcomes. As a way of verifying governments' claims, young people who were transitioning or who had left care were questioned about their experiences as they moved through the stages of this difficult process.

Report Card 2009 represented a much larger study than its precursor and its timing was designed to detect recent changes that had been implemented to improve outcomes for young people, particularly in areas that showed poor responses previously. All state and territory governments responded to a set of questions addressing the issues outlined, providing varying amounts of information explaining the key features of each system. In the third phase of the study, data were collected from a sample of 471 young people (275 in-care and 196 who had left care) to document their experiences in the various jurisdictions. Females comprised 56.5% of the sample, and 22.3% indicated they were Indigenous.

A review of legislation governing transitioning from care revealed differences in the degree of detail expressed by jurisdictions, but associated policies and practice guidelines tended to be more comprehensive. There also still exists variability in when transitioning support should begin and for how long it should be continued. Why does one jurisdiction require preparation for transitioning to begin at 15 years while another could delay it until 17 years? Why will one agree to support young people until 25 years while others terminate assistance between 19 and 21 years? These young people are all Australians and deserve equitable entitlements wherever they live.

The larger jurisdictions have recognised the benefit of establishing partnerships between different arms of government to provide more holistic support for young care leavers. As more of these interconnections are

introduced, challenges will arise in terms of coordinating the contributions from the various sectors. Fortunately, good-practice models are available (e.g., SA) that demonstrate successful inter-departmental cooperation. While the needed attention is starting to be directed to connections with Indigenous agencies, evidence was provided in this study of the need for stronger, more effective partnerships to be forged between child protection authorities and those responsible for education, employment, housing, police, and juvenile justice.

One area where there appears a great disparity between policy and practice is the planning for leaving care. All jurisdictions expect that all young people in care, before they exit the system, will be involved in the development of a plan that will identify their likely needs in the foreseeable future, and specify the type and extent of support required to address these issues. Unfortunately, only about one-third of young people in this sample were aware of the existence of such a plan. Either they didn't have one or they had not been involved in its preparation. Given that it supposedly is "their" plan and will map their future move to independence, this situation is unacceptable.

Even those young people who had a plan did not find it all that useful. Often issues that became important had been overlooked, or the support advocated was not very helpful. The fact that over 40% of young people reportedly didn't know where they would be living on leaving care and over one-third had at least one experience of homelessness in their first year of independence also question the efficacy of this planning. A review of plan templates that were available suggested that while the official documents need substantial detail to emphasise responsibility and accountability, young people need a plan they can relate to and use. Efforts must be directed to improving the planning process overall, and to providing young people with their own "user-friendly" extract that is a living document supporting their future. This will have implications for the training of both workers and carers.

Although several smaller jurisdictions still expect general child protection staff to manage care leavers as well as the cases of those children within the system, larger states now are recognising the benefits of having staff with specialist knowledge and expertise to provide the best integrated support for those transitioning. Having the ability to identify current and future support that may be required by a young person (based on a formal needs assessment) and being able to connect the young person with the necessary support mechanisms are of vital importance to a caseworker. However, the role of these

Executive Summary

staff in encouraging young people to seek assistance also should not be overlooked. Large numbers of care leavers do not seek support; either they don't need help (or possibly see rejecting it as a test of their own capacity for independence), or they find the process of accessing assistance so overwhelming and frustrating that they give up. Part of caseworker training should deal with strategies for removing barriers that may exist preventing young people from accessing assistance and make the process of obtaining support easier.

A common form of support required is financial assistance to acquire essential goods and services to make independent living possible. Fortunately, more jurisdictions are allocating specific funding as brokerage for direct support to care leavers. Clear guidelines are available in some jurisdictions (e.g., NSW) to explain to workers and young people alike what care leavers' entitlements are. However, other regions (e.g., QLD) still draw on general "child related costs" to provide support for those transitioning (if such expenditure had been indicated in their Special Services Case plan). Clearly, it is preferable for eligibility criteria and entitlements to be specified as precisely as possible to reduce the formation of unrealistic expectations on the part of young people, and to minimise the discretionary control that could be exercised by bureaucratic "gatekeepers".

For any system to evaluate how it is functioning, it must consider outcomes as part of that process. Have the objectives that were set been attained? To do this requires monitoring of performance. It is surprising, in a field as important to the individuals involved as transitioning from state care to independent living, and as important to the nation in terms of the magnitude of well-documented

consequential costs to the taxpayers if transition is unsuccessful, that monitoring of leaving-care outcomes rarely has been undertaken. WA sets criteria for determining if transition is complete and surveys young people and agencies to ascertain if services are satisfactory. SA and VIC soon will be able to provide information on leaving-care outcomes through new data collection systems. However, much more work needs to be done in other jurisdictions to establish reporting frameworks.

Possibly impetus for these changes can be developed through the initiatives of the Council of Australian Governments and the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2010 that has been created to improve all aspects of child protection. Many acute issues must be addressed within the system; but it is how effectively the vulnerable young people in care transition to become valued and productive members of the community that is the benchmark of success. Data must be collected to demonstrate what has been achieved or what more needs to be done to reach set goals. For far too long young people transitioning from care have been "invisible", largely absorbed into the disadvantaged sector of the nation. While they may wish to be treated "like everybody else", they should occupy a special place in the collective mind of their "corporate parents" who need to be sure that their young people have realised their maximum potential as human beings.



Recommendations

The extensive set of Recommendations generated in Report Card 2008 as a response to the issues first raised in that research still have relevance given the present findings. However, the following short list is provided to focus attention on the critical issues that need to be addressed with urgency.

1. Planning

All young people exiting state care must have some form of leaving care / transition plan. They must actively contribute to the development of their plan which should:

- clearly articulate the needs of the young people (based on an assessment in key areas including housing, education, employment, health, and self care);
- identify the type and extent of support required;
- specify how young people can access support services;
- be flexible and responsive to the on-going needs of the young person;
- be reviewed and monitored as the needs of the young person change.

2. Education

It is imperative that partnerships are formed in all jurisdictions between Child Safety and Education with a view to ensuring that young people transitioning from care are given whatever support is necessary to complete year 12 of their education.

3. Employment

Special attention must be directed to applying the principle of “earn or learn” to young people transitioning from care. Members of this group are less likely than their peers in the general population to be employed or be continuing their education. They will need to receive maximum support to encourage their learning which should be allowed to encompass a variety of courses / training programs to ensure the unique needs of these young people are met. The more young people can be engaged in such programs, the less likely will be their involvement with Juvenile Justice.

4. Housing

All Child Safety Departments, in conjunction with Departments of Housing, must commit to achieving the Council of Australian Governments’ target that ‘no child or young person will exit care into homelessness’.

5. Life Skills

Life skills training (including budgeting, nutrition, and self care) should be a fundamental part of any educational experience for young people. Those individuals responsible for supporting care leavers must ensure that no young person transitions without having received appropriate training in life skills either through the mainstream curriculum in school or through specialist programs provided by support agencies.

6. Training

Child Safety Departments should develop training for foster carers, residential workers, and kinship carers which will help them prepare young people for transition into independent living.

7. Monitoring

Child Safety Departments should take steps to develop and implement mechanisms to monitor their processes for supporting young care leavers, and to review the outcomes young people achieve with a view to determining the success of their interventions and improving their operation.

A

Part A: Introduction

A1: Background

In 2008, the CREATE Foundation published its regular Report Card with the focus on Transitioning from Care (McDowall, 2008). This document comprised three components. The first presented a comprehensive review of research literature in the field, from a national and international perspective, highlighting the major issues facing “care leavers”. This group mostly included those young people who have “aged out” of the out-of-home care system and are described as transitioning. This was followed by a survey of the actions taken by state and territory governments to address the problems that had been identified in the system. Relevant areas included legislation and policy formulation, planning for transition, service provision, and outcome monitoring. Finally, groups of young people, including those approaching transition and those who already had left care, were interviewed to test the effectiveness of the governments’ responses. This 2008 study resulted in a series of recommendations for change designed to address identified problem areas in the care system (see Appendix A for a list of these proposals). When launching this Report, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of CREATE indicated that, in 2009, a follow-up project would be conducted to review progress toward achieving the recommendations.

The CREATE Report Card 2009 presents a more substantial investigation into the current status of transitioning from care in Australia and adopts a format similar to its forerunner. It provides an opportunity to review changes (hopefully improvements) that have occurred over the last 18 months in the support system provided by governments and agencies for the vulnerable young people who are transitioning from out-of-home care. The document is organised in three sections:

Part A provides a brief overview of literature that has appeared since the previous Report Card was written to draw attention to recent developments in the transitioning-from-care field that may have implications for the Australian context. It is not intended to repeat the extensive literature review already provided in the 2008 Report. Key issues from that study will be identified and the scope of the research that was surveyed is reflected in the attached Bibliography (see Appendix B) drawn from the references cited in the 2008 document.

Part B presents a detailed review of the current support mechanisms that state and territory governments have in place to assist those young people who are approaching the transitioning-from-care period, and those who already

have left care. Performance of authorities will be evaluated through addressing their achievements (particularly recent developments) in six key areas: legislation and policy; established inter-departmental and/or agency partnerships; transition from care planning; support staff and services provided; funding; and the monitoring of outcomes to determine the success of the transition to independence.

Part C documents the results of a large-scale national survey (administered through the CREATE Foundation between May and July 2009) of young people who recently have left care and those who are preparing to do so. These data represent a consumer evaluation of how thorough the implementation of government policies has been, how effective service provision is for these young people, and how appropriate and successful the achieved outcomes are for care leavers.

A2: Transitioning from Care

International Comparisons

It was clear from the literature reviewed in the previous CREATE Report Card (McDowall, 2008) that the care-leaving experience, globally, tends to lead to a range of negative outcomes for young people. Tweddle (2007) in her extensive review of the international research, summarised the common characteristics of youth who have left care. Generally, they are more likely to be: (a) undereducated (not have completed high school), (b) unemployed or underemployed, and earning lower wages (if employed), (c) having children at a younger age, (d) incarcerated or involved in the criminal justice system, (e) homeless at some stage, (f) living in unstable housing arrangements, (g) dependent on social assistance, (h) experiencing mental health problems and not able to afford adequate medical support, and (i) at a higher risk of substance abuse.

Stein and Munro (2008) assembled studies from 16 countries around the world. Each report outlined key statistics relevant to care leaving in its particular region, case studies illustrating experiences of typical care leavers, the influence of the welfare regime in contextualising transitioning, the basic legal and policy framework operating, leaving-care research relevant to the country, the possible use of secondary data in this research, and some key messages for changes in policy and practice.

Some differences were observed based on varying emphases across regimes, but all areas identified particular problems with transitioning leading to poorer outcomes for the young care leavers. For example, even in contrasting countries such as Sweden and the United States, with large data sets and sizeable reported research studies, care leavers experience marginalisation and material disadvantage (or “social exclusion”) in various ways.

In his concluding chapter, Stein (2008) identified stability of placement and the development of a positive identity as vital factors on which successful transition is predicated, certainly in terms of educational outcomes. He also stressed the importance of planned preparation for exiting care, and advocated the role of leaving-care services in helping young people develop self-care skills, practical skills, and interpersonal, relationship skills.

Stein (2008) categorised the countries surveyed as falling into two broad groups. First were those in which the experience of transitioning was accelerated and compressed, i.e., care leaving happens at a younger age than does moving to independent living in the mainstream peer group, and many issues have to be addressed in a brief period (e.g., Australia, Canada, and the U.S.). In the second cluster, transitioning tended to be extended and abrupt, i.e., young people can stay in State (usually institutional) care until their mid-twenties, but when such support ends it is expected that they exhibit “instant adulthood” (e.g., Romania and Hungary). Both approaches can lead to difficulties; preferred transition should be gradual, and provide “a time for freedom, exploration, reflection, risk taking and identity search” (Stein, p. 298).

One of the most important insights obtained from Stein’s research over the years was his realisation that outcomes were related to a number of individual characteristics including 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 (2008) 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 seemed to benefit least from after-care support (but whose needs should not be ignored).

In looking to the future, Stein (2008) believes that the experience of transitioning from care, in all jurisdictions, could be enhanced by (a) improving the quality of care (emphasising stability and continuity), (b) making the transitioning process more gradual, and (c) increasing after-care support through actions of leaving-care services. A major requirement to enable effective policy and practice development (as Courtney, 2008 discussed) is for governments to monitor the system carefully to gather data on service provision and outcomes.

Pinkerton (2006) discussed procedures that authorities could use for making global comparisons between care-leaving frameworks. In that paper, he presented a model that clearly indicates the major elements that must be addressed in any review of support systems. This model is reproduced in Figure A1.1. These elements will form the basis of the review conducted in this Report Card. It is important to recognise the inter-connectedness of the four key elements and the feedback loops that must exist to facilitate the functioning of the system. If actions associated with the key components are not performed, or feedback links are broken, the system will not be effective.

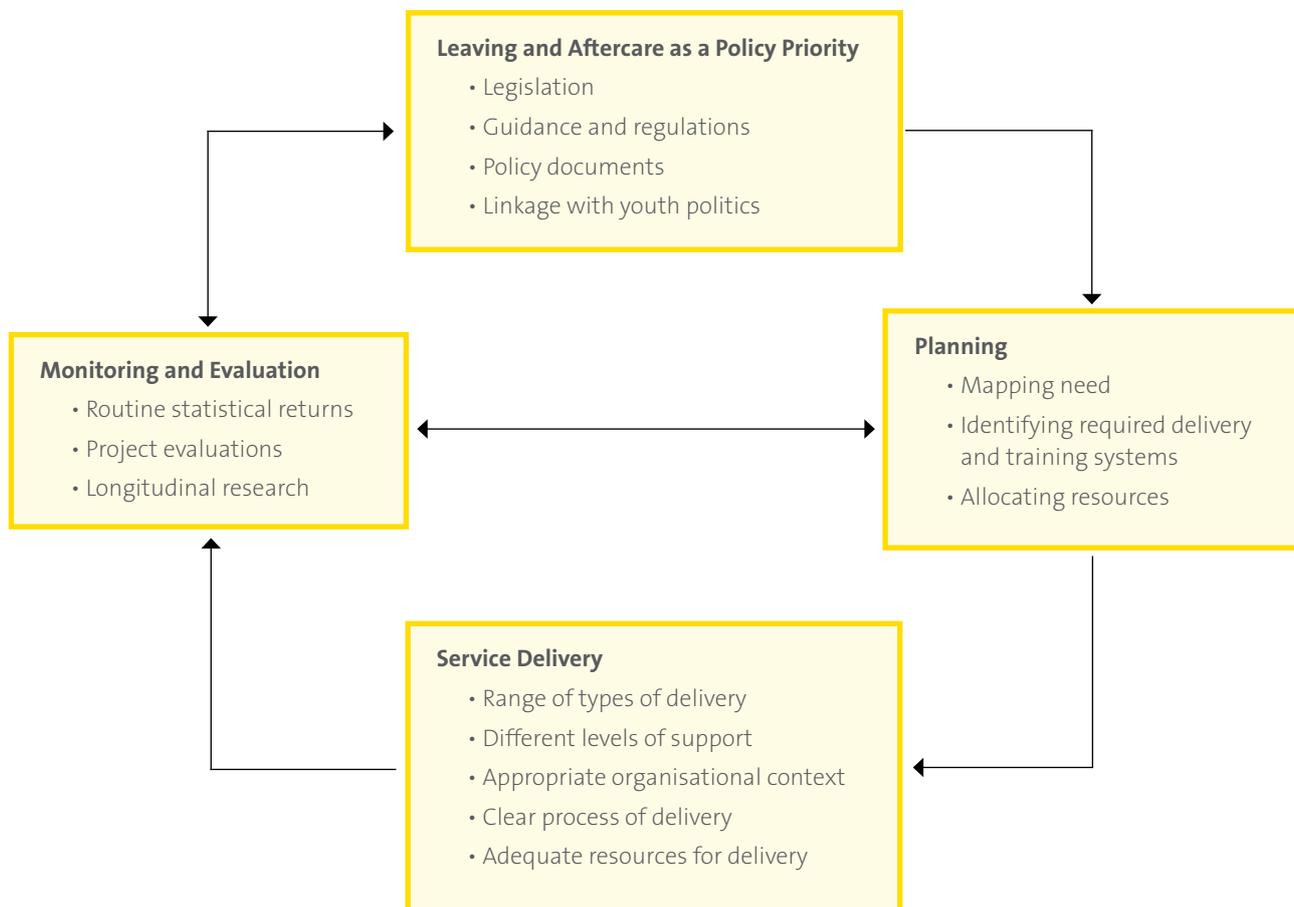


Figure A1.1. Model showing necessary components of a leaving-care support system (after Pinkerton, 2006).

A3: Important U.S. Changes

In early 2001, planning began for what became known as the Midwest Study, a collaborative effort of the state public child welfare agencies in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin and Chapin Hall Centre for Children at the University of Chicago. The overall purpose of the project was to gather information about services provided to selected foster youth in the participating states and to report on adult self-sufficiency outcomes achieved by the young people. Over subsequent years, a series of reports presented progressive findings from this longitudinal study, summarised in the Issue Brief released by Courtney, Dworsky, and Pollack (2007).

Comparison of the outcomes of care leavers from Illinois, where remaining in care until age 21 was already an option, with experiences of those transitioning in Iowa and Wisconsin where exiting care occurs at 18 years indicated that, in Illinois, foster youth were more likely to pursue higher education, achieve higher earnings, and delay pregnancy. Even though Illinois foster youth were less likely to have received independent living services than their peers in Iowa and Wisconsin before age 18, they were more likely to have received them between ages 19 and 21. Courtney et al. (2007) believed that young people who receive services during those transition years would be more likely to acquire and put to use independent living skills.

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 allows states the option (by providing matching federal funding) of maintaining eligible young people “in care” until age 21 years. Eligibility would be achieved if the young people were (a) completing high school, (b) enrolled in post-secondary or vocational training, (c) enrolled in programs to prepare for employment, (d) employed for at least 80 hours per month, and (e) incapable of performing any of these activities because of a medical condition. The definition of “care” varies from state to state, but could include extending Medicaid coverage to age 21, providing vouchers/funding for housing, education and training, and counselling services.

In 2009, Dworsky and Havlicek reported on their commission to conduct what will be a benchmarking review of state policy and programs in the U.S. before the full effects of this new legislation can be realised. Their findings highlighted great variability across states in eligibility criteria for, and the provision of transition support services. They noted that there was a major discrepancy between what would be expected based on state policies that permit young people to remain in care after 18 years and the actual number taking up that option (on the census date set, there were more 17-year-olds in care than 18, 19, and 20-year-olds combined). Dworsky and Havlicek suggested that this could be because the young people were choosing not to stay, or they were not being informed adequately of this option.

Another concern, mirrored in many countries throughout the world, was the finding that states in the U. S. were not able to report reliably on “the number of youth of different ages who are currently in care or the number who aged out of care in each of the past two years” (Dworsky & Havlicek, 2009, p. 20). Monitoring of the system was poorly handled. This is in spite of the fact that a requirement of the CFCIP legislation was the establishment of a data collection system to track the independent living services that states provide to young people. Two rules in the Federal register have been published since 1999 to establish the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) and to require states to begin collecting data no later than 1 October 2010 with the first report due 15 May 2011. The collecting of accurate data to measure the effectiveness of the system, and to inform planning and policy development now is being taken seriously in the U.S.

A4: Australian Developments

In Australia during 2008, several key reviews of the care system were conducted. Retired Supreme Court Judge James Wood was appointed to inquire into future changes that might be required to maintain the effectiveness of child protection in New South Wales (Wood, 2008). His Report, in dealing with various aspects of the system, included an extensive discussion of transitioning (Chapter 20) from which three recommendations concerning “young people, leaving care and homelessness” were derived. Wood advocated for the appointment of specialist caseworkers to manage young people’s needs in this area, and suggested that the Department of Community

Services fund the development of a training package to assist carers (foster and kinship) in preparing young people for leaving care. He also required the Department to ensure that young people were given essential information regarding support services available to them after leaving care, and the mechanisms by which the assistance could be accessed. These recommendations were consistent with those proposed in the 2008 CREATE Report Card.

Smyth and Eardley (2008), in their comprehensive review of literature and policy concerning out-of-home care for children and young people in Australia, gave some attention to issues surrounding independent living arrangements. They pointed to the likelihood of negative outcomes for care leavers and the need for a range of after-care support services. They referred specifically to transitional housing and illustrated how the “foyer or “campus” model, developed in Europe, has been introduced into Australia to provide integrated accommodation, life-skills and training opportunities for disadvantaged young people. Evidence suggests that participants in these schemes remain in education, complete courses and engage in employment. They also reported positive outcomes in terms of life skills, social interaction, and improved emotional resilience. It is claimed that these “foyer models have potential as a practical strategy for dealing with youth homelessness” (p. 17).

Housing also was considered by Johnson, Natalier, Bailey, Kunnen, Liddiard, Mendes, and Hollows (2009) as “one of a broader suite of resources necessary if young people are to achieve positive life outcomes” (p. 14). From a review of the relevant literature, they were able to espouse a range of principles fundamental in any response to the needs of young people leaving care. Successful transition requires that:

- young people receive training in independent living skills and are offered appropriate information and mentoring;
- care leaving should be managed acknowledging age and other life events, such as graduating from high school;
- the diversity of care leavers and their needs is recognised;
- support for young people leaving care is ongoing;
- support for young people leaving care is embedded in legislation, and supported by detailed policy frameworks and shared benchmarks;

- a joined-up approach to care leavers, reaching across policy areas and levels of government [is developed];
- support recognises young people’s agency and actively involves them in their own life planning. (Johnson et al., p. 13)

These are the guiding principles that will be tested through the research findings presented in the present Report Card.

Another substantial overview of the leaving-care system in Australia was reported by Mendes (2009). As a result of his review of current literature, legislative requirements, and service provision, he concluded that “at the very least, care authorities should aim to approximate the ongoing and holistic support that responsible parents in the community typically provide to their children after they leave home until they are at least 25 years of age” (see his *Discussion*). This essential criterion must be kept at the forefront of any evaluation of transition support services.

A critical recent development in the Australian child protection sector may have significant implications for the future in terms of governance and service delivery. Drawing on a plethora of relevant literature, the Council of Australian Governments established the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020 that advocates for the introduction of a public health model (Bromfield & Holzer, 2008) in an attempt to move from seeing protecting children “as a response to abuse and neglect to one of promoting the safety and wellbeing of children” (p. 7). The emphasis here is that everyone can make a contribution, and the National Framework now may enable the Australian Government to play a more defined role in overall support of the protection system. Under Supporting Outcome 4 (Strategy 4.3), general actions are proposed to (a) increase support through non-government organisations (NGOs) for young people leaving care, (b) continue and improve state and territory initiatives supporting care leavers, and (c) eliminate “exits into homelessness”. While these represent broad intentions, the involvement of all levels of government could create a context conducive to the formulation of national standards that have long been advocated (McDowall, 2008).

A5: Conclusion

From the major literature review conducted in the previous Report Card (McDowall, 2008) and this brief update, it remains the case that, throughout the world, leavers from state care are a vulnerable group of young people who need the same ongoing support that effective parents would give their children. The point made in the 2008 Report Card still is relevant:

For a child in the general population, leaving home is a process of transition; it takes time, with many false starts and recoveries, but with the continuing support of family and friends, a level of "independence" can be achieved. Why would we expect it to be different for those transitioning from care, young people who, almost by definition, already have experienced disadvantage? (McDowall, 2008)

As a contribution to the leaving-care debate in Australia, the CREATE Report Card 2009 provides an up-to-date review (as of June 2009) of the situation concerning legislation, policies, and practices within the Australian states and territories (Part B). This will be followed by an analysis of the experiences of young people approaching transition, and those who already have left care (Part C). These data will be compared with findings from Report Card 2008 to determine what progress has been achieved over the last 18 months throughout Australia.



B

Part B: Government Survey

B1: Method

B1.1 Respondents

All state and territory governments throughout Australia were invited to participate in this part of the study. Jurisdictions voluntarily provided the responses that have been summarised here. A list of Government Departments included is given in Table B1.1. All responses were signed off by the relevant Minister or Director General responsible for overseeing child protection and the out-of-home care system in the particular jurisdiction.

Table B1.1

Government Departments that provided Responses Summarised in this Report

Jurisdiction	Department	Responsible Person
ACT	D. of Disability, Housing and Community Services	Hon Andrew Barr Minister for Children and Young People
NSW	D. of Community Services	Hon Linda Burney Minister for Community Services
NT	D. of Health and Families	Hon Malarndirri McCarthy Minister for Children and Families
QLD	D. of Communities (Child Safety Services)	Hon Phil Reeves Minister for Child Safety
SA	D. for Families and Communities	Hon Jennifer Rankine Minister for Families and Communities
TAS	D. of Health and Human Services	Hon Lin Thorp Minister for Human Service
VIC	D. of Human Services	Hon Lisa Neville Minister for Community Services
WA	D. for Child Protection	Mr Terry Murphy Director General

B1.2 Survey

A series of questions were forwarded to the various Departments inquiring as to what systems they had put in place to assist young people when they transition from those placements (usually by 18 years of age). The questions addressed areas including the numbers of care leavers in each jurisdiction, relevant legislation, partnerships established to provide assistance, the leaving care planning process, staff and services available for support, funding for transition and after-care services, and monitoring procedures and outcomes. Appendix C lists the specific questions posed; these also are presented at the beginning of relevant sections in the following report.

B1.3 Procedure

Governments were invited to participate through letters sent by CREATE Foundation's CEO to the Ministers and relevant Directors General and/or Departmental CEOs. All jurisdictions provided considered responses current to 31 March 2009.

B2: Findings

B2.1 Data on Final Exits from Care

QUESTION:

How many young people left out of home care between 1 July 2007 and 30 June 2008, aged 15, 16, 17 or 18 at the time they exited care for the last time, due to the discharge from care orders, and/or their permanent restoration to family or permanent long term placement which was no longer regarded as out-of-home care?

Please provide a breakdown by each age, if possible.

Table B2.1.1

Numbers Transitioning from OOH Care 2007/2008 by State or Territory and Age

Jurisdiction	15yrs	16yrs	17yrs	18yrs	TOTAL
ACT	10	5	1	21	37
NSW	46	65	314		425*
NT	3	5	2	16	26
QLD	109	104	206	-	419
SA	23	10	91	18	142*
TAS	22	16	7	14	59
VIC	163	166	89	6	424*
WA	17	10	13	79	119*

- *These totals are different from values presented in the Child Protection Australia 2007-08 Report (AIHW, 2009). Departmental advice suggests that differences may be related to the timing of the count, and the fact that different types of orders may be included.*



B2.2 Legislative, Policy, or Practice Changes: June 2007 - February 2009

QUESTION:

What, if any, changes to legislative and policy provisions or practice guidance regarding transitioning from care, leaving care or after care have occurred in your jurisdiction since June 2007?

Please provide copies of any legislation, policies or practice guidance current at the end of February 2009.

To contextualise and complement responses from the Departments regarding their leaving-care legislation, actual extracts from the relevant Acts are presented followed by discussion of policy implications.

B2.2.1 Australian Capital Territory

Relevant legislation: *Children and Young People Act 2008*

Transition from Care provisions: Leaving care plans now are required for all young people leaving care.

Chapter 14 Part 14.3 Division 14.3.4

s. 455: What is a *care plan*?

In this Act:

care plan, for a child or young person who is, or is proposed to be, subject to a care and protection order or interim care and protection order—

- (a) means a written plan for meeting the child's or young person's protection or care needs; and
- (b) (vii) if the child or young person is or is proposed to be placed in out-of-home care—planning and services to be provided for the child or young person when leaving out of home care.

Chapter 15 Part 15.1

s. 503: Chief executive may provide assistance

- (2) If the chief executive stops having parental responsibility for a child or young person (for any reason), the chief executive may arrange for financial or other assistance to be provided to, or for, the child or young person on the conditions the chief executive considers appropriate.

New Policies

Private Partnership Group (PPG) within the Care and Protection Services has developed a *Roles and Responsibility* Policy that sets out requirements for agency and government services in providing services to children and young people being supported and cared for in OOHC. A copy of the Policy was not provided and could not be located on the Department's web site at the time of writing. This Policy presumably covers services for all children and young people (CYP) in care. A "Guide to Good Practice" also is in development for caseworkers when delivering services to CYP that will include guidance about supporting those transitioning from care.

Future focus will be directed to developing whole-of-government protocols for identifying support for care leavers in areas including health, education, and housing to complement leaving-care planning.

B2.2.2 New South Wales

Relevant legislation: *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*

Transition from Care provisions: Chapter 8, Part 6: Arrangements on Leaving Out-of-Home Care

s. 165: Provision of assistance after leaving out-of-home care

- (1) The Minister is to provide or arrange such assistance for children of or above the age of 15 years and young persons who leave out-of-home care until they reach the age of 25 years as the Minister considers necessary having regard to their safety, welfare and well-being.

- (2) Appropriate assistance may include:
 - (a) provision of information about available resources and services, and
 - (b) assistance based on an assessment of need, including financial assistance and assistance for obtaining accommodation, setting up house, education and training, finding employment, legal advice and accessing health services, and
 - (c) counselling and support.
- (3) The Minister has discretion to continue to provide or arrange appropriate assistance to a person after he or she reaches the age of 25 years.
- (4) The Minister may cause to be published guidelines specifying the circumstances in which assistance may be granted under this section.

s. 166: Leaving out-of-home care

- (1) The designated agency having supervisory responsibility for a child or young person must prepare a plan, in consultation with the child or young person, before the child or young person leaves out-of-home care.
- (2) A plan is to include reasonable steps that will prepare the child or young person and, if necessary, his or her parents, the authorised carer and others who are significant to the child or young person for the child's or person's leaving out-of-home care.
- (3) The designated agency is to implement the plan when the child or young person leaves out-of-home care.

s. 167: Records concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young persons

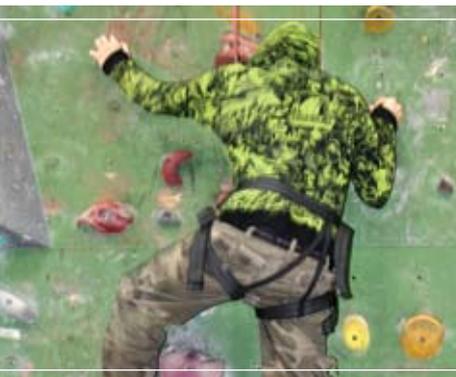
s. 168: Access to personal information

s.169: Entitlement to certain documents

New Policies

Guidelines on the provision of assistance after leaving out-of-home care have been prepared (published June 2008 pursuant to s. 165(4) of *The Act*). This is a comprehensive document detailing policy interpretations of the legislation that deals with the following aspects of leaving care:

- (i) Planning prior to leaving care
 - (a) Planning should begin at least 12 months before leaving care (2 years in the case of young people with disabilities). *NB.* This process is based on the assumption that the time for leaving care can be predicted (which is not always the case);
 - (b) Planning should be based on a needs assessment and generally will cover accommodation, employment and income support, education and training, personal history and cultural background, family contact, and independent living skills including financial management and health and lifestyle issues. Support agencies and personnel should be identified.
- (ii) Information about, and access to available services
Young people should be assisted to access mainstream services (to maximize their possible range of support) in areas including education, vocational training, employment assistance, accommodation, financial management and income support, mental and physical health and legal assistance. In addition, they should be guided to obtain income support and TILA, make contact with cultural groups and family members, and access their personal records.



(iii) Follow-up support

The designated agency that supervised the young person's final placement is responsible for monitoring the care leaver's achievements in the years following his or her exit from care. Staff should provide ongoing advice, support, advocacy and assistance where appropriate.

(iv) Additional assistance based on assessed need

Various criteria, that may indicate disadvantage, need to be met by the young person to be eligible for further assistance. Extra support can be provided where it is likely that it will contribute to the young person's successful transition to independent living.

(v) Financial assistance

If the additional support involves the provision of direct financial assistance, this can take two forms: (a) a time-limited (in three-month periods) fortnightly after-care payment up to a maximum of \$200 to assist a care leaver secure stable, affordable, and where necessary, supported accommodation if the young person is undertaking full-time training or education, and would be at risk of becoming homelessness; (b) one-off payments to assist with accommodation, education, finding employment, obtaining legal advice, accessing health services and counselling.

(vi) Assistance for care leavers over 25 years

The Minister has the discretion to provide after care assistance to care leavers over 25 years under exceptional circumstances where entitled support has not been able to be accessed previously.

In response to the publication of the *Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services* (Wood, 2008), the NSW government released *Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing* (March, 2009). While highlighting several areas that needed to be addressed (e.g., housing, interagency cooperation, costs of continuing support), the Wood Commission made only three recommendations regarding transitioning from care that the state government accepted: (a) the establishment of specialist caseworkers to assist in the case management of young people; (b) the provision of detailed information to care leavers as to the assistance that is available to them after they leave care; and (c) the development of a training package to assist foster carers and kinship and relative carers in preparing young people for leaving care.

B2.2.3 Northern Territory

Relevant legislation: *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007*

Transition from Care provisions: Chapter 2 Part 2.2: Children in CEO's care

- s. 68:** A young person who has left the CEO's care is someone who: (a) has left the CEO's care; and (b) is between 15 and 25 years of age; and (c) was last in the CEO's care for a continuous period of at least 6 months; and (d) in the CEO's opinion, is unlikely to be in the CEO's care again in the future.
- s. 70:** CEO must prepare care plan
- (1) As soon as practicable after the child is taken into the CEO's care, the CEO must prepare and implement a care plan for the child.
 - (2) The care plan is a written plan that: (a) identifies the needs of the child; (b) outlines measures that must be taken to address those needs; and (c) sets out decisions about daily care and control of the child, including, for example: (i) decisions about the placement arrangement for the child; and (ii) decisions about contact between the child and other persons.
- s. 71:** Modification of care plan
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), the CEO must modify the plan if the child is about to leave the CEO's care.
 - (3) The modified plan must:
 - (a) identify the needs of the child in:
 - (i) preparing to leave the CEO's care; and
 - (ii) the child's transition to other living arrangements after leaving the CEO's care; and
 - (b) outline measures that must be taken to assist the child in meeting those needs.
- s. 86:** Assistance for young person who has left CEO's care
- (1) A young person who has left the CEO's care is entitled, free of any charges, to the possession of any of the person's personal items held by: (a) the Department; or (b) anyone who was a carer of the person; or (c) a party to a placement arrangement for the person.
 - (2) The CEO must ensure the person is provided with child-related services and other services the CEO considers appropriate.

- (3) Without limiting subsection (2), the CEO may assist the person in obtaining any of the following:
- (a) accommodation; (b) education or training;
 - (c) employment; (d) legal services; (e) health services; (f) counselling services.
- (4) In addition, the CEO may give financial assistance to the person for any of the following purposes: (a) the person's education or training; (b) obtaining and furnishing the person's accommodation; (c) living in close proximity to the place where the person is or will be: (i) undertaking education or training; or (ii) employed or seeking employment.
- (5) The financial assistance must be given on terms and conditions the CEO considers appropriate in the circumstances.
- (6) this section: "personal items", of a person, includes the following: (a) the person's birth certificate; (b) school reports or other reports relating to the person's education or training; (c) photographs belonging to the person; (d) anything else prescribed by regulation.

New Policies

The NT Families and Children Policy and Procedures Manual has been updated to incorporate the intent of the new legislation and a Quality Improvement Framework has been introduced to monitor compliance. Planning for leaving care is expected to commence when a young person is aged 15 years. The standard care plan template, based on the *Looking After Children* framework, should be modified when the young person is preparing to leave care to outline measures that must be taken to assist care leavers in meeting their needs (The Act, s. 71).

B2.2.4 Queensland

Relevant legislation: *Child Protection Act 1999*

Transition from Care provisions: Chapter 2 Part 6:

Obligations and rights under orders and care agreements

s. 75: Transition from care

- (1) This section applies to a child or person who is or has been a child in the custody or under the guardianship of the chief executive.
- (2) As far as practicable, the chief executive must ensure the child or person is provided with help in the transition from being a child in care to independence.

Schedule 1: (k) to receive appropriate help with the transition from being a child in care to independence, including, for example, help about housing, access to income support and training and education.

New Policies

The Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) is reviewing the policies and procedures governing transition from care. This investigation is being conducted by the Transition-From-Care Working Group that will report to the Child Protection Partnership Forum and comprises key government and non-government stakeholders. Once finalised, any procedural changes will be included in the Child Safety Practice Manual. A Practice Skills Workshop focusing on transitioning from care will be conducted for staff in November 2009 and will emphasise the need for across-agency networks and collaboration.

B2.2.5 South Australia

Relevant legislation: *Children's Protection Act 1993*

Transition from Care provisions: Part 2, Division 1

s. 8: General functions of the Minister (2006 amendments)

- (1) The Minister must seek to further the objects of this Act and, to that end, should endeavour—
- (h) to provide, or assist in the provision of, services—
 - (i) to assist children who are under the guardianship or in the custody of the Minister; and
 - (ii) to assist persons who, as children, have been under the guardianship or in the custody of the Minister, to prepare for transition to adulthood.

New Policies

In June 2007, Families SA endorsed two new policies for dealing with the process of leaving care. In addition, a Practice Guide (Transition Planning for Young People Leaving Care [metro]) was introduced. These mechanisms for operationalising *The Act* were implemented via a series of workshops with Families SA staff between June and August 2007. The two policies addressed (a) the preparation for leaving care (Transitioning from Care [metro] policy) and (b) the entitlements for support following transition (Post Care policy).

Transitioning from care (metro) policy. This Policy is designed to promote better outcomes for young people leaving care by addressing (a) the need for early planning (from age 15 years); (b) issues around the provision of life skills training, information, practical support and advice for young people; and (c) the assistance needed for

accessing support services in areas including health, housing, education, employment and training.

Post care policy. This Policy deals with follow-up support for persons 18 years and over (with no upper limit on age) who previously have been in care for a period of at least 6 months. Specifically, it is designed to facilitate assistance in (a) re-establishing and/or strengthening connections between the young people and their families and communities; (b) accessing personal records; (c) accessing community services and programs including health, housing, medical, education, housing, financial management, counselling, therapy, life and parenting skills, and identity and relationships.

B2.2.6 Tasmania

Relevant legislation: *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997*

Transition from Care provisions: At present, broad general reference

s. 7: Object

- (h) to provide, or assist in the provision of, services to help persons who have been under the guardianship or in the custody of the Secretary during childhood to make a successful transition to adulthood.

New Policies

Jacob and Fanning (2006) recommended several amendments to the legislation, including more specific reference to support for care leavers. The first set of changes was introduced in August 2009. Stage 2, which will legislate to give the Secretary the capacity to support young people (who have been on an order in care) up to the age of 21 years, should be presented to Parliament in 2010.

However, a policy position *Planning for Leaving Care and After Care Support* was released to child protection staff in January 2009. This anticipates the future legislation by setting the expectation that planning for leaving care normally should begin for young people when aged 15 years. At present, standard support can continue for one year following discharge from care, but where ongoing assistance is required, a Case and Care Plan may be approved for up to three years from the time of leaving care. Such a plan would be monitored through the After Care Support Program designed to guide young people in (a) retrieving information from their personal file, (b) finding members of their family, (c) accessing government

and community services, and (d) obtaining financial assistance (that may continue until they turn 25 years).

B2.2.7 Victoria

Relevant legislation: *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*; *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*

Transition from Care provisions: Chapter 2

s.16: Responsibilities of the Secretary

- (1) Without limiting any other responsibility of the Secretary under this Act, the Secretary has the following responsibilities-
 - (g) to provide or arrange for the provision of services to assist in supporting a person under the age of 21 years to gain the capacity to make the transition to independent living where the person-
 - (i) has been in the custody or under the guardianship of the Secretary; and
 - (ii) on leaving the custody or guardianship of the Secretary is of an age to, or intends to, live independently.

However, as is indicated in **s. 16(2)**, the statement of responsibilities does not confer legal rights on care leavers.

s.16:

- (4) The kinds of services that may be provided to support a person to make the transition to independent living include: (a) the provision of information about available resources and services; (b) counselling and support ; (c) depending on the Secretary's assessment of need-
 - (i) financial assistance;
 - (ii) assistance in obtaining accommodation or setting up a residence;
 - (iii) assistance with education and training;
 - (iv) assistance with finding employment;
 - (v) assistance in obtaining legal advice;
 - (vi) assistance in gaining access to health and community services.

New Policies

Since 2007, a service delivery model for young people transitioning from care, and those seeking support subsequently, has been developed. Also completed, and ratified by all stakeholders, were service guidelines for three elements designed to support care leavers until the age of 21 years, including (a) Mentoring Services, (b) Post Care Support, Information and Referral Services, and

(c) Leaving Care Brokerage funding. This model specifies that planning for transition should begin with the young people at least 12 months before they were due to leave state care.

B2.2.8 Western Australia

Relevant legislation: *Children and Community Services Act 2004*

Transition from Care provisions: Part 4: Protection and care of children, **Division 5:** Children in the CEO's care, **Subdivision 3:** Care plans

s.89: Care plan

- (5) Without limiting subsection (4), the CEO must, in the case of a child who is about to leave the CEO's care, modify the care plan for the child so that it —
- (a) identifies the needs of the child in preparing to leave the CEO's care and in his or her transition to other living arrangements after leaving the CEO's care; and
 - (b) outlines steps or measures designed to assist the child to meet those needs.

Division 6: Provisions about leaving the CEO's care

s. 96: People who qualify for assistance

For the purposes of this Division a person qualifies for assistance if —

- (a) the person has left the CEO's care;
- (b) the person is under 25 years of age; and
- (c) the person at any time after the person reached 15 years of age —
 - (i) was the subject of a protection order (time-limited) or a protection order (until 18);
 - (ii) was the subject of a negotiated placement agreement in force for a continuous period of at least 6 months; or
 - (iii) was provided with placement services under section 32(1)(a) for a continuous period of at least 6 months.

s. 97: Entitlement to personal material

- (1) In this section — **personal material**, in relation to a child, means —
- (a) the child's birth certificate;
 - (b) the child's passport;
 - (c) any school report or other report relating to the child's education;

- (d) any photograph of the child; or
- (e) any other document or material relating to the child that is prescribed, or of a class prescribed, in the regulations.

- (2) When a child leaves the CEO's care, the child has a right to the possession, free of charge, of any personal material held by the Department or by any person or body who or which has provided care for the child under a placement arrangement.

s. 98: Social services

- (1) The CEO must ensure that a child who leaves the CEO's care is provided with any social services that the CEO considers appropriate having regard to the needs of the child as identified in the care plan for the child under section 89.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a child who ceases to be in provisional protection and care.

s. 99: Information and advisory services

Without limiting section 98, the CEO must ensure that a person who qualifies for assistance is provided with services to assist the person to do any one or more of the following —

- (a) obtain accommodation;
- (b) undertake education and training;
- (c) obtain employment;
- (d) obtain legal advice;
- (e) access health services;
- (f) access counselling services.

s. 100: Financial assistance

- (1) The CEO may provide a person who qualifies for assistance with financial assistance in the form of
- (a) a contribution to expenses incurred in obtaining, furnishing and equipping accommodation;
 - (b) a contribution to expenses incurred by the person in living near the place where the person is, or will be —
 - (i) employed or seeking employment; or
 - (ii) undertaking education or training;
 - (c) a grant to enable the person to meet expenses connected with his or her education or training.
- (2) Financial assistance may be provided under this section on any terms and conditions that the CEO considers appropriate.

- (3) Without limiting subsection (2), the terms and conditions may include provisions as to repayment and the recovery of outstanding amounts.

New Policies

The Department for Child Protection introduced a new Leaving Care Policy in October 2008 that reiterates the detailed provisions contained in the legislation. Three principles (child participation, self-determination, community participation) were identified as fundamental underpinnings of the policy. A positive feature of the policy is that it sets criteria for determining when the process of leaving care can be considered as finalised. Transition is complete when: (a) the CEO assesses that the identified goals set out in the leaving care plan have been achieved and the long-term placement arrangement is likely to be sustained, or (b) the young person turns 25 years of age, or (c) an Adoption Order is granted by the Family Court.

The Department also has replaced its Field Worker Guidelines with an online Casework Practice Manual (CPM). Leaving care issues including preparation for leaving, transitioning, and after-care support are covered in this document (refer to the following web site for details:

<http://manuals.dcp.wa.gov.au/manuals/cpm/Pages/15LeavingtheCEOsCare.aspx>).

B2.2.9 Discussion

Because changing legislation is a lengthy process, it was not expected that significant developments would have been achieved in the 18 months since the last CREATE Report Card. It still is apparent that states and territories fall into two broad groups in terms of the detail contained in their legislation. One category clearly articulates the CEO's responsibilities for preparing a young person for

transitioning, identifies the extent and duration of assistance, and may even address implementation issues (e.g., NSW, VIC, and WA). Others give a limited acknowledgement that care leavers must receive appropriate support (QLD, and TAS).

The two territories are areas that recently have modified substantially their relevant legislation; however, they still provide examples of these legislative differences. ACT gives a non-specific indication that the CEO may provide some assistance to a young person leaving care, while NT pays considerable attention to the planning for transitioning process and outlines the range of assistance that could be accessed.

Detailed legislation usually results in detailed policies that operationalise the law. SA is an interesting exception where the expression of legislation may fall into the "limited" category but the related policy framework is comprehensive. WA provides an ideal model, and is the one jurisdiction that discusses in detail how the responsible entities know that transitioning is complete. Inclusion of this vital stage of the process has implications for the monitoring of outcomes (see Section B2.7).

One question raised during the perusing of this body of legislation was a section of the VIC Act (s. 16[2]) that stated explicitly: "The statement of responsibilities of the Secretary under this section does not create, or confer on any person, any right or entitlement enforceable at law." Clarification is necessary regarding the implications that this stipulation might have for the treatment of young people leaving care.



B2.3: Partnerships

QUESTION:

Have any new formalised agreements and partnerships been entered into or existing agreements/partnerships been renegotiated, between your department and other departments and key service providers, for supporting young people transitioning from care, or for those who have left care? If so, please list and describe these arrangements. For example, include reference to agreement with housing, education and training or disability departments.

QUESTION:

Have any particular partnerships been entered into, or other measures been taken, to specifically address the needs of Indigenous young people leaving care or who have left care?

B2.3.1 Australian Capital Territory

Formal Partnerships

Table B2.3.1.1

Formalised Agreements and Partnerships between Care and Protection Services and Indicated Organisations

Partner	Project	Description
Housing ACT	Housing Young People Pilot	Established to improve young people's access to public housing and provide more responsive housing services. Particularly targeted at young people (16 – 25 years) who have experienced homelessness or are transitioning from the Care and Protection or Juvenile Justice systems. Requires worker continuity and consistency to facilitate longer-term tenancy and social outcomes for young people from the time of their assessment for public housing, continuing throughout their tenancy, to their transition out of the program. In addition to supportive tenancy management, program will establish and manage shared-housing arrangements and examine other age appropriate housing options for young people.
CREATE Foundation	Time to Fly Leaving Care Kits	Introduced to assist young people who are transitioning from long-term care by providing practical information they will need to learn to live independently and manage their own affairs.
CREATE Foundation	CREATE Your Future	Aimed at young people (16 – 25 years) who have entered public or community housing from homelessness, SAAP Services, the Youth Justice Services or CPS with a focus on supporting them in accessing and maintaining education and employment. Workshop and training modules will provide skill and knowledge development in areas such as nutrition, self-care, protective behaviours, accessing and engaging with social supports, budgeting, and health and well-being.

Partnerships Supporting Indigenous Care Leavers

Table B2.3.1.2

Partnerships between Care and Protection Services and Identified Organisations Designed to Provide Support for Indigenous Care Leavers

Partner	Project	Description
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service (ATSIS)	Leaving Care Planning	Assists in developing and implementing Leaving Care Plans for Indigenous young people.
	ATSIS Foster Care Program	Assists in assessing young people transitioning to Enduring Parental Responsibility Orders.
	ATSIS Integrated Service Delivery / Family Support Program	Supports Indigenous young people and their families pre-and post-care.
Narrabundah House	Indigenous Residential Service	Supports Indigenous young men transitioning to independent living (from care or youth justice), foster care placements, and returning to family.
Bimberi Youth Justice Centre	Aboriginal Liaison Officer	Supports Indigenous young people.

B.3.2 New South Wales

Formal Partnerships

Table B2.3.2.1

Formalised Agreements and Partnerships between Department of Community Services and Indicated Organisations

Partner	Project	Description
Department of Disability, Ageing and Home Care	Revised Memorandum of Understanding	Developing detailed protocols and guidelines which, among other matters, will address issues relating to leaving care (that were identified during a 2008 evaluation).
Specific partner not identified	NSW Homelessness Action Plan (July 2009)	To assist young people transitioning from statutory care and correctional and health facilities into appropriate long-term accommodation.
NSW Housing	NSW Housing and Human Services Accord	Developed to enhance cooperation to optimise the planning, coordination, and delivery of services to assist mutual clients in establishing or sustaining social housing tenancies. One specific target group is young people under 20 years of age leaving or who have left out-of-home care and who have no family support. Under the Accord, a Shared Access Trial has been conducted in Maitland to provide stable housing for care leavers under 20 years who were assessed as needing additional support. The one-year trial has concluded and project is being evaluated (as of February 2009, 13 young care leavers have been accommodated under this scheme).

Partnerships Supporting Indigenous Care Leavers

Table B2.3.2.2

Partnerships Between Department of Community Services and Indicated Organisations Designed to Provide Support for Indigenous Care Leavers

Partner	Project	Description
Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre (member of the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat [NSW] known as AbSec)	Marungbai Aboriginal Leaving and After Care Service	First funded in 2003. Through AbSec, funded Aboriginal out-of-home care service providers agree on how Marungbai can support young people transitioning.
Link-Up Aboriginal Corporation NSW		Funded to support Aboriginal people who were separated from their families when they were children to reconnect with family and kin.

B2.3.3 Northern Territory

Formal Partnerships

NT Families and Children at present is progressing the development of an NT After Care Service. No other partnerships were mentioned.

Partnerships Supporting Indigenous Care Leavers

Aboriginal Community Workers are employed in all work units in the Department. No specific partnerships were mentioned.



B2.3.4 Queensland

Formal Partnerships

Table B2.3.4.1

Formalised Agreements and Partnerships between Department of Community (Child Safety Services) and Indicated Organisations

Partner	Project	Description
Department of Employment and Industrial Relations	Life Without Barriers: Transition from Care – Pilot Program	To assist young people transitioning from out-of-home care prior to turning 18 years of age. Directed toward those young people who face barriers in accessing suitable education, training, employment support, income support, housing, health, and face other social, family, and personal challenges. Key areas of support identified include: development of practical life skills, improving access to employment and training, development and improvement of social relationships, improve access to information and planning options.
Department of Housing	Memorandum of Understanding – Housing Qld (2007)	Under the MOU, young people can be referred to Housing Services at 15 years as part of the transition from care planning process. A Housing Plan then is developed in response to the young person's needs and reviewed regularly as part of the case planning.
Disability Services Queensland	Memorandum of Understanding (continuing)	Regular meetings occur between Child Safety Services, Disability, and Housing Services to progress strategies to enhance practice across all agencies in relation to transition from care.
Office for Women	CREATE Foundation: Transition from Care Development Day Workshops (non-recurrent funding)	To provide day workshops for young women 15 to 18 years who are preparing to exit the care system. These are designed to impart essential information and build the young woman's skill base to enhance her confidence when transitioning.

Partnerships Supporting Indigenous Care Leavers

In Queensland, it is a requirement of legislation that, when a significant decision is made concerning an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, the Recognised Entity for the child must be given the opportunity to be involved. Therefore, engagement with Recognised Entities, Indigenous service providers and community members within all aspects of case planning and review is essential. Other Child Safety Service initiatives such as the current review of practices followed when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the development of resources to strengthen the case planning process with Indigenous families will support the transition from care procedures.

B2.3.5 South Australia

Formal Partnerships

In 2005, the *Rapid Response: Whole of Government Services – a Framework and Action Plan* was released to ensure that CYP under the guardianship of the Minister had access to the same support and services available to those with strong family networks. Departments, through the Across Government Guardianship Steering Committee, report six monthly to the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Child Development on their implementation of Rapid Response. Developments under *Rapid Response* that relate to young people transitioning from care are listed in Table B2.3.5.1.

Table B2.3.5.1

Formalised Agreements and Partnerships between Department for Families and Communities and Indicated Organisations

Partner	Project	Description
Department of Education and Children's Services	Individual Education Plans (IEP)	Designed to ensure coordinated planning between schools, Families SA and carers to support the child or young person's education and identify additional support needed to enhance engagement and retention at school. Data collected in semester 2, 2008 indicate that 60% of students in DECS schools now have IEPs; work is ongoing within schools to improve the understanding of the IEP requirements and increase the number of CYP who have an IEP.
	School Retention and Cross Roads Project	Families SA has established a lead Project Officer position within the School Retention Team.
Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology	Fee Waiver	This agreement ensures that TAFE fees for Guardianship students will be waived until the young people turn 26 years.
	TAFE SA Sub Quota	In competitive courses (where there are more applicants than places), TAFE SA has agreed that 5% of places will be quarantined for young people under Guardianship. Automatic entry is available in non-competitive courses.
Department for Families and Communities (other sections of same Department)	Disabilities SA	New protocols are being developed to facilitate timely and integrated provision of services to CYP of all ages, with a specific section on transitioning from care. (Expected release date: April 2009).
	Housing SA	The <i>Housing SA, Families SA, and Disability SA Service Delivery Guidelines</i> are being reviewed and updated. It is expected that improvements to planning, referral, and assessment processes will make housing access easier for care leavers. As part of the Muggy's South Project that provides accommodation and support to young people in independent and semi-independent living, Housing SA purchased a residential dwelling that is being refurbished to provide short-term accommodation.
Public Trustee		Special consideration (reduction in fees and charges) is given in situations where the Public Trustee is managing a young person's funds.
Department of Health	Health Standards Agreement	<i>Health Standards for Children and Young People under the Guardianship of the Minister</i> is Health's response to <i>Rapid Response</i> and was produced under the auspices of the Across Government Guardianship Steering Committee.
	SA Dental Services	Provision of services to CYP through School Dental Clinics, Community Dental Services, and the Adelaide Dental Hospital.
	The Second Story Youth Health Service	An <i>Adolescent Health Practice Guide</i> has been developed. Adolescent Health Assessments are now being provided to young people under guardianship. The main aim is that young people have a review of their health at a time when they are planning for their transition out of care, and will promote engagement with a service they can access until they turn 26. TSS also is planning to introduce special programs for young people living in Community Residential Care units and will offer training programs for staff to familiarise them with the range of services available for young people in their care.
	SA Ambulance	As of December 2006, an agreement was reached to provide centralised blanket cover for all children and young people in alternative care.

Partnerships Supporting Indigenous Care Leavers

The Aboriginal Family Support Service (AFSS) entered into a partnership with Families SA in 2008 to develop the “Moving On” program that offers young Aboriginal people appropriate, culturally supported transitioning. This service uses community networks, established connections with community Elders, and draws on their knowledge of Aboriginal culture in delivering the program. Funding was due to conclude in June 2009; no indication was given of attempts being made to continue the partnership.

B2.3.6 Tasmania

Formal Partnerships

No specific partnerships were identified.

Partnerships Supporting Indigenous Care Leavers

No specific partnerships were identified.

B2.3.7 Victoria

Formal Partnerships

Protocols exist within the Department of Human Services (DHS) that assist in the transition planning for young people leaving state care between Children, Youth and Families Division and: (a) Disability Services, (b) Mental Health, (c) Alcohol and Drugs Services, (d) Youth Justice, and (e) Housing and Community Building. A key program has been the Young People Leaving Care – Housing and Support Initiative. Representatives of these Divisions and other service providers form the Regional Leaving Care Alliances in each of the eight DHS regions in Victoria.

DHS has formal protocols with external agencies that also assist young people including: (a) Victoria Police, (b) Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, (c) Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, (d) Centrelink, (e) DHS/Commonwealth Youth Protocol (regarding homeless youth). No information was provided regarding specific programs conducted under these protocols.

Partnerships Supporting Indigenous Care Leavers

Housing and Community Building has developed an Indigenous-specific Leaving care Housing and Support Initiative in conjunction with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) that provides the service in the three DHS regions with the greatest number of Indigenous young people, i.e., Loddon Mallee (Mildura), North and West (Preston), and Gippsland (Latrobe Valley). In addition, VACCA has received funding from Children, Youth and Families Division to provide mentoring services for Indigenous young people.

B2.3.8 Western Australia

Formal Partnerships

In 2009, a whole-of-government policy statement will be developed and formally endorsed by Cabinet that will acknowledge the role of all Western Australian government agencies as a “corporate parent” to CYP in the state’s care. The statement will outline the roles and responsibilities of the agencies in addressing the needs of CYP in care, particularly in the areas of housing, education, and health.



Table B2.3.8.1
Formalised Agreements and Partnerships between Department for Child Protection and Indicated Organisations

Partner	Project	Description
CREATE Foundation	Create'Voyce	The Department, in 2008, established an Advisory Group comprising CYP in care or who had recently left care to provide feedback on out-of-home care policies and services. CREATE's role is to facilitate the Group's meetings that include fun activities and events, and provide a safe and friendly environment for young people to meet, share their experiences, and express their views.
Office of the Public Advocate	Support for Young Adults with a Decision-Making Disability	Protocol to identify young people who need a guardian or administrator appointed before the expiry of their care and protection orders and prescribe the processes by which the authorities will consider the needs of young adults.
Disability Services Commission	Memorandum of Understanding	Articulates interagency arrangements to assist disabled children and young people when transitioning from care.

Partnerships Supporting Indigenous Care Leavers

The Department currently has no specific partnership agreements that address the needs of Indigenous CYP.

B2.3.9 Discussion

Departments differed in the amount of detail provided regarding specific connections formed with other organisations with the express purpose of assisting care leavers. Most jurisdictions have established partnerships between child protection services and departments / organisations responsible for disability services and housing, with some adding other areas such as employment and women (QLD), mental health, youth justice, and alcohol and drug services (VIC). While jurisdictions such as NT and TAS claim that the needs of their transitioners can be handled through existing services because of the small numbers involved, it is interesting that ACT (comparable in numbers of care leavers) describe several partnerships for both mainstream and Indigenous young people. It is surprising that WA has not developed specific partnerships to support Indigenous youth exiting care.

SA provided the outstanding response in this area by documenting a large range of diverse but relevant inter-departmental associations designed to assist those transitioning from care. Possibly the established links are easier to identify in this state because of the emphasis given to interconnectedness through the *Rapid Response* system.



B2.4: Leaving Care Plans

QUESTION:

What, if any, data does the Department have about the development of leaving care plans for young people aged 15 and over? (For example, what number or proportion of young people aged 15-17 have such plans?)

Please provide pro-forma examples of a transitioning from care plan or a leaving care plan, if one is used.

B2.4.1 Australian Capital Territory

Scope of Leaving Care Plan

Unfortunately, a copy of the current policy guiding the preparation of Leaving Care Plans in the ACT was not available for comment. Information provided indicated that 118 young people will be turning 15 to 18 in 2009 (29 of these reaching 18 years) and that some of these will require a Leaving Care Plan (the need for a Plan seems to depend on the orders in place, but details were not given).

No data were provided on the proportion of young people for whom a Plan had been prepared.

The Department's response to this survey indicates that current policy requires the Leaving Care Plan to cover a five-year span, including the years that the young person is still in care. This would suggest that, depending on when planning actually commences, young people could receive monitored support to varying ages. For example, if planning began at 15 years, they would be assisted to at least 20 years; however, if aged 16.5 years (the oldest they could be before planning must commence, see Responsible Entities below), this could extend to 21.5 years.

Responsible Entities

A Senior Compliance Officer monitors and coordinates the development of Leaving Care Plans. The responsibilities of this Compliance Officer include: (a) reviewing the appropriateness of current planning tools, (b) identifying the young people who require a Leaving Care Plan, (c) ensuring that the required processes for leaving care are commenced at least 18 months prior to the date of leaving care, and (d) following through with caseworkers as required.

Interestingly, a team leader within the Care and Protection Services Care Orders Team also has been allocated responsibility for the development of Leaving Care Plans, although this role's responsibilities were not defined in the Department's response. However, it is a caseworker (within the relevant out-of-home-care agency) who develops the Plan in consultation with the young person (and carer/family/other supports if appropriate) and will conduct the necessary follow-up and monitoring.

Content of Plan

Information provided indicated that a Leaving Care Plan should be used to identify key areas that need to be addressed in preparation for transitioning. The Plan needs to ensure that the young person's skills are developed so that they feel prepared for independent living and are confident in making personal decisions and in seeking necessary assistance. To this end, the Plan must establish appropriate connections between the young people and relevant support services, and articulate follow-up procedures to evaluate outcomes.

B2.4.2 New South Wales

Scope of Leaving Care Plan

Planning for transition from care should occur at least 12 months before the expected date when this can be determined and should involve the young persons, and possibly their parents, carers, and significant others. The relevant legislation clearly indicates that planning should consider support needed until the young person reaches 25 years of age.

The Department currently does not hold data on the proportion of young people with Leaving Care Plans.

Responsible Entities

Under the relevant legislation, the out-of-home-care agency responsible for supervising the in-care placement is required to prepare and implement a Leaving Care Plan in consultation with the young person. Planning must occur within the Department's *Out-of-Home Care Service Provision Guidelines* that provide agencies with the operational framework for delivering out-of-home-care programs. It is a requirement expressed in these *Guidelines* that agencies have systems in place to track all children and young people in care above 14 years of age to allow sufficient time for transition plans to be developed.

Currently, out-of-home-care caseworkers located in all Community Service Centres have responsibility for overseeing the transitioning from care process as part of their overall case management. Under *Keep Them Safe*, specialist caseworkers will be introduced to assist in case management. It is not clear from the Department's response if these workers will have a major role in the planning for care leaving and the monitoring of outcomes.

Content of Plan

As stated previously, the new Ministerial *Guidelines* clearly identify areas that should be covered in a Leaving Care Plan. These include: (a) accommodation, (b) employment and income support, (c) access to education and training, (d) knowledge and understanding of personal history, including cultural background, (e) contact with family members, (f) life skills, including financial management, (g) health issues (including nutrition, risks of alcohol, drugs, and unsafe sex), and (h) legal rights.

B2.4.3 Northern Territory

Scope of Leaving Care Plan

It is required, under relevant legislation, that a young person in care will have his or her Case Plan modified into a Leaving Care Case Plan, a process that should commence by the age of 15 years, involve the young person, the carer, family members, and other key stakeholders, and be reviewed every six months.

At the point of leaving care, a young person's Case Plan formally would need to incorporate support planned through the After Care Services section, although details provided in the Department's response are unclear as to how this might happen. Since this service is charged with overseeing the provision of vital support until the young person is 25 years, it is essential that its function be articulated clearly. It appears that this Service at present still may be in development.

No data were provided regarding the proportion of care leavers for whom Leaving Care Plans had been prepared.

Responsible Entities

Northern Territory Families and Children (NTFC) caseworkers in the out-of-home-care team in each work unit are responsible for developing the Leaving Care Case Plan. It is suggested in Departmental documentation that these caseworkers may make a referral to the After Care Service, but who then would have oversight of the transitioning process needs to be explained. In its response to this section of the survey, the Department claimed that "the NTFC Quality Improvement Framework will monitor compliance with the development of care plans through data captured in the NTFC Community Care Information System"; but no details of the Framework could be located and no information was given as to who the responsible officer might be.

Content of Plan

The Northern Territory is one jurisdiction that now includes reference to specific support for care leavers in its legislation. The areas identified are: (a) accommodation (that may include financial assistance, e.g., bond payment, utility connection fees, purchase of household goods, assistance with tenancy arrangements); (b) education or training (e.g., payment of tuition fees, purchase of textbooks, computers, and materials, driving lessons); (c) employment (e.g., purchase of uniforms, tools, safety equipment, relocation expenses); (d) legal services (that could include transport costs); (e) health services (e.g., payment for health related services, transport, accommodation needed to access health services); (f) counselling services (e.g., payment for services, related transport and accommodation costs); and (g) access to personal items held by the Department, carers, or any party involved in the placement.

B2.4.4 Queensland

Scope of Leaving Care Plan

As outlined in the Department's *Child Safety Practice Manual (CSPM)*, planning for transitioning from care is expected to begin in the month before the young person's 15th birthday. The standard Case Plan is to be modified to reflect the planning decisions and reviewed at least every six months. If support is considered necessary for the young person after the age of 18 years, a Special Services Case must be opened. Although no upper limit to the duration of support is stated either in legislation or policy, the expectation articulated in the *CSPM* is that the

duration of a Special Services Case intervention generally should not exceed 12 months.

No data were provided indicating the proportion of care leavers for whom such a Plan had been created, or the average duration of these plans.

Responsible Entities

Currently, the relevant Child Safety Officer dealing with the young person's case has responsibility for developing a Leaving Care Plan and for deciding if a Special Services Case needs to be opened. This is a significant responsibility to be placed on workers who already may have a substantial caseload. The Department indicated that, although no formal directive had been given for the establishment of specialist transition from care officers (as recommended in McDowall, 2008), several Child Safety Services Centres have restructured existing resources to create dedicated positions.

The challenges and opportunities inherent in the establishment of specialist positions will be one of the issues considered in a major review of Transition from Care Policy being conducted at present. Child Safety Services (CSS, within the new Department of Communities) also is reviewing the case plan template to determine the efficacy of this tool for recording a young person's future goals for entering adulthood. The emphasis here will be on considering a young person's needs in an holistic way. Strategies to achieve comprehensive and culturally relevant planning for satisfying a young person's needs will be incorporated in the practice guidelines provided to CSS staff.

Content of Plan

While the relevant legislation includes limited examples of the type of support that should be considered when transitioning (e.g., housing, income support, training and education), the various manuals and guides available to workers and young people provide a clear indication of the assistance young people can expect. As the CSPM states, transition from care planning should focus on the skills and abilities of the young person, and what is required to help them achieve independence. Planning should focus on: (a) accommodation and self-care skills, (b) helping the care leaver understand the reasons for their being in care and how to access information on their departmental file, (c) identity issues, (d) family, social relationships and support networks, (e) education, training and employment, (f) income support, (g) health, and (h) emotional and behavioural development. The guide *Where to from here?* that all young people should receive when leaving care provides practical contacts to address these areas of need.

B2.4.5 South Australia

Scope of Leaving Care Plan

Transition planning should occur for every young person from the age of 15 years and should gain clarity and intensity as the young person approaches 18 years and/or the time of his or her proposed exit from care. Oversight of the development of these plans falls within the purview of the Annual Review Panel that is required to evaluate planning and management directions every 12 months.

Under the Transitioning from Care Policy, support can be provided to age 25 years if needed through actions of the Youth Support Service. Alternatively, the young person can opt for assistance provided by the Post Care Service located within the Adoptions and Family Information Service (for which there is no specified age limit), or through other specialist services (e.g., Disabilities SA).

At this stage, no data could be provided regarding the proportion of young people having transition plans. However, the Departmental response highlighted the introduction of a new case management IT system (C3MS) that in future will be capable of accurately recording the number of Leaving Care Plans completed.

Responsible Entities

As indicated in the *Families SA Practice Guide*, the designated case manager largely is responsible for facilitating preparation of the Leaving Care Plan in consultation with the young person. Youth workers assist with life skills assessment. All support specified in post-care case management requires the approval of the District Centre Manager.

South Australia is one jurisdiction that has increased the investment in staff providing post-care support. Four Senior Youth Workers have been added to the existing Youth Support Teams to work with young people post-care to 25 years. In addition, Post Care Services has been established involving four positions (3.2 FTE) working with young people over 18 years.

Content of Plan

Through the Transition and Post-Care Plans prepared with young people by Families SA, support is provided for: (a) re-establishing and/or strengthening connections with family and community, (b) accessing personal records, and accessing services dealing with (c) health, (d) housing, (e) medical, (f) education, (g) financial management, (h) counselling and therapy, (i) life and parenting skills, and (j) identity and relationships.

B2.4.6 Tasmania

Scope of Leaving Care Plan

Planning for transition from care begins when a young person is 15 years and is managed through the annual Case and Care Review. Before the young person turns 18 years, a Leaving Care Plan is developed that should outline the supports provided for a minimum of one year, but up to three years after transitioning where additional assistance is required. When young adults turn 19 years, they may be referred to the After Care Support Program. As part of this program, financial support can be provided until the age of 25 years.

The Department's current information system does not record how many young people have a Leaving Care Plan.

Responsible Entities

Because of the relatively low numbers of young people transitioning each year in Tasmania and their dispersed geographic location, the Department's position is that it is preferable for a young person's primary worker to continue to provide all necessary support during the transitioning process and post care. Child Protection Managers and Senior Practice Consultants ensure that the policy is implemented.

Content of Plan

Case and Care Plans for those leaving care address issues including: (a) health (e.g., day to day needs, preventative health, sexual health), (b) wellbeing (including emotional and behavioural development), (c) education, (d) identity (e.g., personal information, family details, cultural background), (e) family and social relationships (including peer relationships, community activities, and social presentation), (f) self-care skills (including life skills and financial management).

B2.4.7 Victoria

Scope of Leaving Care Plan

The Victorian Leaving Care model stresses the importance of beginning to prepare a young person for transitioning to independent living at least 12 months prior to their exit from care. Legislation requires that the Plan produced will detail the range of support to be provided until the young person reaches the age of 21 years.

It is asserted by the Department that all young people in out-of-home care who are subject to Custody or

Guardianship Orders have a Best Interests Plan.

However, no data were provided to verify the accuracy of these claims.

Responsible Entities

Program and Service Advisor staff who are located in the Children, Youth, and Families Division both centrally and in all eight regions, are primarily responsible for the establishment and monitoring of the transitioning from care processes. Specific duties include liaison with Leaving Care service providers, monitoring referrals and quality of service provision, and the establishment and monitoring of databases for leaving care brokerage acquittals. These staff work with community service organisations to facilitate provision of services state-wide (ensuring that young people are connected with appropriate Leaving Care resources and that follow-up services are responsive and meet the needs of young people).

Content of Plan

Victorian Best Interests Plans (including those modified to become Leaving Care Plans) cover a variety of placement issues including (a) safety, (b) long-term stable care, (c) cultural connections, (d) therapeutic treatment, as well as a range of health and welfare needs including (e) health, (f) education, (g) ongoing emotional or behavioural conditions, (h) identity, (i) family and social relationships, (j) social presentation, and (k) self-care skills. Within each area, planners are required to identify (a) the major concerns/needs the young person has, (b) goals proposed to be achieved, (c) tasks to be undertaken to reach goals, (d) who has responsibility for tasks, (e) the date the tasks are to be commenced and/or completed, (f) how progress toward goals will be measured, (g) and finally has the outcome been achieved. Departmental staff generally need to facilitate connections between young people and leaving care agencies where particular kinds of support can be provided including leaving care mentoring, post-care support, referral and information services, and leaving care brokerage funding.

B2.4.8 Western Australia

Scope of Leaving Care Plan

Planning for transitioning is expected to begin after the young person turns 15 years and assistance should be provided until s/he reaches 25 years. It is expected that the support required for independent living will be documented in the Care Plan modified 12 months prior to leaving care.

The Department has procedures in place to review the planning process and was able to state that, of the 119 young people who left care in 2007–08, 87 (73%) had a care plan that was developed, reviewed, or modified in the 12 months before transition.

Responsible Entities

The Department indicated that, in Western Australia, no staff members have been dedicated to the provision of transitional support or leaving care services. It is the responsibility of individual caseworkers to assist young care leavers as part of the Department's holistic case management approach.

Content of Plan

The Care Plans in Western Australia are designed to address all placement needs of young people and are extended with specific detail when dealing with transitioning. The general areas covered include: (a) safety, (b) care arrangements, (c) health, (d) education, (e) social and family relationships, (f) recreation and leisure, (g) emotional and behavioural development, and (h) identity and culture.



B2.4.9 Discussion

Jurisdictions still vary in terms of the length of time they undertake to support young people who are transitioning or have left care. NT, QLD, SA, TAS and WA want planning to begin at 15 years; NSW and VIC stipulate at least 12 months (ACT 18 months) prior to the young person exiting care. The latter approach assumes a well-planned process, where the date of leaving is predetermined. However, this is not the case with all young people and could result in some being disadvantaged when a premature exit occurs.

Similarly, the duration of support varies across jurisdiction. NSW, NT, SA, and WA extend their responsibility to age 25 years; VIC, and TAS to 21 years (although TAS can provide financial assistance until the young person reaches 25 years). ACT indicates that the final plan can span 5 years (when planning begins then becomes a critical issue) and QLD is non-committal, but advice provided in their *Practice Manual* suggests that a Special Services Case plan normally wouldn't extend longer than 12 months after the young person leaves care. It would seem that there is no defensible reason for such variability and governments should work together to achieve consistency in the area of planning.

Another issue that becomes obvious when reviewing the plans produced (although only three of the Departments provided templates that they use) is the variability in complexity of the document. For example, NT and VIC use case plans / leaving-care plans that contain records of thorough needs assessment, goal-setting, action-planning, and documentation of other responsibilities. The plans are detailed and comprehensive. While these are appropriate for Departmental accountability, such plans are densely packed with large amounts information and can be extremely complex. Given that young people are to be involved in the planning process and should receive a copy of their current document, a more "user friendly" or young persons' version is required. WA does use a much simpler form but this does not record some essential detail particularly concerning responsibility for action. It is suggested that two versions of a plan should exist: the official document and an "extract" that can be discussed with, and provided to the young person.

Complexity also exists in the processes that need to be followed by young people to gain assistance. When reviewing the information provided by Departments, it is not always clear who is responsible for what, and what are the reporting hierarchies within organisations, where sections often are identified by acronyms and role definitions are obscure. It can be confusing determining which agencies are involved in certain stages of a process,

and how they relate to other services. Greater clarity exists when the Departments are able to identify the relevant interconnections as tends to occur when whole-of-government, holistic approaches are adopted. SA is an example of good practice in this area, and the type of flow chart that has been developed to show relevant organisational connections provides a valuable tool that would assist caseworkers and young people alike.

The complexity of process and decision-making also has implications in jurisdictions where maximum responsibility and discretionary power is vested in the regular caseworker (e.g., QLD). For staff with already heavy case loads, the extra requirement of making decisions about the long-term support of young care leavers (which may require the development of special plans and the conduct of ongoing reviews) is a stress the workers do not need and may help explain why the system appears not to be working. Everything should be done where possible to clarify the entitlement of young people to minimise confusion, unrealistic expectations, and possible disappointment.

As documented in previous sections, all jurisdictions, through their legislation and policies, require that young people when transitioning have some form of leaving care plan. However, only one state was able to specify how many young people actually had a current plan (the WA Department found 73% of those transitioning in 2007-08 met this criterion). Other states and territories indicated they did not have mechanisms for collecting these data (although SA now has introduced a system designed to capture this type of information). VIC asserted that all their young transitioners had a plan. Until Departments introduce mechanisms to gather such data routinely, the planning process will not be sufficiently accountable.



B2.5: Support Staff and Services

QUESTION:

Have specific Departmental staff positions with a “transitioning from care” primary focus been established? If so, how many positions have been established, in which Departmental sections are they located and were they filled as at end March 2009?

QUESTION:

Have any non-government organisations been funded in the past 18 months to provide new or enhanced specialist transitioning, leaving care or aftercare services? If so, which organisations, what have they been funded to provide, what is the intended scope of the services, and when did service delivery commence?

QUESTION:

What specific support services and resources, new and existing, are available for young people transitioning from care, including services while still in care and planning to leave and after care services?

B2.5.1 Australian Capital Territory

Positions Established

A Senior Compliance Officer monitors the development of Leaving Care Plans and is the point of contact for care leavers within the Department. In addition, a Team Leader within the Care and Protection Services Care Orders Team now has been allocated responsibility for the development of Leaving Care Plans by out-of-home care agencies that also offer follow-up services and support.

Funded Organisations and Specific Support Services

Through the Youth Services Program (YSP), funding is provided to 19 community organisations to deliver 25 services to care leavers. The YSP primarily funds early intervention programs to support young people “at risk” aged 12 – 25 years that include youth centres, youth

support services, and youth development services. Work is progressing with these organisations to ensure a focus on the specific needs of care leavers. Only two particular organisations were identified: (a) the Richmond Fellowship provides accommodation and support to young people due to transition from care within six months; and (b) Narrabundah House Indigenous Supported Accommodation provides housing for young Indigenous men.

B2.5.2 New South Wales

Positions Established

Special caseworkers have been assigned to all Community Services Centres to handle all aspects of case management of CYP in out-of-home care including transitioning from, and leaving the system.

Funded Organisations and Specific Support Services

As part of the 2007 out-of-home care funding rollout, the Department provided UnitingCare Burnside with enhanced funding to deliver transitioning, leaving care, and aftercare support services to young people who are or previously have been placed with their agency. Support includes accessing accommodation, health, education, legal issues, training, employment and financial assistance. Services are delivered in the Southern region as well as Metro South West Sydney.

A.L.I.V.E. , a service operated by CatholicCare, is a program designed to assist 15 – 25 year-old young people to assist those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. The service is delivered in the Inner West region of Sydney and utilises brokerage funds to provide accommodation and support.

The Benevolent Society is scheduled to receive new funding to deliver transitioning, leaving care, and aftercare support once growth is achieved and young people placed with this agency move towards leaving care.

Relationships Australia delivers the Aftercare Resource Centre across the Sydney Metropolitan and Hunter Central Coast areas to assist young people 16 – 25 years with living independently. The Department also has increased funding (from July 2009) to the Aftercare Resource and Support Service to provide support to NSW care leavers who are over 25 years residing in Australia.

Funding also is provided to Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre to auspice the Marungbai Aboriginal Leaving and After Care Service.

B2.5.3 Northern Territory

Positions Established

Caseworkers in the Out-of-Home Care team in each unit are responsible for working with young people regarding their transition from care.

Funded Organisations and Support Services

The Department currently is progressing the development of the NT After Care Service.

B2.5.4 Queensland

Positions Established

Several Child Safety Service Centres (CSSC) have restructured resources to establish positions dedicated to assisting care leavers.

Funded Organisations and Support Services

Revised transition from care policy and procedures will promote the need for inclusive case planning. Efforts will be directed to ensuring consistency across all agencies working with young people through aligning the goals and strategies identified in a young person's case plan with those contained in foster carer agreements and licensed care service case plans. By establishing a support network of family, carers, and agencies around each young person leaving care, the new procedures will promote continuity of relationships and help reduce social isolation.

Recent efforts by the Department have concentrated on the production of resource material for use by Community Support Officers to further enhance transition from care planning. One such resource is designed to provide information and raise awareness of young people about services and supports available at the Commonwealth and State level and present strategies to access these supports. This will complement the existing Departmental booklet *Where to from Here?*.

CREATE Foundation was consulted in the development of these resources which will be available through the Child Safety Services website and at local CSSCs. CREATE also consulted with young people in designing a dedicated transitioning checklist which now is available on the Child Safety Services' website.

In terms of specific services, Family Planning Queensland has been funded to implement training and develop resources around sexual health issues.

B2.5.5 South Australia

Positions Established

Families SA has been expanding services since new policies were implemented in June 2007. Three major service areas exist to support care leavers: Youth Support Teams, Post Care Services, and Anti-poverty Services. Table B2.5.5.1 lists the current combined active FTEs across the Northern and Southern Youth Support Teams.

Table B2.5.5.1

Title and Number of Positions Currently Active and Areas of Responsibility in Northern and Southern Youth Support Teams

Position Title	Area of Work	Number of Positions (FTE)
Supervisors; OPS 5	Transition and Post Care	2
Senior Youth Workers: OPS 4	Post Care (18 – 25 years)	4
Youth Workers: OPS 3	Transition (15 – 17 years)	6
Youth Support Worker: OPS 2	Transition (15 – 17 years)	2
TOTAL FTE		14

Post Care Services (established 2007) is co-located with the Adoptions and Family Information Service (AFIS) within the Southern Metropolitan Region Directorate. This Service supports care leavers over 18 years (no upper limit). Table B2.5.5.2 lists the type and number of filled positions at Post Care Services.

Table B2.5.5.2

Positions Currently Filled at Post Care Services

Position Title	Employment Status	Number of Positions (FTE)
Team Leader: ASO 6	Permanent	1
Senior Social Worker: PO 2	Permanent	1
Senior Social Worker: PO 2	Contract	0.8
Social Worker	Contract	0.4
TOTAL FTE		3.2

Anti-poverty Services do not have designated positions to work with care leavers; however, staff of the service are committed to working with young transitioners. Anti-poverty teams are located within the region in which the District Centre is based.

Funded Organisations and Support Services

Families SA offers integrated support services both internal and external to the Department. The Youth

Support Teams assist with: life skills training and development, a TAFE accredited tenancy training program, obtaining accommodation, brokerage applications (e.g., for the acquisition of household goods), developing support networks, seeking employment, and setting educational directions.

The Post Care Services provides information, advocacy, referral, and support for those over 18 years. Delivery of Anti-poverty Services (including development of personal and household financial management skills, acquisition of consumer knowledge and living skills, and access to entitlements) can be negotiated during the planning and review process.

Currently funded external transitioning services include Anglicare Youth 180, Salvation Army Muggy's Southern and Northern, and Baptist Care XStreams program. Although these services offer support through different mechanisms, their programs generally cover budgeting, cooking, maintaining household, and support around learning to use public transports and to access services.

B2.5.6 Tasmania

Positions Established

No specialist staff members are employed to work with care leavers; caseworkers assume this responsibility.

Funded Organisations and Support Services

The Kennerley Children's Home continues to be funded to provide the "Moving On" leaving care program that offers supported accommodation and mentoring for up to four young people through a lead tenant model.

Additionally, the Department provides the After Care Support Program and provides resources such as the information package "Outta Here: Your Options, Your Choices" to young people in care when they turn 15 years.

B2.5.7 Victoria

Positions Established

In the Children, Youth and Families Division program areas, both centrally and in all eight regions, there are Program and Service Advisor staff with a primary focus on establishing and monitoring transition from care processes in Victoria. These staff work with community service organisations to ensure young people are referred to the Leaving Care services and that the follow up responses are timely and meet expressed needs.

Funded Organisations and Support Services

The Victorian Leaving Care initiative was introduced in September 2008. Since then, all eight DHS regions have either called for expressions of interest or have allocated funds directly to community service organisations for provision of leaving care support. Table B2.5.7.1 indicates the range of organisations involved and the services available.

It should be noted that the Victorian government also has provided flexible brokerage to assist young people (from 16 to 21 years), who either are transitioning or who have left care, achieve successful outcomes in independent living.

Table B2.5.7.1

Community Service Organisations Funded and Leaving Care Support Provided in Victoria

Region	Community Service Organisation	Leaving Care Service
Barwon South West	Whitelion Inc	Mentoring
	Brophy Family and Youth Services Barwon Youth	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Service
Eastern Metropolitan	Whitelion Inc	Mentoring
	Salvation Army Eastcare	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Service
Gippsland	Whitelion Inc and Quantum Youth Services	Mentoring and Post Care Support, Information and Referral (Interim Services)
	Expression of Interest for recurrent services 2009/2010	Mentoring and Post Care Support, Information and Referral Service
Grampians	Lisa Lodge	Mentoring
	Child and Family Services Ballarat Wimmera Uniting Care	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Service
Hume	Central Hume Support Services Berry Street Victoria	Mentoring and Post Care Support, Information and Referral Service
	Hume Creating Connections providers	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Service
Loddon Mallee	Whitelion Inc	Mentoring
	St Luke's Anglicare Mildura Accommodation and Support Program	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Service
North and West	Whitelion Inc	Mentoring
	Expression of Interest process	Post Care Support, Information and Referral Service
Southern	Jesuit Social Services	Mentoring
	Southern Directions Youth Services	Mentoring and Post Care Support, Information and Referral Service

B2.5.8 Western Australia

Positions Established

No staff have been dedicated specifically to the provision of transitional support/leaving care services. Field workers assist young people transitioning from care as part of the Department's holistic case management approach.

Funded Organisations and Support Services

The Department has not funded any non-government organisations to undertake any new specialist transitioning, leaving care or after care support in the past 18 months. However, the Department has existing funding agreements with three NGOs to provide four leaving care services. Details of these services are listed in Table B2.5.8.1.

Table B2.5.8.1

Funded Services and Leaving Care Support Provided in Western Australia

Region	Organisation	Service Provided	Details of Support
Metropolitan Area	Salvation Army	Transitional Support Services (Moving to Independence)	Targets young people 16 to 25 years. Provides support, information, training (life-skills development) and advocacy, and encourages young person to enhance extended family and support networks.
State-wide	Salvation Army	Transitional Support Services (Preparation for Leaving Care and After Care Services)	Targets young people 14 - 17 years (in-care) and 18 – 25 (post-care). Service model similar to <i>Moving to Independence</i> program. Provides funding, training and assistance to regional services to undertake leaving care support.
Peel District and South Rockingham	Wanslea Family Services	My Place (Preparation for Leaving Care and After Care Services)	Targets young people 14 - 17 years (in-care) and 18 – 25 (post-care). Provides assistance in accessing accommodation, income/ financial assistance, health services, legal advice, social and recreational networks, training, education, and employment services.
South West and Great Southern Districts	Mission Australia	Navig8	Targets young people 14 - 17 years (in-care) and 18 – 25 (post-care). Provides support to access stable accommodation, obtain employment, training, and further education, and to develop local community support networks.

B2.5.9 Discussion

A recommendation of the CREATE Report Card 2008 was that specialist staff be appointed in the various Departments to take responsibility for overseeing the process of transition. The current review identified four jurisdictions in which specialist positions had been established (ACT, NSW, SA, and VIC). NSW created Special Case workers in response to recommendations of the Wood Commission, and it is expected that these workers will be concerned with transitioning as well as performing general case management. SA has provided detailed information concerning the positions established at a variety of levels of seniority.

Most states and territories could identify funded organisations used to provide after-care services, but the numbers involved varied largely depending on the demand. Large states where out-sourcing was common (e.g., VIC) could provide many examples of services working within the integrated system to provide mentoring and post-care support. Other areas seemed to provide useful but more piecemeal, ad hoc assistance. QLD was unusual in that its response emphasised the production of resources rather than the provision of services.



B2.6: Funding for Leaving Care

QUESTION:

What is the budget allocation for staff and services designated for leaving care, transitioning from care and after care services or programs?

QUESTION:

What, if any, funds are allocated for directly to young people leaving care, and/or for supporting them after they have left care?

Please specify:

- *the annual budget allocation for this type of expense and the amounts potentially available to individual young people.*
- *the number of young people who accessed this financial support in the financial year 2007-2008.*
- *any practice guidance regarding the allocation of these funds.*

B2.6.1 Australian Capital Territory

Total Funding of Services

The Department's position is that, because of the small cohort of care leavers annually, no special funding is provided for assisting care leavers; support is provided through the actions of out-of-home care caseworkers. It should be noted that the ACT government, through the Department of Housing, granted the CREATE Foundation (ACT) \$90,000 in 2009 to conduct a pilot program *Create Your Future* for young people approaching transition to help develop life skills and enhance their readiness for independent living.

Direct Funding for Young People

No identified allocation has been made; support is provided on a case-by-case basis. Financial assistance to carers can continue until a young person has finished schooling (past the age of 18 years); in 2007-08, two young people received this support. The Department did not provide any other details of financial support available for young people.

B2.6.2 New South Wales

Total Funding of Services

In 2008-09, \$2.324 million has been allocated to fund specialist after-care services discussed in Section B2.5, including \$262,959 for the Marungbai Aboriginal Leaving and After Care Service.

Direct Funding for Young People

The Department also has provided, in 2008-09, \$1.6 million as direct support for young people who have left care. This includes one-off financial assistance for items to help them in establishing their independence, contacting their family, and meeting medical or educational needs. This does not include the cost of caseworker resources.

Over the last six years, 3264 young people have transitioned from care in NSW; all of these still are eligible for support. Assuming only one-quarter of these young people access specific assistance in any year, the 2008 funding level would provide \$1960.00 per young person.

B2.6.3 Northern Territory

Total Funding of Services

The Department indicated that it has allocated \$200,000 for after-care support (to assist young people who already have transitioned from care). It is not clear from the response if this is direct funding or whether it will be used to provide assistance through the developing After Care Service.

Direct Funding for Young People

See above.

B2.6.4 Queensland

Total Funding of Services

The Department does not have a specific transition from care budget. No clear statement was made regarding funding for general support accessible to all young people who have left care. Specific, but limited support programs were identified. For example, Life Without Barriers was funded (through Child Safety Services and the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations) \$1.5 million over three years to conduct a Transition from Care pilot program in the Logan, Beenleigh, Inala, and Goodna regions. This program is to provide support for significantly disadvantaged young people (the initial proposal suggested 90 individuals could be involved) prior to their turning 18 years. CREATE Foundation also was allocated \$25,000 as a one-off grant by the former Department of Child Safety and the Office for Women to deliver transition from care Development Day workshops for young women aged 15 to 18 years preparing to exit the care system.

Direct Funding for Young People

Currently there is no notional allocation of funding for individuals. Staff are able to access money from the “child related costs” (CRC) budget for transition from care purposes, e.g., purchase of laptops, whitegoods, and for education expenses. Young people also can be assisted to access Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) provided as a one-off payment by the Australian Government.

Care leavers can receive additional, continuing assistance if a Support Services Case has been opened on their behalf. No details were provided regarding how many such plans have been created and what costs have been incurred in providing support through this system. The

Child Safety Practice Manual instructions concerning Support Service Cases give the clear impression that, if such support has been indicated, it is time limited and reviewed regularly.

B2.6.5 South Australia

Total Funding of Services

Families SA budget allocation for transitioning and post-care services is \$1.484 million. This comprises \$647,000 for transitioning from care support and \$837,300 for post-guardianship services.

Direct Funding for Young People

As part of the major review *Keeping Them Safe - In Our Care*, an action plan designed to improve the alternative care system, Families SA considered carefully its system of support payments. This produced a number of new policy and reference documents to clarify the range of supports available and how they can be accessed.



Table B2.6.5.1

Sources of Financial Support for Care Leavers in South Australia

Funding	Age	Purpose	Amount
Incidental Expenses	Under 18 years	To support care provided under independent living arrangements.	Up to \$5000.00
Other Client-Related Payments	18 – 25 years	To support post-guardianship clients.	No value indicated
Brokerage	16 – 18 years	To support placement stability (only for goods/services not available through other means; applications prioritised).	No limit; \$1000-\$3000 typical
Dame Roma Mitchell Trust Fund	Under 30 years	To assist applicant to achieve personal goals; contribute to health and wellbeing of applicant; provide development opportunities for applicant.	No limit; \$1000-\$3000 typical
Wyatt Benevolent Institution	No limit	Provides financial assistance grants for essential goods/services; education grants to assist people undertaking full-time study; Further Education Awards for students at TAFE; University scholarships for Indigenous students; requires a referral from a health and welfare professional.	Information not provided
TILA	18 – 25 years	One-off Australian Government payment to assist and support young people in making a successful transition to independent living.	\$1000 (\$1500 as of 1 July 2009)

Families SA District Centres currently use their discretion in providing ongoing case management for young people following the expiration of their orders. This support can include financial assistance for educational, medical, and other expenses. Unfortunately, the management systems available at present are unable to capture how many individuals have sought this type of support, or how many have received assistance in any given year.

As a guide to the level of support available and the indicative funding individuals tend to receive, Table B2.6.5.1 outlines various sources of funds available to young care leavers, the purposes for which the financial support can be used, and typical amounts of funding allocated per application.

Data were presented regarding the actual support provided through the Dame Roma Mitchell Trust Fund for care leavers. In 2007-08, of the 127 applications funded (93% of those received), 81 (64%) were from young people (15-25 years) transitioning from care who received in total \$162,700. This represents approximately 9% of eligible care leavers (based on *Child Protection Australia* data for the last six years).

B2.6.6 Tasmania

Total Funding of Services

No specific budget allocation is provided in Tasmania for leaving care services; these fall within the overall budget

for child protection, including case management. Two specific programs have been funded: the *Moving On* leaving-care project in 2008-09 received \$75,000 (plus GST) while the After Care Service Program again was allocated \$90,000. Unfortunately, the total expenditure on leaving care cannot be determined.

Direct Funding for Young People

It was not possible for the Department to provide details on the total amount of financial assistance available for direct access by young people leaving care. However, in 2007-08, 19 young people requested financial assistance through the After Care Program. Of the 18 eligible applicants, only five progressed their submission to the point where they could be provided with the necessary assistance.

B2.6.7 Victoria

Total Funding of Services

The total Victorian leaving-care budget is \$3.17 million per year (recurrent) comprising \$1.7 million for service delivery of mentoring and post-care support, information and referral services, and \$1.4 million for brokerage.

Direct Funding for Young People

Brokerage funds (\$1.4 million) specifically are provided to meet the individual needs of young people as identified through their planning process. No specific amount is allocated for each young person, but at least 50% of the brokerage funds must be available for those who have left care and need assistance subsequently. In 2007-08, 324 young people were assisted with transitioning through brokerage funding.

B2.6.8 Western Australia

Total Funding of Services

In 2008-09, the Department will provide total funding of approximately \$1.012 million to three organisations to deliver the four leaving care services mentioned in Section B2.5.8 throughout Western Australia.

Direct Funding for Young People

The Department's annual budget allocated to provide direct assistance for young people leaving care is \$500,000. No breakdown was provided to indicate how these funds were spent. By comparison, in the 2007-08 financial year, \$161,422 was spent to provide discretionary assistance to 28 young people who already had left care.

Of this amount, \$133,720 was spent on accommodation (including continuation of placement with an existing carer, supported accommodation or independent living) for 13 young people; \$19,872 was dedicated to the provision of professional services (e.g., medical, dental, optometry, and psychological services) for seven young people; \$5,370 purchased equipment for five young people. These amounts do not include additional financial assistance that may have been provided by district offices. Specific expenditure by each young person was determined on a case-by-case basis depending on individual needs.

B2.6.9 Discussion

Even though the questions asked of the Departments were designed to elicit as precise data as possible, only four of the states were able to provide information regarding the total budget allocations to (a) fund transition from care services and (b) provide direct support for young people. NSW, SA, VIC, and WA gave sufficient details of funding to show that these states are providing comparable per capita funding for the numbers eligible to receive support. Based on the total number of care leavers presented in *Child Protection Australia* reports between 2003 and 2008 (projected total throughout Australia is over 11,000 in the six years), it is estimated that the states are providing notionally between \$1200.00 (NSW) and \$1900.00 (SA) per young person. It is a positive development that these states are making between 11% and 49% of the funding directly available to young people as brokerage-type support.

Unfortunately, the other jurisdictions still are rather vague when identifying what funding is available to support transitioning. NT and TAS mention varying amounts of funding, but it is not clear what is covered by this expenditure (TAS points out that the amounts mentioned do not represent the total spent on after-care support; but no estimate is given of how much is). QLD refers to significant funding that is directed to one program, able to provide preparatory support for a limited number of 15-17 year olds.

It is understandable that the jurisdictions with fewer care leavers might think it reasonable to have to draw on general funding where necessary to support those exiting care; however, QLD should not fall into this category. When the extent of assistance able to be provided is unclear, and expenditure for supporting individual transitioners has to be argued for, and defended by front-line staff, it is likely that the required help will be difficult to obtain.

B2.7: Monitoring of Transition Outcomes

QUESTION:

Who is responsible and what procedures are in place to monitor the outcomes for young people leaving care or who have left care? Please provide any information available of the results of this monitoring.

QUESTION:

What data are available on the secondary school completion rates (yr 10, yr 12) of young people by the age of 18, or at the point at which they leave care (if available please provide data)?

QUESTION:

Please outline what data, if any, are available on the housing destination of 18 year olds as the first place they will live after leaving care for the last time? In particular, what number/proportion of young people, at the point of leaving care, go into a Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)?

B2.7.1 Australian Capital Territory

Overall Monitoring

Child Protection Services has overall responsibility for monitoring preparation for transition and the exiting of care. Out-of-home care and community support agencies have specific responsibility for overseeing a young person's Leaving Care Plan and ensuring it includes information and support options. However, measurement of outcomes has not been documented to date; it is expected that requirements for this will be incorporated into contractual obligations for agencies under the new OOHC framework that should be implemented by the end of 2009.

Secondary School Completion

At present, a comprehensive and accurate data set on secondary school completions is not available. This information will form part of the new contractual arrangements required of OOHC agencies (planning is underway with the Department of Education and Training to enable access to this information).

Housing Destination On Leaving Care

No information was available on housing destinations for specific 18 year olds. General comments indicated that young people usually choose to; (a) return to parents; (b) access youth residential accommodation; (c) access government housing; and (d) continue living with foster parents (however, the numbers in each category were not reported).

B2.7.2 New South Wales

Overall Monitoring

Under legislation, the agency responsible for supervising the young person's last placement also must prepare and implement the leaving care plan. This agency must offer continuing support at regular intervals in the years following a young person's exit from care (an expectation consistent with the out-of-home care accreditation requirements of the NSW Children's Guardian). No report of outcomes was provided.

Secondary School Completion

Accurate data currently are not available on the school completion rates of young people in care.

However, the Department is aware of research findings indicating poor educational outcomes for these young people compared with the general student population. Educational achievement also will be one domain studied as part of the Department's large-scale 5-year investigation into out-of-home care in NSW that began in 2007-08. In addition, the Department, in conjunction with the Centre for Children and Young People (Southern Cross University) is supporting a four-year study examining the factors that facilitate and impede the educational engagement and achievement of children and young people in care.

A key innovation, proposed as an element of the *Keep Them Safe* response, involves the establishment of out-of-home care coordinators in the NSW Department of Education and Training to assist in the formulation and implementation of educational plans, and generally to work with other staff to improve the educational outcomes for CYP in care.

Housing Destination On Leaving Care

The Department does not hold data on the housing destinations of young people leaving care.

It was claimed that appropriate assistance and support provided through the implementation of a leaving care plan would avoid a young person's entering a supported accommodation service. Leaving-care planning includes assessing the accommodation needs of the young person and determining their eligibility for social housing or rent assistance. Financial assistance of up to \$2000 is available (based on eligibility and assessed need) to help care leavers obtain accommodation.

B2.7.3 Northern Territory

Overall Monitoring

Monitoring is managed through care-plan reviews. The implementation of an After Care Case Plan ensures that a young care leaver will continue to work with a case manager for a period of up to six-months duration.

Secondary School Completion

Data on secondary school completions are not available at this point in time.

Housing Destination On Leaving Care

Data on housing destinations are not available at this point in time.

B2.7.4 Queensland

Overall Monitoring

During the transitioning process, the Child Safety Officer is responsible for developing a Case Plan (which will transform into the Transition from Care Plan) and a Support Service Case, and for reviewing their implementation.

When a young person has left Departmental care, and is not the subject of a Support Service Case, there is no mechanism to permit Child Safety Services to monitor directly the outcomes of his/her transition.

Secondary School Completion

Data regarding secondary school completion rates are not collected currently at the central agency level.

However, the Department presented findings purportedly contained in the annual Next Step survey (Next Step, 2008) conducted by the Department of Education and Training relating to young people in care who have completed year 12 (though this could not be verified from the actual report). For example, it is claimed that data indicate that 31% of CYP who were in care in their final year of school were "neither earning nor learning" following completion compared with 2.7.3% in the comparable "non-care" group throughout the state. This was explained because CYP in care traditionally come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and year 12 completers from out-of-home care might be deferring their future education while they manage their transition. This begs the question: Why should these young people, already disadvantaged, be placed in such a difficult position?

Housing Destination On Leaving Care

Current legislation does not require Child Safety Services to obtain information on housing destinations of young people who have left the child protection system. The Department has lodged a request with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to obtain data on SAAP access by former Queensland child protection clients.

B2.7.5 South Australia

Overall Monitoring

It is the Annual Review Panel's role to monitor planned outcomes while young people are in care. The After Care Support services provide information regarding the number of care leavers receiving support, but details of outcomes are not available. For example, Youth Support Teams have provided a service (either casework support or one-off assistance) to 215 care leavers between 18 and 25 years since July 2007; currently, 68 young people are receiving casework services. Post Care Services has supported over 600 people who have been in care to access medical, therapeutic, and educational services, as well as processing over 500 Freedom of Information requests for historical client files since January 2007.

Families SA's electronic Connected Client Case Management System (C3MS), currently under development, will be able to provide quantified information not easily accessible at present, e.g., the number of young people having (a) Individual Education Plans, (b) transition plans, (c) initial health assessments, (d) dental assessments, (e) an allocated case manager, and (f) completed annual reviews.

Monitoring through Rapid Response. SA government departments through the Across Government Guardianship Steering Committee report every six months to the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Child Development on their progress toward implementing *Rapid Response*. The Department was able to report significant progress to April 2009 in areas including Individual Education Plans, the waiving of TAFE fees, dental treatment, medical services, and housing.

Secondary School Completion

Families SA and the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) currently are unable to extract the data on secondary school completions; however, these will be

available under C3MS in the future. The Department was able to report on the percentage of young people under guardianship who are enrolled in secondary school: year 10: 60%; year 11: 39%; and year 12: 14% (source: Families SA Data Warehouse, retrieved 17 April 2009).

Housing Destination On Leaving Care

Families SA currently is unable to extract the data on housing destinations for care leavers. Information would be stored locally on administrative files in District Centres; however, there is no requirement that it is reported centrally. These data will be available under C3MS.

B2.7.6 Tasmania

Overall Monitoring

There are no formal mechanisms for monitoring the outcomes for care leavers in Tasmania. The After Care Support Program collects data on the circumstances of those care leavers who request assistance; however, it is considered that outcome data are unreliable. The Department intends to explore mechanisms for collecting outcome data over the coming year.

Secondary School Completion

No data currently are available on secondary school completions. Under the new Agreement between the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Education, data will be collected on the educational experience of young people in out-of-home care, including the percentage of these students who complete year 12 compared with the general cohort.

Housing Destination On Leaving Care

No data currently are available on housing destinations for care leavers.



B2.7.7 Victoria

Overall Monitoring

The Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers (CRISSP) has been adopted for the Leaving Care program in Victoria. This is a web-based client information and case management system. Developed by the Department of Human Services for the non-government community services sector, the system provides an extensive range of functions for recording client information, assisting case management, and enabling electronic reporting of data required by the department. It is expected that community service organisation staff will be responsible for data recording, a process overseen in each agency by a staff member designated the Organisation Authority.

In the process of implementing the Leaving Care services, Children, Youth and Families (CYF) Divisions have put in place monitoring structures including (a) Regional Leaving Care Alliances (RLCAs), and (b) the Central Leaving Care Advisory Group. Membership of the former comprises representatives from CYF, Housing and Community Building, and services providing mental health, disability, and drug and alcohol programs. In addition to overseeing the implementation of Leaving Care service provision, the RLCAs also are the peak regional bodies that monitor the expenditure of Leaving Care brokerage. The central Leaving Care Advisory Group (involving DHS regional staff, Leaving Care service providers, Mental Health, Youth Justice and Disability Divisions, as well as the Centre for Excellence and the Child Safety Commissioner's Office) guides the implementation of the program, and ensures that any issues are addressed in a consistent and collaborative manner.

Secondary School Completion

DHS indicated that they began a Partnership Agreement with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in 2003, with data on student outcomes becoming available in 2005. The Department acknowledges that young people in out-of-home care generally are underrepresented in secondary school completion figures. They assert that, whilst the numbers of CYP in care completing year 12 remain low, recent data show that the numbers going on to tertiary education have increased (however, actual numbers were not provided).

Housing Destination On Leaving Care

The Departmental response cited 2005 data identifying the following housing destinations for care leavers: relatives (18.3%), private rental (11.7%), foster carer (1.7%), public housing (10%), friends (3.3%), SAAP (31.7%), custodial sentence (1.7%), unknown (21.7%). Unfortunately, no data were presented revealing the current situation for comparison.

B2.7.8 Western Australia

Overall Monitoring

At the operational level, responsibility for monitoring outcomes is delegated to the Department's Executive, District Directors, Team Leaders, and Case Workers. To inform decisions by these officers, an annual customer perception survey is conducted with young people who have used the four Departmental-funded leaving-care services. The information collected measures satisfaction with services, the ability of the young person to manage in the future as a result of support received, and the adoption of a person-centred approach by the service.

Secondary School Completion

No data currently are available on secondary school completion rates. It is anticipated that individual education plans will commence development in mid 2009 for CYP in care attending government schools and will occur over the next three years in non-government schools. Collection of data on educational completions will form part of this initiative.

Housing Destination On Leaving Care

Table B2.7.8.1 shows the breakdown of housing destinations for care leavers recorded in the Department's client system for the years 2006-07 and 2007-08. The Department notes that while only one person was recorded as moving to SAAP accommodation, this figure could be higher since a proportion of those listed as "Independent Living" and "Other" also may have transitioned to SAAP accommodation. Also, the "Family" designations could include both birth family and foster carer.

Table B2.7.8.1

Housing Destinations for Care Leavers in 2006-07 and 2007-08 in Western Australia

Destination	Number	Percent
Aboriginal Kinship	9	6.2
Blended Family	1	0.7
Both Biological Parents	1	0.7
Detention	2	1.4
Disability Services Commission	10	6.9
Extended Family	20	13.8
Friend	5	3.4
Homeshare Board	4	2.8
Hospital	1	0.7
Independent Living	57	39.3
Other	21	14.5
Pre-sentence Placement	4	2.8
SAAP Youth Accommodation	1	0.7
Single Parent Female	7	4.8
Single Parent Male	1	0.7
Unknown	1	0.7
TOTAL	145	100

(Source: Department for Child Protection Reporting Snapshot, April 2009)

B2.7.9 Discussion

As was found in Report Card 2008, Departments overall did not perform well when monitoring the outcomes of their leaving-care support programs. Most rely on the

caseworkers, either Departmental or community service agency staff to provide the active monitoring, with some having clearly established review processes to oversee their actions (e.g., SA, VIC, WA). SA and VIC also have developed record management systems to facilitate data collection and analysis (e.g., C3MS and CRISSP) that apparently in future will be able to provide answers to the sample questions posed in this survey.

Unfortunately, when the monitoring processes in place at present were tested, no Department could provide data on both of the two most important aspects of a young persons life: their education and where they live. When addressing school completions, QLD pointed to data collected by another government department to show the numbers of care leavers who were not “earning or learning” (explaining the poor outcomes because of the difficulties young people may experience when transitioning); and SA was able to cite data on enrolments in year 12, but not completions.

Regarding housing outcomes, only WA could give current data; VIC referred to 2005 figures. Hopefully, when the new data collection systems come on line, more comprehensive information will be available. This does assume that the staff entering data will be adequately prepared and resourced for the additional tasks this responsibility will impose on them.

The major concern is with the other jurisdictions that did not know what had happened to their former charges, and had no mechanisms in place to track outcomes. While current legislation may not “require” such monitoring (apart from in WA), it would seem that Departments have a moral responsibility as “corporate parents” to follow-up on the achievements of their “young people” as they move into independent living, and to have sufficient information on their requirements to ensure the care leavers receive all the assistance they require to reach their full potential as productive members of the community.

Part C: Young Persons' Survey

C1: Method

C1.1 Participants

In this survey, responses were obtained from 471 young people throughout Australia; 58.6% were 15 to 18 year-olds still in care (IC group) and 41.6% had left care (PC group; maximum age 25 years). Table C1.1 presents the number and mean ages of participants from the various states and territories. Females comprised 56.9% of the sample, with males most difficult to locate in the PC group (representing 37.8% of that cohort). The majority (60.1%) of young people resided in capital or large cities, with 25.3% from small towns, and 14.5% in rural environments.

Overall, 22.3% identified as Indigenous (Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both), while 67.2% indicated they were non-Indigenous Australians. Only 10.5% specified a connection with an "Other Cultural Background", including Africans, Asians, Europeans, and South Americans. It is worthy of note that 29.1% of the sample claimed to have some form of disability, with 11.7% specifying some form of "Mental Illness" which included depression and bipolar disorder as exemplars. However, only 16.8% were receiving any support for this disability.

Table C1.1

Number and Mean Ages of Females and Males in the two Care-Status Groups Sampled in Each State / Territory

Status	Sex	Jurisdiction									TOTAL
		ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA		
In Care (IC)	Female	N	11	22	13	30	21	4	30	13	144
		Age	17.2	16.2	16.3	16.4	16.5	16.1	16.6	16.9	
	Male	N	4	18	10	35	17	10	30	7	131
		Age	16.4	16.6	16.4	16.8	16.7	16.5	16.4	16.3	
TOTAL			15	40	23	65	38	14	60	20	275
Post Care (PC)	Female	N	7	29	5	21	14	3	27	16	122
		Age	19.9	20.6	19.1	20.8	20.3	21.5	20.7	20.8	
	Male	N	5	19	1	17	7	6	15	4	74
		Age	21.7	20.0	24.9	18.9	21.1	20.4	19.4	21.5	
TOTAL			12	48	6	38	21	9	42	20	196
GRAND TOTAL			27	88	29	103	59	23	102	40	471

C1.2 Survey

Two forms of the survey were prepared, one for those young people still in care and one for those who had left care. As far as possible, the questions were matched, but in some areas this was not possible, e.g., regarding current caseworkers, finances, and accommodation. Hard copies of the surveys used are included in Appendices D and E. Combinations of categorical and interval data were collected; when a young person's responses to a situation were being measured, 6-point Likert-type items were used depending on the variable involved, (e.g., *How difficult did you find...?*: Very hard: 1; Quite hard: 2; Hard: 3; Easy: 4; Quite easy: 5; Very easy: 6). As well as a hard-copy form, the surveys also were produced in web-accessible format. Questions appeared on successive pages with responses being stored on a database. An advantage of this system over the hard copy was that respondents could be directed to relevant sections of the survey depending on previous information provided rather than having to navigate through questions they did not need to answer.

C1.3 Procedure

Young people within the appropriate respondent categories were identified through contacts with government departments, agencies, carers, and by using information from the *clubCREATE* database of young people who are, or have been in out-of-home care. CREATE offices in each state and territory offered prizes as incentives to encourage participation. Various forms of the surveys were used to maximise response rate. The web-site URL was published on notices and invitations that were sent to departments, agencies, and young people so that participants could enter their responses unaided if they preferred. A national phone-in period was promoted when young people could contact CREATE staff and complete the survey as an interview. This approach did not result in a high response, therefore CREATE staff adopted the more proactive method of direct contact with young people.

Instructions explained the purpose and nature of the study and emphasised that participation was voluntary. In addition, the interpretation of the various points on the scale items was explained, as was the expected length of time needed to complete the survey. Young people were asked to generate a personal password that was applied

to all sections of the survey so that data could be coordinated while maintaining the respondent's anonymity. At the completion of the survey, participants were asked if they wanted to be included in the prize draw; if they responded positively, they were asked for their name and contact details which were stored separately with no connection to their data.

C2: Findings

C2.1 In-Care Experience

Young people were asked to provide various data concerning their care experience including the age they entered care, the total time they spent in care, the number of placements they had experienced in the last five years of their being in care (or for their whole care experience if that time were less than five years), and how long (in years) they had spent in their last placement. It must be emphasised that these are self-report data. Overall results showed that young people came into care on average at 8.8 years, remained in care for 7.9 years, experienced 5.7 placements in the last five years, but had been in their last placement for 3.5 years (data suggesting a possible improvement in placement stability). No sex differences were found across these variables, but differences were detected over jurisdictions and cultural groups. A more detailed breakdown of these values is given in Table C2.1.1.

Significant differences were found for Jurisdiction and Culture in terms of Age Entering Care (and the corresponding Time in Care)¹. Respondents tended to be older when entering care in ACT and NT while younger in SA. The significant interaction between Jurisdiction and Culture is shown in Figure C2.1.1. Young people from "Other Cultural Backgrounds" enter care for the first time at an older age in ACT, NSW, TAS, and WA, the difference being significant in NSW, and in WA between Other and Indigenous (who were the youngest in all states except ACT and SA).

¹The between-subjects effects for a Jurisdiction (8) X Culture (3) MANOVA indicated that significant differences were found for Age Entering Care across Jurisdictions ($F[7, 445] = 3.30, p < .01$, and Culture ($F[2, 445] = 4.60, p < .01$). Time in Care also showed significant main effects; these two variables correlated highly ($r = -.89, p < .01$). A significant Jurisdiction X Culture interaction also was obtained for Age Entering Care: $F[14, 443] = 1.81, p < .05$.

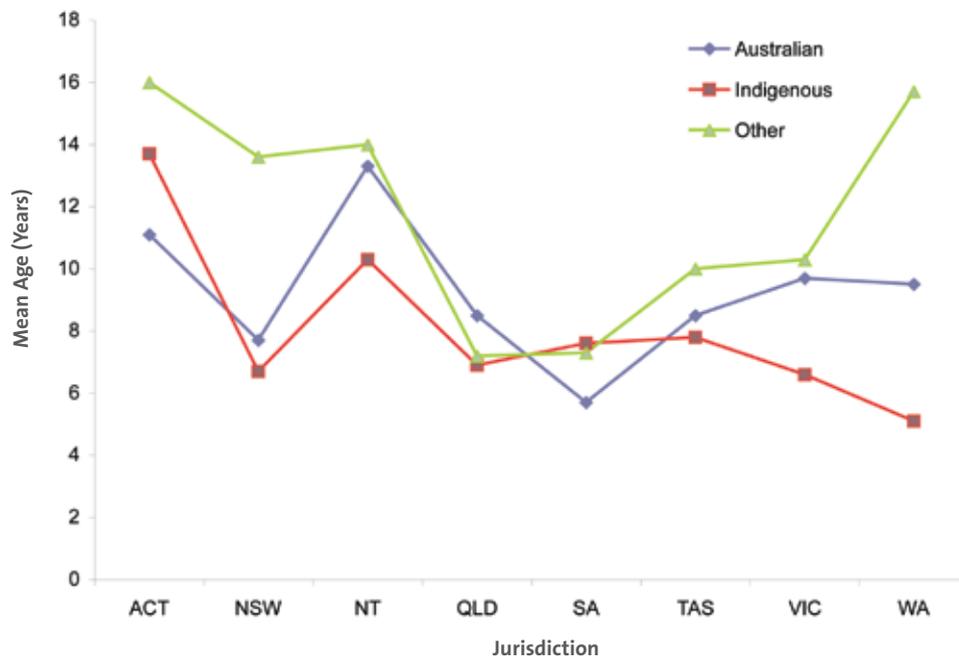


Figure C2.1.1. Mean age entering care as a function of Jurisdiction and Cultural association.

Table C2.1.1

Mean Values for Age Entering Care, Time in Care, Number of Placements, and Time in Last Placement by Jurisdiction and Culture

Placement Variables	Culture	Jurisdiction							
		ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
Age Entering Care	Australian	11.1	7.7	13.3	8.5	5.7	8.5	9.7	9.5
	Indigenous	13.7	6.8	10.3	6.9	7.6	7.8	6.6	5.1
	Other	16.0	13.7	14.0	7.2	7.3	10.0	10.3	15.7
Time In Care (years)	Australian	5.3	9.4	3.9	8.2	11.2	8.5	7.2	6.2
	Indigenous	1.9	9.8	5.6	10.0	8.6	9.3	10.0	9.6
	Other	0.5	3.6	3.0	8.1	10.5	7.5	5.2	2.3
Placements (last five years)	Australian	9.3	3.7	4.0	8.3	3.8	4.8	6.3	4.8
	Indigenous	5.0	7.1	2.9	6.5	3.0	4.8	4.4	13.0
	Other	1.0	7.5	2.0	5.1	6.8	2.0	2.9	3.7
Time in Last Placement (years)	Australian	1.9	4.6	0.6	3.7	3.9	4.4	3.9	3.3
	Indigenous	0.3	4.9	4.0	1.3	4.0	1.0	5.0	1.9
	Other	0.5	1.3	3.0	1.0	2.0	1.5	2.0	0.4

Distribution of Placement Type was not significantly different across the Jurisdictions with the most common placement being in Foster Care (171 or 36.5%) followed by Residential Care (116 or 24.8%) with Kinship Care in third position (63 or 13.5%). Some observations related more to certain states. For example, 52.4% of all respondents in Queensland (n = 54) were from Foster Care (31.6% of all Foster Care placements); 33% of young people (n = 33) in Victoria were from Residential Care (28.4% of Residential Care placements), and of the eight cases of Permanent Care recorded, five were in Victoria. Not surprisingly, Independent Living was more common in the PC group; overall incidence was 7.1%, but this increased to 11.7% (n = 23) of all respondents in the PC group compared with 3.7% (n = 10) of the IC cohort. Independent Living also was more common in SA where 36.4% (n = 12) of all those living independently were located.

Half the young people in the sample (50.2%) had their placements supervised by a government department. This was particularly the case in NT (82.8%), SA (79.7%), and TAS (69.6%). Community agencies were next most common (overall 36%); however, in VIC this support comprised 64.7%, a reflection of the preference for outsourcing of these services in that state. Interestingly, 31.1% (n = 14) of those who were “Not Sure” who was responsible for their placement came from VIC. Of some concern is the observation that 4.3% of respondents (n = 20) indicated that they did not believe any authority was responsible for them.

This is consistent with the number of those still in care who do not, or are unsure whether or not they have a caseworker (13.8%, n = 38). While 86.1% have contact with someone from their responsible organisation at least once every three months, the others have little or no contact with caseworkers.

C2.2 Education and/or Employment

When asked about school attendance, 71.3% of those still in care indicated they currently were students, while 28.7% (n = 79) revealed that they didn't go to school (of these 15.2% were 15 years; 38%: 16 years; 36.7%: 17 years; and 10.1%: 18 years). This pattern was reversed in the post-care group, with only 10.8% (n = 21) of those young people remaining at school (41.2% of these were in each of years 11 and 12). There were no significant sex differences in school attendance.

Over half (52%, n = 106) of young people still studying did not feel that they needed any extra help to remain at school. Of the types of assistance identified by the others, extra help with schoolwork was the most needed (26%, n = 61), while financial assistance (14.5%), and counselling (4.7%) seemed less important. Three respondents made specific reference to their benefitting from help handling bullying.

Not surprisingly, differences were found when comparing the last year of school reached by those still in care and those who had left. In the former group, 26.9% (n = 21) completed Year 10, with 25.6% finishing at Year 9. Of those young people who had left care, 35.3% (n = 59) had completed year 12 (27.8% Indigenous, n = 10), with 33.5% finalising year 10. For those who had left school from the IC group, the most common reason given was that they did not like school (28.4%, n = 21) or that they had been expelled (20.3%). Comparable numbers for the PC group were 10.8% (n = 18) and 8.4% (n = 14). Overall, 7.9% left to take up employment. In their open-ended responses, several young people mentioned that attitudinal and social problems contributed to their decision to leave school:

Boredom. Didn't like being told what to do.

Did not like school; was not doing well and was bullied.

Placement change; new school; didn't want to start again.

Thought it was not cool to be in school. Only completed Year 5 Primary.

Too much stuff going on at home.

No Jurisdiction, Care-Group, Culture, or Sex differences were found when analysing responses to the remaining questions concerning education and employment. Of the 246 who gave an indication of how they were occupied at present, the largest proportion (28.5%) reported being unemployed and looking for work. However, a similar proportion in total was in full-time (15.4%), and part-time or casual (12.6%) employment. Unfortunately, only 11% reported studying at TAFE (although another 4% mentioned that they were thinking of doing a TAFE course), and 2.8% were undertaking university degrees. Another important activity listed in the open responses by 8.1% of females was being a parent.

Young people (44.1%, n = 70) reported that finding a job was “Quite” or “Very” hard (M = 2.8, SD = 1.6; 1: Very hard – 6: Very easy;). They had mixed feelings about how helpful the support they had received had been: 30.3% had received “Quite” or “Very” helpful assistance, while 38.0% found it of “Little” help or “Not helpful at all” (M = 3.3, SD = 1.8). In addition, they were split as to how they felt about their school experience overall, with 27.4% (n = 46) recording both highly positive and negative responses (M = 3.3, SD = 1.5; 1 – Very unhappy – 6: Very happy).

Many comments were offered when education and employment outcomes were discussed. They highlighted some key issues that need to be considered by policy makers in these areas. A few of these are presented below:

High schools are terrible at handling bullying. TAFE is a more adult environment and is easier to attend.

I think that some people or teachers at school make the HSC out like it determines your life. So much unnecessary stress.

I learn more stuff doing it hands on. I'd rather learn in the workplace than in a classroom.

It's hard to go to school when you don't have many clothes to wear and all your friends do.

I would like to do TAFE but don't have money or transport to get there.

Easy to find a job; hard to keep. Had support of family to pay for course.

I found that with my education and having a good school name on my resumé, people gave me a chance. I now have a great full-time job.

Kids would get a better education and get better employment if their placements were more stable.

Discussion. These results confirm the universally reported observation (e.g., Mendes, 2009; Tweddle, 2007), and are consistent with the data collected by CREATE in 2007 (McDowall, 2008), indicating that care leavers are substantially disadvantaged in terms of educational

outcomes and employment prospects. The 35.3% of those over 18 years who have completed year 12 education does not compare favourably with the 74% of 19-year-olds achieving that benchmark in the general population (ABS, 2008). Similar concern is raised when the 28.5% unemployment rate is compared with the national average of 9.7% for youth overall in Australia (OECD, 2009). Clearly, the explanation provided by one of the states (see Part B) that young care leavers perform poorly in educational achievement because they are so consumed with issues surrounding transition needs to be considered and addressed. Everything possible must be done by responsible authorities to ensure that these young people begin their move to independence with a sound education and that they are provided with appropriate support to find suitable employment.

C2.3 Finances

Members of the PC group were asked a series of questions regarding the source and management of their finances. Again, no Jurisdiction, Cultural, or Sex differences were observed. The most common source of support for the young care leavers was Centrelink payments (53.7%; n = 101 of the 188 who responded to these items). A further 16% managed on part support from the government and part wages, while 25.5% of this group were self-supporting through their employment.

When asked about the help they could use in managing their finances, 46.7% (n = 86) of the young care leavers indicated that they didn't need any assistance in this area. Of the others, 20.1% believed that training in finance and budgeting would be most beneficial, while 15.2% felt that advice in these matters would be adequate. Overall, they were divided as to the difficulty of managing their money: 28.8% responded with “Quite” or “Very” easy, while 21.3% found the task “Quite” or “Very” hard (M = 3.3, SD = 1.4; 1: Very hard – 6: Very easy) and gave a variety of comments to outline their views:

Hard to manage money because I have (a) limited amount of money.

Paying a debt accrued when in Year 10. That has been very hard.

It needs to be a part of everyday training that you receive at work like time management skills or customer service etc. It needs to be a common training course.

A savings account for you to get a nest egg when you leave care. You don't realise how much shits cost until you are out in the big bad world yourself.

Discussion. These comments from the young people are particularly insightful. The advantages of budgeting and financial management (saving, debt control) and procedures by which these can be achieved should be part of fundamental education, introduced into the standard school curriculum no later than years 9 or 10. Indeed, it would seem that the mathematics involved could form a logical and practical focus and application of the numeracy training being emphasised through the education systems in recent years (DETYA, 2000).

C2.4 Accommodation

Finding suitable accommodation on leaving care is another important concern in a young person's life. Clearly the experience of the two groups being studied would be expected to vary so the issue had to be handled differently with each. The IC group was asked what they planned to do when leaving care while the PC group were able to discuss what had happened to them.

In the results presented here, Jurisdiction, Culture, and Sex differences were explored but no significant differences were found so the combined responses will be given. Of the 190 in the PC group who responded to these questions, 50.5% had been required to leave their placement when their care order expired. Disturbingly 40.6% of this cohort (n = 39) did not know where they would be moving to following the placement. Those who had been informed generally were told less than a fortnight before the event (M = 11.4 [days], SD = 15.8) but the individual situations showed substantial variability.

Members of the PC group were asked if they had been homeless (defined as being without safe and adequate housing for more than five nights) at any stage within the first year of leaving out-of-home care. Overall, 34.7% (n = 66) reported having had that experience. Young people indicated they had been homeless an average of three

times in that year for a total period of around one month (M = 31.3 [days], SD = 72.7). Further analysis highlighted that the length of homelessness was quite variable across Jurisdictions. Of the seven young people who were homeless for all of their first year of independence, four lived in ACT, two in NSW, and one in VIC. Eleven young people revealed they were still homeless at present. Those who had found somewhere to stay have lived in an average of 4.9 places per year (SD = 9.0) since they turned 18.

Both groups were questioned regarding the type of accommodation in which they first would wish to live (IC) or the type they did occupy when leaving care (PC). Interesting differences emerged regarding aspirations and reality as can be seen in Table C2.4.1. Significantly more than expected² of the young people still in care thought the ideal accommodation would be their own flat or house in which they could live alone. Those who had left care found that shared accommodation was the most likely or moving back home with family members.

Similar differences were found when young people were asked about with whom they would like to (IC) or did live (PC). A large proportion of the IC group (36%, n = 86) did not want to share with anyone, but only 18% (n = 34) of the care leavers lived alone. Indeed, over half (51.9%, n = 98) usually resided with friends or their partners. Although 22.1% initially moved back with family members, subsequently this reduced to 13.2% (n = 25).

Young people still in care expressed confidence in finding somewhere suitable to live on exiting their placement: 29.9% (n = 77) felt "Quite" or "Very" confident, with only 12% at the worried end of the scale (M = 4.0, SD = 1.3; 1: Very worried; 6: Very confident). This was not quite matched by the moderate difficulty care leavers experienced in finding accommodation with 20.3% (n = 37) finding it "Quite" or "Very" easy compared with 39.0% for whom it was "Quite" or "Very" hard (M = 3.2, SD = 1.7; 1: Very hard - 6: Very easy). Most of those who had left care were paying rent (61.5%, n = 115) or board (25.1%, n = 47), and while they found it reasonably easy to make their payments (M = 3.8, SD = 1.6; 1: Very hard - 6: Very easy), several comments indicated that some support in this area would be appreciated:

²Chi Square tests indicated significant differences for both the IC group ($X^2(5) = 73.9, p < .01$) and the PC group ($X^2(6) = 32.6, p < .01$).

Rent is really high so more rent assistance would help.

Financial support, so I can eat as well

Well I want to stay in the area I was raised in but its pretty expensive.

It's scary trying to find a place because I've never done it before, I feel like I am getting a little bit of help with it.

It's hard to live on your own when you're out of care because you have to pay rent, bond, electricity and water bills.

Help to get to work. Cost of transport makes paying rent hard.

Table C2.4.1

Ideal Accommodation as Perceived by Young People In Care and that Occupied Initially by Care Leavers

Accommodation	Care Group	
	In Care	Post Care
Don't know	24 (9.4%)	-
Stay in placement	35 (13.2%)	28 (14.7%)
Home with family	50 (18.8%)	42 (22.1%)
Flat/House alone	93 (35.0%)	29 (15.3%)
Flat/House shared	25 (9.4%)	42 (22.1%)
Supported accommodation	-	18 (9.5%)
Homeless	-	9 (4.7%)
Other	38 (14.3%)	22 (11.6%)

Discussion. Data collected in this study show that many young people are still ill-prepared for transitioning from care. This relates to the planning process that will be discussed in more detail later. It is inexcusable that a large proportion of care leavers would be expected to move from their "home " without knowing where they would be going. It is not surprising, given this treatment, that over one-third have been homeless. Being first informed that such a major event was about to happen fewer than two weeks before it occurred would be expected to generate feelings of abandonment and anxiety in many young people. More responsibility must be taken by all involved

parties to better prepare transitioners, both formally and informally, for such massive change in their lives.

It is unacceptable that any young people who have been in state care should ever be homeless. The fact that it happens largely because of bureaucratic abjuration of responsibility is an indictment of our society.

Involvement in decision making is a guiding Principle espoused in many *Charters of Rights* of children and young people in care. However, young people do not always have the information needed to make appropriate decisions regarding their futures. The observed differences between

the idealism of the youth in care (wanting to be independent and fending for themselves) and the often harsh reality of real-world experience give insights into the support young people need to be informed, active participants in the planning process. Having the opportunity to discuss experiences with those who have left care before transition would better equip young people to meet the challenges ahead. Such experiences could be included as part of life-skills training programs or could be arranged by caseworkers as a stage in the transitioning process.

C2.5 Relationships

Birth family. Questions were asked regarding the amount of contact both groups had with birth family members. Table C2.5.1 shows (a) the number of young people from the three cultural groupings in this sample who live with the designated family members, and (b) the average amount of contact the young people have with those members. Contact was scored using a 7-point scale (1: Not at all; 2: Once a year; 3: Every six months; 4: Every three months; 5: Monthly; 6: Fortnightly; 7: Weekly). It can be seen from these data that young people with an Indigenous or Other cultural background had significantly more contact with their sisters/brothers (probably because they also are more likely to be living with them) and with grandparents than did other Australian participants.

Siblings also formed the group with which young people wished to have more contact in the future (see Table C2.5.2). About one-third of participants did not want to have any increased contact with family members.

Well over half of young people (59.4%, n = 218) indicated that they didn't need any support to keep in touch with family members. Of those who could use assistance, most (28.2%, n = 42) requested help with transport. More (35.4%, n = 129) were "Quite" or "Very" happy compared with 15.6% "Quite" or "Very" unhappy with the extent of their birth family contact (M = 4.0, SD = 1.5; 1: Very unhappy - 6: Very happy). Comments revealed a range of issues regarding contact that need to be addressed:

Family willing and not intoxicated or under influence of drugs.

Had no contact when in care. Was not interested. Once I matured enough, I asked for help and received it. Went to Tasmania to meet Mum and Dad.

(need) finance and my learners permit.

(need) the court to order my parents to let me see my sister.

The department needs to allow me to see my mother more.



Table C2.5.1

Current Contact Maintained with Birth Family Members as a Function of Culture

Birth Family Member	Culture					
	Australian		Indigenous		Other	
	Live With (Number)	Contact (Mean)	Live With (Number)	Contact (Mean)	Live With (Number)	Contact (Mean)
No one	176 (56.2%)		50 (48.1%)		36 (73.5%)	
Mother	14 (4.5%)	3.7	11 (10.6%)	3.5	2 (4.1%)	5.1
Father	5 (1.6%)	2.9	8 (7.7%)	2.7	0	3.3
Sisters/Brothers	38(12.1%)	3.3	23 (22.1%)	4.4*	2 (4.1%)	5.1*
Grand Parents	14 (4.5%)	3.4	6 (5.8%)	4.9*	0	5.4*
Aunts/Uncles	13 (4.2%)	2.4	7 (6.7%)	2.9	0	3.7
Other	7 (2.2%)	2.4	3 (2.9%)	2.9	0	2.8

*A Sex (2) X Culture (3) X Care Group (2) MANOVA found significant Culture main effects for Sister/Brother and Grand Parents (S/B: $F(2, 138) = 4.6, p < .05$; GP: $F(2, 138) = 6.7, p < .01$).

Note. Percentages in this table are based on the proportions of the three cultural groups in this sample: Australian: 313; Indigenous: 104; Other: 49. Because multiple choices were possible, they do not sum to 100.

Children. Some young people in both care groups were parents: 5.2% (n = 12; 13 children, oldest 2 years) of the In-Care, and 22.7% (n = 32; 47 children, oldest 10 years) of the Post-Care group. Although 38.6% (n = 17) of the young parents claimed that they didn't need any support, those who would appreciate help identified child support as their greatest need (29.6% of 27). The young people who selected "Other" generally did so to combine answers:

I think I need support for everything listed All of those. Financial. Parenting is really big - you need every single bit of support that you can get.

As parents, 34.1% of respondents with children depended largely on themselves and their partners to manage their children while others relied mainly on family (13.6%) and friends (11.4%). While 20.5% had not received any support with parenting, 43.2% (n = 19) found the support they received "Quite" or "Very" helpful (M = 4.3, SD = 1.7; 1:Not at all helpful – 6:Very helpful).

Table C2.5.2

Number of Young people Desiring Future Contact with Birth Family Members as a Function of Culture

Birth Family Member	Culture		
	Australian	Indigenous	Other
No one	104 (33.2%)	42 (40.4%)	13 (26.5%)
Mother	46 (14.7%)	15 (14.4%)	9 (18.4%)
Father	37 (11.8%)	6 (5.8%)	9 (18.4%)
Sisters/Brothers	71 (22.7%)	28 (26.9%)	13 (26.5%)
Grand Parents	31 (9.9%)	6 (5.8%)	10 (20.4%)
Aunts/Uncles	45 (14.4%)	14 (13.5%)	12 (24.5%)
Other	14 (4.5%)	6 (5.8%)	1 (2.0%)

Note. Percentages in this table are based on the proportions of the three cultural groups in this sample: Australian: 313; Indigenous: 104; Other: 49. Because multiple choices were possible, the percentages do not sum to 100

Discussion. These data emphasise the importance of maintaining sibling contact within families even when connection with parents has broken down. The care system seems to be recognising this (given the number of young people here living with siblings), but the evidence also suggests that more could be done to satisfy the wishes of participants for more sibling and extended family contact.

Many young people, as parents, want to demonstrate their capacity to look after their children without dependence on others. However, it must be remembered that parenting is a difficult role under ideal circumstances; special attention should be directed to ensuring that this group is not overlooked in the provision of support.

C2.6 Health and Self-Care

Those participants in the PC group were questioned regarding the current condition of their health. Most rated it as “Good” ($M = 4.3$, $SD = 1.2$) with 39.1% indicating they felt ‘Quite’ or ‘Very good’ and only 7.2% claiming “Quite” or “Very poor”. Access to health services was measured on a 7-point scale (1: Not at all – 7: Weekly). Females ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 1.7$) were found to use medical services significantly more than males ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.6$)³. Participants were asked to indicate on a 6-point scale

(1: Very hard – 6: Very easy) how they found managing a variety of daily activities. No significant differences were detected in the levels of difficulty, but the pattern of responses is interesting. Table C2.6.1 shows the percentages scoring the various tasks “Easy” (Quite and Very) and “Hard” (Quite and Very). Confidence seems to be lower regarding meal preparation.

Table C2.6.1

Percentage of Young Care Leavers Reporting Designated Levels of Difficulty with Daily Tasks

Activity	Difficulty		N
	Easy (Quite/Very) %	Hard (Quite/Very) %	
Looking after health	39.1	9.5	169
Prepare healthy meals	31.8	12.6	167
Look after your place	36.1	8.3	169
Find and use transport	39.7	10.1	169
Make friends	40.5	7.8	168
Get along with people	45.9	4.2	168

³A one-way ANOVA was used: $F(1,166) = 13.9$, $p < .01$.

The survey also inquired into the possible involvement of the care leavers with the Juvenile Justice system. Although there was a tendency for Indigenous young people to report a higher involvement (Australian: 27.8%, n = 30; Indigenous: 37.5%, n = 15; Other: 29.4%; n = 5), the differences were not significant. However, significantly more of the males (45.5%; n = 30) compared with females (21.6%, n = 22) indicated some involvement with the police, courts, or detention centres concerning a range of offences:

I have been to court about custody battles and sexual assault.

Got a good behaviour on a fraud charge.

Just got a few train fines for not having a ticket.

Drinking in public fines, failure to pay fines, cannabis cautions.

Drug possession, drink driving, driving without licence, restraining order, and now becoming a lawyer.

Discussion. Careful attention should be directed to the likely health issues facing young people when conducting a needs assessment in the planning phase of transition. Because females tend to use health services more than males, it could be that they have more concerns that must be addressed; alternatively, males may not be presenting with problems when they should. Either way, these patterns in health care need to be recognised.

It is encouraging that around 40% of respondents were finding basic self-care reasonably easy; but what about the 60% who did not? Why is it that over two-thirds of young people did not feel that it was reasonably easy to manage nutrition and prepare healthy meals? Again, these are skills that should be acquired early in life. Ensuring that such training was included in the general education curriculum would be a positive move, as would providing training and support for carers (in terms of content, procedures and health and safety issues) so that these skills could be developed as part of the young person's life experience.

The disproportionate number of this cohort involved with Juvenile Justice (compared with the rate in the general population of 5 per 1000 youths; AIHW, 2008) is alarming, especially for young males. In spite of detailed data being available as to the costs inherent in supporting pathways to independence that involve the police and justice

systems (Forbes, Inder, & Raman, 2006; Morgan Disney, 2006), assistance to avoid such pathways is not reaching those care leavers who need it. This problem could be addressed by more appropriate and continued follow-up after transition.

C2.7 Planning for Leaving Care

Planning for transitioning is recognised by legislators as a vital phase of the process for all young people in care. It is essential that responsible individuals discuss the situation and possible outcomes with the young people to prepare them for the future. Participants in this study were asked who had spoken to them about their life after leaving care and the age when that occurred. Results are shown in Table C2.7.1.

Table C2.7.1

Percentage of Respondents in the Two Care Groups Receiving Information from Various Sources about Leaving Care

Sources	Care Groups		
	In Care (% n=275)	Post Care (% n=196)	Total (% n=471)
No One	23.6	19.4	21.9
Carer	32.0	17.9	26.1
Caseworker	40.0	29.6	35.7
Another worker in agency	8.4	7.7	8.1
Worker in Leaving Care service	1.5	8.7	4.5
Indigenous community worker	0.7	1.0	0.8
Family	10.9	9.7	10.4
Friend	7.6	5.1	6.6
Other	6.9	8.2	7.4

Sadly, 21.9% (n = 103) of participants reported that no one had discussed with them what might happen after they left care. Most who had talked with someone received information from caseworkers or carers. (Interestingly, one-third of the "Other" category involved contact with CREATE staff.) Young people still in care had been spoken to when they were significantly younger (M = 14.9, SD = 2.5) than had those who already have left care (M = 15.9, SD = 2.0)⁴, suggesting that attempts now are being made

⁴A one-way ANOVA comparing mean ages found $F(1, 196) = 9.0, p < .01$.

to begin preparations for leaving care earlier.

A major concern in this study was the verification of the principle that a leaving care plan is prepared for all young people transitioning as required in the relevant legislation of all jurisdictions. Both care groups were asked if they had a leaving care or transitioning plan (the IC group was given an extra choice beyond “Yes”, “No”, or “Don’t know” to indicate that a plan was “still being worked on”).

Unfortunately, only 71% (n = 335) of respondents chose to answer this question. Overall, 36.4% (n = 122) of these participants indicated that they did have a plan or that one was being developed. (Note. If this number were expressed as a percentage of all participants, the value would be 25.9%.) The percentages for the IC and PC groups were 34.0% and 40.3% respectively. No significant Sex, Culture, or Jurisdiction differences were observed in the incidence of plans, although the numbers having one ranged from 27.9% in VIC to 40.6% in WA. Generally, those who knew about their plan reported making a reasonable contribution to its preparation (M = 3.6, SD = 1.5); however, while 32% indicated being “Quite” or “Very” involved, another 33% reported “Little” or no participation.

Table C2.7.2

Numbers of Young People in Each Care Group Having a Leaving Care Plan Who Were Not Aware of Areas Covered, and the Numbers from the PC Group Reporting Levels of Helpfulness of the Plan in Each Area

Area in Plan	Care Group			
	In Care	Post Care		
	Not Covered	Not Covered	Very/Quite Helpful	Not at all / A little Helpful
Education	39 (55.7%)	11 (22.0%)	10 (25.6%)	18 (46.2%)
Employment	47 (67.1%)	20 (39.2%)	2 (6.5%)	19 (61.3%)
Accommodation	41 (58.6%)	5 (9.8%)	13 (28.2%)	20 (43.5%)
Household Goods	54 (77.1%)	13 (25.5%)	13 (34.2%)	11 (28.9%)
Driver’s Licence	51 (72.9%)	15 (29.4%)	9 (25.0%)	22 (61.1%)
Financial Planning	53 (75.7%)	19 (37.3%)	5 (15.6%)	19 (59.4%)
Family Contact	49 (70.0%)	23 (45.1%)	5 (17.8%)	12 (42.9%)
Emotional Support	52 (74.3%)	24 (47.1%)	4 (14.8%)	13 (48.1%)
Cultural Support	64 (91.4%)	41 (82.0%)	2 (22.2%)	4 (44.4%)
Life Skills Preparation	47 (67.1%)	19 (38.0%)	8 (25.8%)	11 (35.5%)
Health	50 (71.4%)	14 (28.0%)	11 (30.5%)	13 (36.1%)

Note. Multiple choices were possible, therefore percentages do not sum to 100.

Those young people who reported having a plan were asked which areas of their life were addressed in that document (these areas were drawn from the domains included in available plan templates provided by various governments, usually addressing the *Looking After Children* domains). The numbers of young people believing that various nominated areas were not covered in their transition from care plan are shown in Table C2.7.2. As an example of how to read these data, of the 70 with a plan in the IC group, 31 mentioned Education as an area receiving attention with the remaining 39 not aware that this domain was included in the plan. These data also compare the same measure obtained from the group that already had exited care.

Note. The high value recorded for lack of attention to Cultural Support reflects the fact that such assistance is required to be provided only for Indigenous young people of whom there were seven in this sub-group of the sample.

While these data seem to suggest that several areas are being overlooked for many young people in the IC group, caution should be exercised in interpreting these findings. It is possible that, because plans for this cohort are still in preparation (with needs still being assessed and actions proposed), young people may not be aware of all issues likely to be included. This is not the case for those in the PC group. It is of concern that areas including emotional support, family contact, employment, life-skills preparation, and financial planning were not considered for well over a third of care leavers. Unfortunately, no data are available to enable an evaluation of the likely effectiveness of leaving-plan content.

Of even greater interest are the responses indicating how helpful plans were found to be in various areas (see Table C2.7.2). The issues identified as not being addressed for many also were the ones that were found not to be all that helpful even when included in a plan, particularly the domains of employment and emotional support. Indeed, fewer care leavers than expected found any of the areas “Quite” or “Very” helpful.



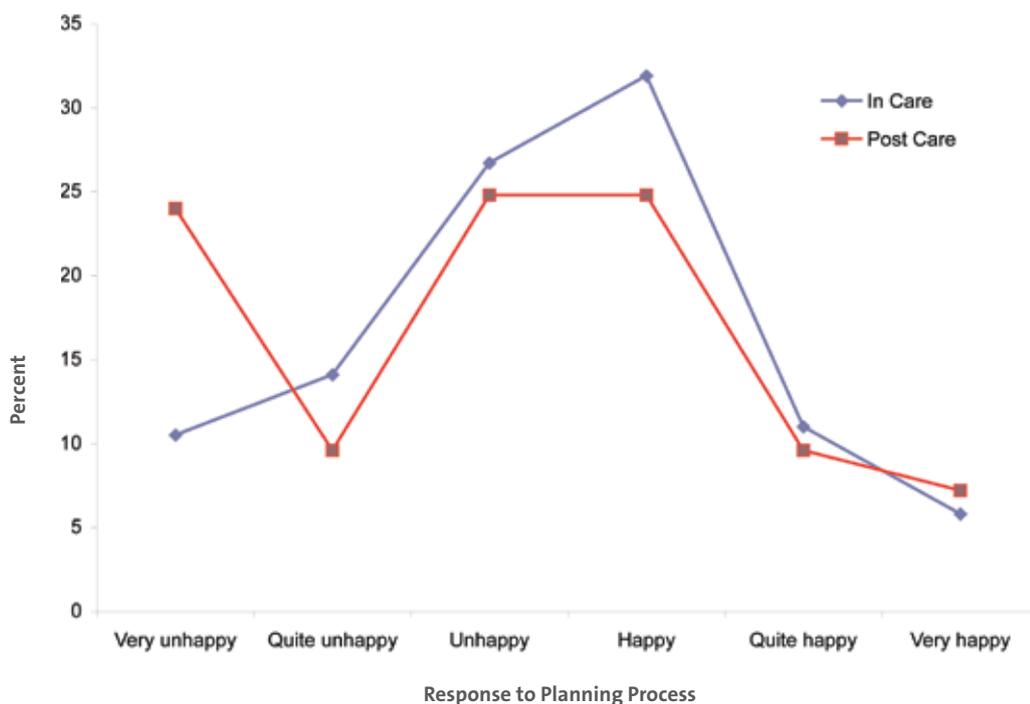


Figure C2.7.1. Percent of young people from the two care groups indicating their level of happiness with the planning process.

When asked how they felt about the planning process, the two groups gave significantly different responses. Figure C2.7.1 shows the percent of the IC and PC groups that indicated the various levels of happiness with the planning process. More of the young people who had exited care (and fewer of the IC group) were “Very unhappy” with the process than was expected, while more (than expected) of the IC (and fewer of the PC) group were “Happy” with their treatment⁵. These observations could reflect improvements that have occurred in the process leading to increased satisfaction for those still in care; alternatively, it could be that the PC members are having their perceptions influenced by their negative experiences since leaving care. The varied views of young people are highlighted in comments such as:

So far it's good so I have gotten what I could out of it because I am staying with my carers.

Because it covered all aspects of my life. Then nothing happened.

Don't know much about it, working it out for myself.

Not enough information and someone else was making all the decisions without listening to me.

It was terrible. I was told a week before I turned 18 that I was leaving care.

Because we have some involvement, but it's still early days so we will see how things go.

Because I haven't been notified what's happening and I really, really want to know.

⁵A Care Group (2) X Rating (6) Chi-Square analysis found significant differences: $X^2(5) = 11.8, p < .05$.

An attempt was made to evaluate which of a variety of approaches would be seen as most useful in helping young people learn about leaving care and the support services available. Alternatives provided included hard-copy publications (brochures/booklets), web-based sources of information, workshop presentations, small-group discussions, practical hands-on experiences, and use of mentors. The care groups were consistent in their responses when expressing significant differences among the approaches, with web-based sources ($M = 3.1, SE = 0.1$), brochures/booklets ($M = 3.2, SE = 0.1$), and workshops ($M = 3.3, SE = 0.1$) being seen as less useful than hands-on activities ($M = 4.3, SE = 0.1$) and the assistance of mentors ($M = 4.4, SE = 0.1$)⁶. Other suggestions included:

Learning experience, like moving out of home for a week or so to experience what it's like to live out of home.

Educating workers to teach kids these skills so the kids don't have to engage with anyone new.

Good foster carers help you and tell you about services.

People who have gone through the situation themselves.

As a final question about transition, the PC group members were asked what events occurred that marked their leaving care. Commonly, young people mentioned having meetings with workers (15.3%, $n = 30$), receiving letters from the Minister (14.8%, $n = 29$), being given farewells by carers (11.7%, $n = 23$). However, 22.4% ($n = 44$) indicated that nothing special was done to record this milestone in their lives.

Discussion. Planning for leaving care is an area where there is a major difference between the rhetoric of the authorities and actual outcomes for young people. Governments stipulate that planning must begin well before young people exit care; for one-fifth of this substantial sample of young care leavers, nobody discussed this momentous event with them. Departments assert that leaving-care plans in some form must exist, although as seen in Part B of this Report, in the rare situations when official audits are conducted, not all

young transitioners do have plans. The observations here present a much bleaker picture than even the government audits. Just under two-thirds of respondents do not have, or are unaware of having, an approved plan for their immediate future. If plans do exist in Departmental files, the young people concerned have not been involved sufficiently, or at all, in their preparation (as the guiding principles of all jurisdictions dictate).

In those cases where a plan does exist, it is important to ensure that it is relevant to the needs of the young person and that it is effective. Governments clearly spend few resources evaluating these aspects of the leaving-care plans (see Part B). Information collected here reveals that, for many, key areas were not addressed in planning, and strategies that were included often were not all that helpful.

While these outcomes could be interpreted as presenting a pessimistic view, they also identify a source of hope. The planning process worked for some young people; it is essential that governments and researchers evaluate the successes to determine what was effective in those cases. Were the young people more involved (data here indicated a significant correlation between the amount of involvement in the planning process and the young person's happiness with that process⁷). Were the plans produced less complex and more accessible to the young people?

Interesting findings emerged concerning the most useful ways information about leaving care could be imparted to young people. Contrary to much contemporary popular wisdom that advocates the internet as "the" way to connect with young people, those in this study preferred to learn about leaving care via people-based approaches, either through their participation in practical, experiential programs or through interactions with mentors. This questions the actions of governments relying on the production of material resources to communicate essential information to care leavers.

C2.8 After Care Support

Only 7.1% of the 196 young people in the PC group claimed that no one had helped them since leaving care. The most common form of assistance was the help of friends (34.7%) with family and former carers being the next most frequently accessed supporters (26.5% and

⁶A Care Group (2) X Approaches (6) MANOVA (with Greenhouse-Geisser correction applied) was conducted to compare the means. Significant within-subjects effect for usefulness of the Approaches was found: $F(4, 1385) = 60.0, p < .01$.

⁷A Pearson product moment correlation was calculated: $r(147) = 0.5, p < .01$

23.5% respectively). Caseworkers did not figure prominently as sources of help for care leavers (16.3%). Other supporters mentioned included teachers, mentors, and CREATE staff.

The apparent lack of connection between young people and caseworkers was reinforced by the finding that those who had left care maintained significantly more contact with their last foster family than with their last caseworker. When frequency of contact was measured on a 7-point scale (1: Not at all – 7: Weekly), contact with carers was more common ($M = 3.5$, $SE = 0.3$) than with workers ($M = 2.1$, $SE = 0.2$)⁸. While 31.0% of young people maintained at least monthly contact with carers, only 17.8% exhibited comparable contact with caseworkers.

Young people were provided with a list of various support services and then required to rate on three 6-point scales (a) how often they had used the services since leaving care; (b) how easy each of the services was to use; and (c) how helpful the services had been. Unfortunately, because a small number of responses were received from ACT, NT, and TAS, these jurisdictions were not included in the subsequent analyses. In addition, because relatively few of the sample required the assistance of Indigenous Organisations and Disability Services, these were omitted from comparisons. Figure C2.8.1 presents the mean usage

ratings given by the Jurisdictions with larger numbers. Different patterns of service usage were found across the various jurisdictions⁹. Transition from Care services were used occasionally in WA but hardly at all in QLD, Youth Services were more popular in WA but less in NSW, whereas Health Services were used reasonably often in QLD but less in SA. CREATE was accessed occasionally in QLD, WA, and VIC but less often in NSW and SA.

Similar analyses were conducted on the ease of use and helpfulness of the services¹⁰. Since there were insufficient numbers to allow jurisdiction comparisons to be performed, overall analyses simply compared the services on the two measures. As can be seen in Figure C2.8.2, Health Services, Youth Services, and CREATE were easier to access than the other services. CREATE and Health Services were seen as more helpful than other Transition from Care Services.



⁸A Jurisdiction (8) X Supporter (2) ANOVA with repeated measures on the second factor found a significant within-subjects effect for Supporter: $F(1, 95) = 11.0$, $p < .01$.

⁹A Jurisdiction (5) X Service (6) ANOVA with repeated measures on Service found a significant main effect for Service ($F[5,555] = 12.1$, $p < .01$) and a significant Jurisdiction X Service interaction ($F[18, 555] = 2.0$, $p < .01$).

¹⁰One-way, repeated-measures ANOVAs compared mean Ease of Use and Helpfulness ratings. A significant main effect for Service was found in each case: Ease of Use: $F(4, 225) = 21.9$, $p < .01$; Helpfulness: $F(4, 189) = 7.8$, $p < .01$.



Figure C2.8.1. Mean rating of frequency of use for various leaving-care services across Jurisdictions.

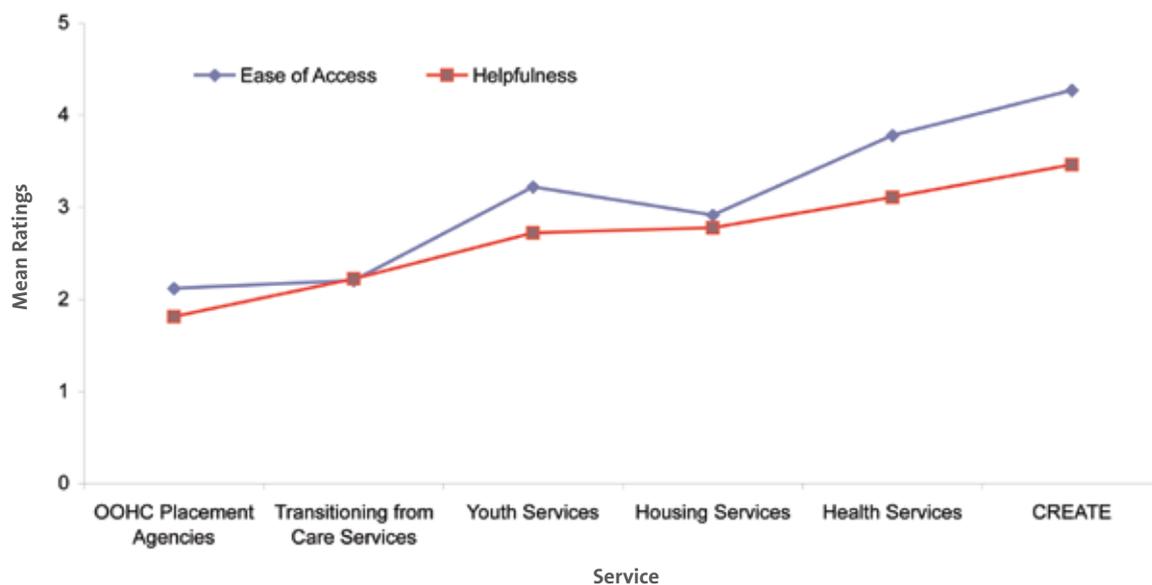


Figure C2.8.2. Overall mean ratings of ease of access, and helpfulness for various leaving-care services.

To conclude the After-Care Support section of the survey, young care leavers were asked if they knew how to access their Departmental case file, whether or not they had retrieved it, and how easy they found that process. They also were asked about applying for TILA, and to discuss any direct (particularly financial) support received from the Department.

Half (50.0%) of 160 respondents indicated that they knew what they needed to do to access their files, however, 51.2% had not asked to see their personal documents. Of those who had tried to retrieve their files, 10.1% found the process “Quite” or “Very” easy while 30.0% found it “Quite” or “Very” hard. Comments reflected the different experiences of young people regarding this fundamental right:

The Department pointed me in the right direction and it was pretty easy from there.

My caseworker avoids the question. I have been asking since I was eighteen.

Haven't had a chance to go into the department to ask.

Didn't know I could. I think the process is too much trouble.

I have (made) requests over the phone because I live long distance. Nothing has been sent.

With regard to applying for TILA, 28.9% of 149 respondents claimed that they had never heard of this support, while another 23.5% indicated that they had not sought this funding at present. A total of 18.8% found the process of applying “Quite” or “Very” easy compared with 8.7% who found it “Quite” or “Very” hard. Some of the difficulties were identified through open responses:

Quotes were hard to get. Department lost quotes. Worker did it for me.

Was not aware of TILA grant until 5 years after leaving care.

Because you had to talk to our caseworker, and then to their manager, about what you can do.

Young care leavers were able to give diverse examples of situations where the Department had provided specific, tangible support that resulted in variable outcomes. For example:

Funded bed frame, fridge, and washing machine.

Since leaving care I was told I had financial things approved but did not receive it.

They recently paid for my driving lessons and driving test.

Brokerage from the youth support service

Setting up my place and buy the stuff we need that we can't afford.

(Received) financial assistance with obtaining glasses.

Only when I left home, as I had no clothes and stuff.

Help for uni textbooks for one semester.

Centrelink, but now they have a big debt for me to repay which I cannot afford.

I had a power bill that I couldn't pay, so they offered to pay it just this once.

I think my mum still gets some money for me until I finish year 12.

However, only 23.4% of 158 felt that they had received sufficient information to prepare them adequately for leaving care. Furthermore, although of the 69.2% who had sought assistance with transitioning, 25.5% had found the support “quite” or “very” helpful, 37.3% found it a “Little” or “Not at all” helpful.

Discussion. The variation noted in the use of services across regions reflects the decisions of governments regarding which operations will be funded or supported in a particular area (see London, Moslehuddin, Mendes & Cashmore, 2007). When reviewing the range of services and programs available (see Part B), it is clear that unless steps are taken by relevant Departments to integrate the assistance provided, the result can be a piecemeal approach to providing essential support. The needs of young care leavers do not vary; it is the responsibility of governments to ensure consistency of treatment throughout the country.

The difficulty of achieving this is highlighted when the fundamental supports, such as assessing personal records and the Australian Government's TILA grant, are considered. Substantial numbers here reported that these tasks were difficult, largely because they lacked the necessary knowledge of entitlements and process. The fact that over three-quarters of respondents felt that they didn't have sufficient information to transition successfully questions the efficacy of the process as it is practiced. More needs to be done to ensure that relevant information is made available through front-line contacts with young people (caseworkers and carers), and that it is accurate, accessible and effective.

C2.9 Thoughts about Leaving Care

Members of the group approaching transition were asked for their thoughts about leaving care, how concerned they felt, what specific worries they may have, with whom they have discussed their concerns, and to whom they will most likely turn for support after leaving.

"Leaving care" implies many different things to young people in this group. Some saw it positively as freedom from the constraints of the past. Others saw the added responsibility as "scary" and felt abandoned by the system. Overall, there appeared in the comments a distinct impression that they should expect to be on their own, independent, but with no support.

Weight lifted, letting go of the past, making own choices, following career path, freedom, independence, transition to being treated like an adult.

It means being on my own. to try and do things on my own that I haven't done before.

Finally getting everyone out my hair.

Freedom, space, not being called weekly to see how I'm going.

It's my responsibility once I turn 18, there is no one to support me.

I could have stayed with my foster family but I decided to get my own place... it has been a bit harder than I thought.

I was scared that I wouldn't make it on my own

A lot of anxiety.

Kicked out on the street.

Homeless :(.

In spite of the tenor of these comments, a substantial majority (75.3%, n = 153) of young people expressed little or no concern about leaving care compared with 12.3% who felt high levels of anxiety. If they had a worry they would most likely discuss it with their foster carer (14.5%). Few specific worries were mentioned, but a recurring concern was where the young person would live following transition. After leaving, they would be equally likely to seek assistance from their carer (21.4%), parents (20.9%), or other family member (19.8%).

The last section of the survey asked both groups how happy they felt about the support they had received for leaving care, what they were looking forward to, and for final comments. Overall, 71.0% had a positive response, with 28.9% (n = 88) "quite" or "very" happy. At this stage of their lives, freedom and independence were the articulated goals, to be achieved from various perspectives:

Hopefully I will be a bit more grown up, and realize a lot more things and how important they are.

My singing and dancing, and just being happy.

Their vision for the future, as would be expected with most young people, centred on study or work, and relationships, or as one young male commented, in five years he hoped to be:

Working in a good job and have a nice misses.

Young people made various statements in summarising their responses to this survey. Two of the more profound seem to encapsulate the key principles that should be guiding the transition process:

I just think whoever has been in care, for whatever reason, has the right to a normal life of their own, to overcome whatever thoughts and feelings ...[may exist] on the reason they were in care.

I reckon people should be able to leave care when they are ready (past the age of 18), not in the houses, but still with the reassurance that you're in care and have support.

C3: Evaluation

To conclude this Report Card, the findings presented here will be compared with those obtained in 2008 and progress toward implementing the Recommendations proposed will be evaluated. Discussion will centre on data presented in the key sections of this study.

C3.1 Legislation and policy

Overall, the responses of governments in articulating their responsibilities have been commendable. Even in jurisdictions where the references in legislation concerning transitioning have been relatively limited and non-specific, derived policies tend to be detailed and comprehensive. Some variability between states and territories still is observed in terms of when planning for transitioning should begin and how long support should be maintained. It would seem that commencing planning as early as possible at a specified age (e.g., 15 years) would be preferable to beginning a certain period (e.g., 12 months) before the date of leaving (since this may be unpredictable). Furthermore, continuing the provision of support until 25 years could be considered the ideal and would match the trends present in the general community. It is suggested that when future policy revisions occur, outlying jurisdictions could move toward adopting the “15/25” support strategy and establish that as the national standard.

C3.2 Established partnerships

Most of the larger jurisdictions reported a variety of formal connections between different arms of government aimed at providing support services for those young people transitioning from care. While the extent of established partnerships was positive, the more that were identified meant that greater efforts had to be directed at coordinating the agreements into an holistic continuum of care. Examples of best practice were provided (e.g., SA and VIC) where overt action was taken to ensure that all parties involved knew the role they and others were playing in the support team. The claim made in Report Card 2008 that the costs of providing transitioning assistance could be spread through the establishment of new partnerships (and the possibility that extra funding could become available) was realised in new connections made in QLD (e.g., between Child Safety and Industrial Relations). Further linkages within governments should be explored across all jurisdictions and mechanisms introduced to integrate the respective contributions.

Given the poor outcomes observed in this study in terms of Education (with only 35% of care leavers having completed year 12 and 13.8% undertaking further education), Employment (where 28.5% report being unemployed), and Juvenile Justice (which involved large numbers of young people in this sample, particularly males), partnerships between responsible Departments in these areas must receive particular attention, either to be established or to have their effectiveness improved.

One set of partnerships that has become more recognised since 2008 is that involving Indigenous agencies. All jurisdictions except NT, TAS, and WA have realised the need to pay special attention to the needs of the relatively large proportion of Indigenous young people in care and hence eventually transitioning. Interestingly, cultural differences did not figure prominently in this study; the disadvantage experienced through care-leaving seemed to place all cultural groups on a similar footing.

C3.3 Planning for Leaving Care

Clearly, in the former sections, achievements already in evidence in 2008 were enhanced through 2009. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for leaving-care planning. The high percentages of respondents from both the IC and PC groups indicating that they didn't have a plan were almost identical with those reported in 2008. Again, the rhetoric does not match the reality. Data indicated that young people were not as involved as they

need to be in the planning process, and the plans produced (while supposedly addressing the relevant support domains dictated in policy) were not perceived as effective by young care leavers.

Caseworkers are the individuals with primary responsibility for ensuring young people are prepared adequately for leaving care. Unfortunately, the relationships young people have with their workers are not always positive which can impede the flow of necessary information. Employing staff as specialists in transition who have the necessary knowledge and expertise, and who can relate personally to young people could help create a context in which planning is effective.

Another major factor in raising care-leaver awareness is the role the carer plays in the preparation for transition. Carers are in daily contact with the young people and are in the ideal position to help them through the exiting process. There is some evidence from this study that the type of placement is related to the likelihood that a young person will have a plan¹². There probably are several reasons for carers to avoid discussing planning with young people; for example, with some it may be difficult to discuss the possibility of future "separation". Therefore, it is essential that special training be provided for carers to help them raise the issues of leaving care with young people in an appropriate and timely way, as recommended in Report Card 2008 and reinforced by Wood (2008).

It is not known why young respondents did not have, or did not know about their leaving-care plans. However, if they are made aware that they should have a plan, then the young persons can be proactive and ask to be involved in the planning process. In keeping with its mission to empower young people in care, CREATE proposes to take action to ensure that this awareness is achieved, and will establish support mechanisms to facilitate young persons' inquiries.

Evidence presented here indicates that even when plans are prepared, they may not be perceived as of great use by young people. It is widely recognised that plans must be developed based on an assessment of the needs of individual young people as they arise in each of the critical life domains. However, young people do not seem to be relating to the plans produced. A detailed comparative analysis and evaluation of plans from various jurisdictions would be useful to inform best practice. The cursory review possible in this study did indicate that plans vary in terms of their detail and complexity. While thoroughness

is necessary for Departmental accountability, it can contribute to a plan's inaccessibility to those who need it most of all. It is suggested that consideration be given by Departments to producing a simplified "extract" of the detailed plan developed in consultation with the young person, a copy of which care leavers can retain for personal reference.

C3.4 Staff and Services

Some jurisdictions (e.g., ACT, NSW, SA, and VIC) have realised the value in having specialist staff appointed officially (and in some Service Centres in QLD "unofficially") with a major responsibility for working with those young people transitioning from care. However, while these workers can play a vital role in integrating support available, data indicate that relatively large numbers of young people are not accessing services. This could be because of a lack of knowledge of what support is available, or because care leavers have chosen not to engage with the system. Comments provided by young people suggest both situations can apply depending on the care leaver.

Authorities must ensure that relevant information is available regarding transitioning. Several jurisdictions have taken this requirement on board and promoted leaving care kits and other resources including web sites. Although such sources of information are necessary, it is clear from observations in this study that young people value more talking with mentors and having hands-on experiences where they can trial "leaving" while still in the security of the care system.

A theme pervading many of the views expressed by young people, while not stated explicitly, seems to reflect the attitude that "I'm on my own now. I don't need them. I'll show them". If such a position is widely held among care leavers, it could be a factor contributing to low access rates for support services. Governments need to investigate this possibility, and take steps reduce the disengagement many young people seem to exhibit towards "the Department". This could be achieved by removing unnecessary bureaucratic barriers and making the pathways to support easier to follow.

¹² Percentages of young people having leaving care plans by placement type are: Foster care 32.6%; Kinship care 20.1%; Residential care 39.3%.

C3.5 Funding

It is encouraging that four of the five jurisdictions with most annual care leavers (NSW, SA, VIC, and WA) have made transparent budget allocations of funding for direct assistance to young people as well as providing overall funding for transition services. Such an approach is desirable for all jurisdictions because it helps reduce the discretionary control often exercised over support funding. Young people must be informed of their specific entitlements and their eligibility for various forms of assistance. This would limit the formation of unrealistic expectations, and would eliminate the stigma associated with the “cap in hand” mentality generated when young people have to ask for something, but are not sure if they should.

While all forms of financial support are desirable, those systems, where numerous schemes are in operation offering capped “grants” to young people, require extra vigilance on the part of workers to ensure that those eligible for assistance are aware of their options. If funding programs are being established, those involving general brokerage would be easier to administer and potentially less confusing. Equity must be upheld; support must be available based on need, not merely on how proactive a caseworker may be.

As discussed in Report Card 2008, attention should be directed to ensuring that comparable direct funding support is available to young care leavers wherever they reside. The Australian Government provides the \$1500 TILA grant nationally, but several young people reported they were not aware of the existence of this scheme. Also, it is not always clear if the support provided through the state or territory governments includes or is in addition to TILA. It would seem that this could be an issue that would benefit from review within the National Framework.

C3.6 Monitoring Process and Outcomes

Another area that might need to be addressed nationally is the monitoring of the effectiveness of child protection systems, including transitioning processes and outcomes. At present, from the viewpoint of governments, “monitoring” is the most poorly handled aspect of the transitioning-from-care experience, even more so than the planning

phase. It is of some concern that reviews of *process* largely are conducted ‘in-house’ by Departmental and agency staff, but at least there is some accountability in the system.

When *outcomes* for care leavers are considered, the situation is far worse. Only WA has any current data on the success of its transition-from-care programs. In the near future, new data collection mechanisms may give SA and VIC access to comparable information (but this is untested as yet). Considering that it is impossible to plan adequately and develop appropriate responses when the strengths and weaknesses of the system are unknown, attention to this major deficiency is critical. The U.S. government has acted to redress the problem in its domain by setting a timeframe for monitoring to become effective, but this required a ten-year lead-time. Australia cannot afford such a delay. Governments must obtain accurate information on how the 11,000 young people who have left care over the last six years are coping to enable meaningful changes to the system. The introduction of these will to enhance support available for the greater numbers transitioning in the future.

C3.7 Targeted Issues: Accommodation and Education

Two outcome areas about which concerns were raised from the data collected in 2008 were accommodation and education. In that Report Card, significant numbers of care leavers experienced periods of homelessness after transitioning. In addition, relatively few completed year 12 and undertook further education. These issues were explored in more detail in the current study. Unfortunately, similar disappointing trends were again observed. More care leavers than was tolerable were homeless for at least five days in their first year of independence, and fewer than was acceptable had completed year 12. Both outcomes could be improved through appropriate after-care support in the form of a continuum of contact between young people and their caseworkers or mentors.

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Appendices

- Appendix A.** Recommendations from CREATE Report Card 2008
- Appendix B.** Bibliography presenting literature reviewed in CREATE Report Card 2008
- Appendix C.** Questions for Governments Regarding Support for Transitioning and After Care
- Appendix D.** Survey on transitioning for young people still in care
- Appendix E.** Survey on transitioning for young people who have left care
- Appendix F.** CREATE Leaving-Care Support Program: CREATE Your Future

Extract: CREATE Report Card: Transitioning from Care 2008 Recommendations

From the data collected in this study, the following recommendations are drawn. They derive from the information provided by Governments as well as the responses collected from the young participants.

1. It would seem desirable to establish in Australia minimum national standards to achieve parity across jurisdictions concerning the treatment of care leavers by reducing the variability encountered in key areas of legislation and policy. Consistency should be introduced to ensure:
 - a. early commencement of transition planning (planning to begin at 15 years);
 - b. continuity of support (support should be maintained until the young person reaches 25 years, and then be extended at Ministerial discretion); and
 - c. comparability in the content of the plans produced (plans should include an assessment of a young person's needs with reference to the seven *Looking After Children* domains: Health, Education, Identity, Family and Social Relationships, Social Presentations, Emotional and Behavioural Development and Self-Care Skills. It is important that specific reference be made, where appropriate, to accommodation, employment, and financial considerations.
2. A greater number of formal associations and partnerships need to be instigated between relevant government Departments, and between Departments and agencies to provide specific support for those transitioning from care. Although portfolios differ in focus and extent across jurisdictions, connections would seem logical between Child Protection and areas such as Disability Services, Health, Housing, Education, Employment, Communities, and Transport. Formal partnerships would reduce the uncertainty surrounding responsibility for provision of support, help clarify the type and extent of assistance available; make expectations of care leavers clearer and more realistic; and spread the cost of support across areas.
3. Since planning for leaving care must begin while young people are still in a placement, the carers concerned should be informed fully of milestones to be reached during transitioning and actively involved and *supported* by Departments to help make the process as positive as possible, especially for the young people. Emphasising the collaboration between young people, carers, and the Department to ensure a smooth, gradual transition (rather than an abrupt termination) is likely to result in more positive perceptions of the system by young people and a greater willingness on their part to engage with support mechanisms in the future.
4. Given the high incidence of Indigenous young people in care (relative to their proportion of the population) and the consequent number becoming care leavers, more attention needs to be directed to forming associations between Departments and agencies that may benefit this group. Consultations should involve Indigenous stakeholders (such as the Recognised Entities in Queensland) to determine appropriate connections and priorities.
5. Governments must ensure that the plans developed for and with care leavers must address the life issues they are likely to confront. It is essential that the individual needs of young care leavers within the Looking After Children framework must be assessed professionally to inform any plan to be prepared. Actions recommended and processes established must relate to areas of greatest individual need. Planning must be proactive in predicting needs that may arise (given the individual's experiences in care) rather than just addressing immediate concerns.
6. Since at present there is a lack of clarity regarding who should control the development and implementation of Leaving Care Plans, it is suggested that specific positions for individuals or groups (Transitioning From Care Officers or Sections) be established within Departments to assume responsibility for overseeing these processes. Departments must institute rigorous monitoring procedures to evaluate both the implementation of their leaving-care policies and the success of their outcomes for the young people. Departments need to set criteria for Key Performance Indicators (including long-term measures) and determine the effectiveness of policies and programs using these tools. If NGOs are involved in providing services, Departments must be responsible for accrediting agencies and training their staff in data collection and reporting to ensure consistency and accuracy of the evaluations.
7. It is clear that transitioning is a long-term process (from 18 until the young person reaches at least 25 years); therefore, there is a strong need for continuity of support, not only through specific services, but also with social networks. While family may fill this role in some situations, young people without such connections need someone (as well as carers and Departmental workers) to turn to for ongoing guidance and reassurance in their move toward independence. One way of providing this ongoing support is through mentoring programs, such as those operating in WA and VIC. To provide valued longitudinal support for care leavers and reduce the pressures on overworked

Departmental officers, all jurisdictions should investigate the introduction of similar programs.

8. While it would seem advantageous to have a range of services available (specialist and non-specialist) to support care leavers, it is imperative also to ensure that young people know about the services and have the means to access them. To increase engagement of care leavers with support programs, clear and accurate information must be provided in a variety of forms to maximize the likelihood of young people realizing what their entitlements are and what assistance is available. This will require a variety of approaches being adopted, using hard copy, Web sites, Help lines, and Transitioning From Care personnel. Mechanisms must be established to enable integration of information and coordination of services. For example, Departments could provide information to CREATE for inclusion in the Club CREATE newsletters to guide young people in ways of accessing relevant services and programs. Transitioning From Care officers would take responsibility for this.
9. Another area in which Transitioning From Care officers could play a pivotal role is in monitoring the provision and integration of services to ensure there are no “cracks” for young people to fall through. When formal arrangements exist between Departments/agencies, the specific areas are held accountable for their actions and the outcomes achieved. However, when several independent programs may be employed, success of service provision must be assessed through the eyes of the young people. The Transitioning From Care officers need to develop non-threatening procedures for establishing regular contact with care leavers to obtain feedback on their transitioning to independence.
10. Acquisition of life skills seemed to be an area that some young people found difficult, perhaps through lack of opportunity, before leaving care, and didn’t access post care. When designing programs involving skills training for young people, particularly those including life skills, it would be useful to consider holistic approaches that integrate a variety of abilities to ensure that the young persons’ basic needs of caring for themselves (e.g., hygiene, nutrition) will be met. Examples of such programs from CREATE are documented in Appendices A through D.
11. In spite of various programs and schemes focusing on the issue of housing and accommodation, finding an appropriate place to live still appears to be area of major concern for young people leaving care. Leaving Care Plans must give this subject top priority. Special attention should be given to young people who have experienced several disrupted placements while in care to minimize instability post care. Continued monitoring of the young person’s situation (e.g., by Transitioning From Care personnel) is required to eliminate homelessness in this readily identifiable group.
12. Mechanisms must be put in place to encourage greater participation in continuing education. More jurisdictions should investigate the feasibility of introducing schemes such as those developed in SA with removal or reduction in fees and quarantined places provided for care leavers entering TAFE/ University. (It may be useful to explore “preventative measures” that may result in improvement in completion rates for Year 12 studies by keeping a close watch on levels of expulsions and suspensions within the care population with a view to minimizing these occurrences).
13. Care leavers should be encouraged to become self-sustaining to reduce the dependence on social assistance from Governments and to enhance their self-esteem. This is an area where format partnerships between Departments could work well. For example, links with TAFE to provide more traineeships and apprenticeships would extend the skill base of young people; connections with Transport Departments to assist in the acquisition of a driving license could increase their employability.
14. Finally, child protection Departments must acquire an accurate picture of actual costs to government of the transition from care process. It is essential to know “who” is using “which” services. When the costs of providing services are understood, it will be possible to ensure equitable funding across jurisdictions (at least referenced against a local cost of living index if necessary). All governments should make explicit the specific budget allocation available for Departments and regions, and provide official guidelines so that decision makers understand the levels of support that can be provided. Also, it would seem advantageous to make a specific financial allocation available for each care leaver to reduce their uncertainty about entitlements, reduce reliance on the discretionary powers of decision makers, and reduce the feeling by young people of having to “beg” for basic assistance. A relatively small investment now will save a huge social and economic cost in the future.

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CREATE Foundation

Transitioning from Care 2009

Departmental Information Request 25 March 2009

DATA on FINAL EXITS FROM CARE

1. How many young people left out of home care between 1 July 2007 and 30 June 2008, aged 15, 16, 17 or 18 at the time they exited care for the last time, due to the discharge from care orders, and/or their permanent restoration to family or permanent long term placement which was no longer regarded as out-of-home care?

Please provide a breakdown by each age, if possible.

LEGISLATION, POLICY, GUIDANCE

2. What, if any, changes to legislative and policy provisions or practice guidance regarding transitioning from care, leaving care or after care have occurred in your jurisdiction since June 2007?

Please provide copies of any legislation, policies or practice guidance current at the end of February 2009.

PARTNERSHIPS

3. Have any new formalised agreements and partnerships been entered into or existing agreements/partnerships been renegotiated, between your department and other departments and key service providers, for supporting young people transitioning from care, or for those who have left care? If so, please list and describe these arrangements. For example, with housing, education and training or disability departments.
4. Have any particular partnerships been entered into, or other measures been taken, to specifically address the needs of Indigenous young people leaving care or who have left care?

LEAVING CARE PLANS

5. What, if any, data does the Department have about the development of leaving care plans for young people aged 15 and over? (For example, what number or proportion of young people aged 15-17 have such plans?)

Please provide pro-forma examples of a transitioning from care plan or a leaving care plan, if one is used.

SUPPORT STAFF and SERVICES

6. Have specific Departmental staff positions with a 'transitioning from care' primary focus been established? If so, how many positions have been established, in which Departmental sections are they located and were they filled as at end March 2009?

7. Have any non-government organisations been funded in the past 18 months to provide new or enhanced specialist transitioning, leaving care or aftercare services? If so, which organisations, what have they been funded to provide, what is the intended scope of the services, and when did service delivery commence?
8. What specific support services and resources, new and existing, are available for young people transitioning from care, including services while still in care and planning to leave and after care services?

FUNDING and EXPENDITURE

9. What is the budget allocation for staff and services designated for leaving care, transitioning from care and after care services or programs?
10. What, if any, funds are allocated for directly to young people leaving care, and/or for supporting them after they have left care?

Please specify:

- the annual budget allocation for this type of expense and the amounts potentially available to individual young people.
- number of young people who accessed this financial support in the financial year 2007-2008.
- practice guidance regarding the allocation of these funds.

MONITORING OUTCOMES

11. Who is responsible and what procedures are in place to monitor the outcomes for young people leaving care or who have left care? Please provide any information available of the results of this monitoring.
12. What data are available on the secondary school completion rates (yr 10, yr 12) of young people by the age of 18, or at the point at which they leave care (if available please provide data)?
13. Please outline what data, if any, are available on the housing destination of 18 year olds as the first place they will live after leaving care for the last time? In particular, what number/proportion of young people, at the point of leaving care, go into a supported accommodation (SAAP) service?

CREATE Report Card 2009

Transitioning from Care

STILL IN CARE Young People's Survey

CREATE is asking young people about what happens when they get ready to leave out-of-home care, and in the first years after they leave. Using the information from this survey, CREATE will prepare a report and make suggestions to governments and other services about what could improve things for young people.

The survey is to be answered by young people aged 15 to 25 years old who are in out-of-home care now or who were in out-of-home care for six months or longer, at some time before they turned 18.

All information collected is anonymous and will be treated confidentially and stored securely. If something a young person says is used as a quote, the source will be indicated using only the age and sex of the participant.

However, remember that if you do provide your name and address at the end of the survey, you will be eligible to be in the draw for a great prize available in each state.

Valuable prizes include: iPod Nano, Panasonic Micro Hi-Fi System and Fuji Digital Camera! There is one prize in each state or territory. To be in the draw, you need to complete the survey and provide your contact details by 30 June. Winners will be chosen on 21 July and notified as soon as possible after that.

Agreeing to participate

Participation is up to you.

You may decide **yes** and go ahead now. You may decide **no** and stop now.

Your foster carer, case worker, parent or guardian may have views about your participation. You might want to speak to them about the research before going ahead.

Just a reminder we will keep your information private. You may stop if you change your mind and the report will not identify you.

Do you want to fill in the survey? YES NO

Instructions

Questions will take a variety of forms in this survey. Some will provide optional answers where you will need to select a response from a list or mark the box or circle associated with the item that best represents your choice of answer. Other questions will give you a space to type or write your response.

Several questions ask you to choose one answer from a scale. Your responses might be positive or negative on the item. If you feel really strongly one way or the other, use the "Very" option. If your feelings are strong, but not as extreme, use "Quite". If neither of these levels represent your strength of feeling, use the appropriate midrange values to show which way your responses are tending (positive or negative).

The whole survey should take about 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

Office use only

Interviewer name: _____
(if interviewed by CREATE staff)

Date interviewed: _____

Survey for young people still in out-of-home care

Demographics

- Are you Female Male
- What is your date of birth? ____ / ____ / ____
(day, month, year)
- In what State or Territory do you live?
 - ACT
 - NSW
 - NT
 - QLD
 - SA
 - TAS
 - VIC
 - WA
- In what type of location do you live at present?
 - Capital city
 - Large city (not a capital)
 - Small city or town
 - Rural area
- What is your cultural background? (tick one box)
 - Aboriginal
 - Torres Strait Islander
 - Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
 - Australian (Other than Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)
 - Other cultural background: which one?

6. Have you been in out-of-home care for six months or more, in total? Yes No

7. Are you in out of home care now? Yes No

If you answered "NO", You should use the LEFT CARE SURVEY. Please change.

8. Do you have a disability?

- No If "No" go to Q10
- Intellectual disability
- Vision Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- Other physical disability
- Behavioural disorder – eg ADHD, ADD, ODD
- Mental illness, eg Depression, Bipolar disorder
- Multiple disabilities
- Other _____ (give details)

9. Do you receive support for this disability?

- Yes No

Placement information

For the following questions that ask for estimates, give as accurate information as you may. If months are involved, use fractions of years (e.g. 6 months is 0.5 years, 3 months is 0.25 years). For example, three and a half years would be entered as 3.5.

10. About how old were you when you first came into care (years)? _____

11. About how long have you been in care in total (years)? _____

12. About how many placements have you been in over the last 5 years or since you have been in care (if a shorter time)? _____

13. About how long have you been in your current placement (years)? _____

14. In what type of placement are you living now?

- Foster care
- Relative or kinship care
- Family group home
- Residential care
- Permanent care
- Semi-independent supported accommodation
- Independent living
- Other (please say what type) _____

15. What type of organisation is mainly responsible for your placement?

- Government department
- Community service organisation/Agency
- None
- Not sure

16. Do you have a case worker who is the main person who organises, visits or talks to you about your placement?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure (if "No", or "Not sure", go to Q18)

17. If YES, how often are you usually in touch with your main case worker?

- Not applicable
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Every 3 months
- Every 6 months
- Once a year
- Not at all

Education and Employment

18. Are you still going to school or are you in a similar secondary education program?

- YES
- NO if NO go to Q21

19. What grade of school are you in now? _____

20. What, if any, support do you need to stay in school?

- Don't need any support
- Financial support
- Extra help with school work
- Counselling
- Help with making friends
- Help with handling bullying
- Other (give details) _____ please go to Q25

21. If you have left school, what was the last year of schooling you completed?

- Less than Year 7
- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Year 12

22. What was the main reason you left school?

- Completed Year 12
- Employment
- Did not like school
- Was not doing well at school
- Expelled
- Other (give details) _____

23. What are you mainly doing now?

- Full time work
- Part time or casual work
- Volunteer work
- Unemployed / Looking for work
- TAFE course
- University
- Other (give details) _____

24. If you are working or looking for work, how easy has it been to find a job?

- Not applicable
- Very hard
- Quite hard
- Hard
- Easy
- Quite easy
- Very easy

25. How happy do you feel regarding your experience with school?

- Very unhappy
- Quite unhappy
- Unhappy
- Happy
- Quite happy
- Very happy

26. Why do you feel that way?

27. Is there anything else you would like to say about Education or Employment?

Relationships

28. If you are you living with any members of your birth family now, who are they (you may choose more than one)?

- None
- Mother
- Father
- Brothers or sisters
- Grandparents
- Aunts or Uncles
- Other (please give details) _____

29. How often are you in touch with the following members of your birth family who do not live with you?

Person	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Every 3 months	Every 6 months	Once a Year	Not at all	Not applicable
Mother								
Father								
Sisters								
Brothers								
Grandparents								
Other Relatives								

30. Are there any birth family members you want to have more contact with than you do now (you may choose more than one)?

- None
- Mother
- Father
- Brothers or sisters
- Grandparents
- Aunts or Uncles
- Other (please give details) _____

31. What, if any, support do you need to keep in touch with your family?

- Don't need any support
- Financial support
- Counselling
- Transport
- Access to phone or internet
- To be kept safe
- Other (give details) _____

32. How happy do you feel with the birth family contact you have now?

- Very unhappy
- Quite unhappy
- Unhappy
- Happy
- Quite happy
- Very happy

33. Why do you feel that way?

34. Are you a parent?

- Yes
- No If "No" go to Q41

35. How many children do you have? _____

36. What is the age of your oldest child (years)? _____

37. What is the age of your youngest child (years)? If only one child write "0" _____

38. What, if any, support do you need to care for your child/children?

- Don't need any support
- Child care
- Babysitting
- Parenting skills
- Toys, clothes or equipment
- Financial support
- Other (give details) _____

39. Who or what is your main source of support with parenting?

40. How helpful has been the support you have received with parenting?

- Not at all helpful
- A little helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Reasonably helpful
- Quite helpful
- Very helpful
- Have not received support

41. Is there anything else you want to say about your family or parenting?

Planning for leaving care

42. Who, if anyone, has spoken to you about what will happen after you leave care (you may choose more than one person)?

- No one
- Carer
- Your case worker
- Another worker in placement organisation
- A worker in a Leaving Care service
- An Indigenous community person
- Family members..... (give details)

- Friend
- Someone else (give details) _____

43. How old were you when someone first talked to you about leaving care (years)? _____ or Not sure

44. You have a Leaving Care or Transitioning from Care Plan?

- Yes
- It is still being worked on
- No
- Don't know If 'No' or 'Don't know' go to Q47

45. How involved have you been in preparing the plan?

- Not involved at all
- A little involvement
- Some involvement
- Reasonable involvement
- A lot of involvement
- Total involvement

46. What aspects of your life are covered in the plan (you may choose more than one area)?

- Don't know
- Education
- Employment
- Accommodation
- Household goods
- Driver's licence
- Financial plan
- Family contact
- Emotional support
- Cultural support
- Life skills preparation
- Health
- Other (give details) _____

47. How happy are you with the planning process so far?

- Very unhappy
- Quite unhappy
- Unhappy
- Happy
- Quite happy
- Very happy

48. Why do you think that about the process?

49. What sort of place do you want to live in after you leave care?

- Don't know yet
- Stay here
- Home with family
- Flat or house alone
- Flat or house with others
- Other (give details) _____

50. If you plan to share, who would you want to share with?

- Don't want to share
- Friend/s
- Boyfriend/ girlfriend / partner
- Foster carer's family
- Birth family members
- Other (give details) _____

51. How do you feel about finding somewhere you'll be happy to live?

- Very worried
- Quite worried
- Worried
- Confident
- Quite confident
- Very confident

52. Is there anything else you want to say about accommodation?

Thoughts about leaving care

53. What does leaving care mean to you?

54. How concerned are you about leaving care?

- Not at all concerned
- A little concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Reasonably concerned
- Quite concerned
- Very concerned

55. What, if anything, worries you about leaving care?

or No worries

56. Who, if anyone, have you talked to about your worries?

- No worries
- No-one
- Parent
- Other family member
- Foster Carer
- Case worker
- Partner
- Friend
- After care service
- CREATE
- Other (give detail) _____

57. What, if anything, do you need to know more about before you leave care?

Or Don't need to know about anything else

58. Rate how useful each of these ways would be for you to learn about leaving care and the support services that are available?

Brochures/booklets	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Web-based information	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Workshops with speakers	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Small group discussions	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Practical hands on experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Mentors (people to guide you)	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Any other suggestions? _____								

59. Who will you be most likely to turn to for support after you leave care? (choose only one)

- Don't have anyone
- Parent
- Other family member
- Foster Carer
- Case worker
- Partner
- Friend
- After care service
- CREATE
- Not sure who I will turn to
- Other (specify) _____

You have finished the survey. Thanks

Read on to find out how to return your survey, be eligible for the prize draw and find out more about CREATE.

60. How happy do you feel with the support you have received, so far, for leaving care?

- Very unhappy
- Quite unhappy
- Unhappy
- Happy
- Quite happy
- Very happy

61. What are you looking forward to after leaving care?

62. What do you hope to be doing in five years time?

63. Is there anything else you would like to say about leaving care?

Thank you for participating the survey. The information you have provided will be important in arguing for changes to the care system.

We hope you will tell other young people about the survey and encourage them to have their say. You can all help to make a difference.

If the survey has upset you or raised any concerns, it might be useful to talk with someone, such as your carer, parent or case worker. If you are not sure who to talk to, you may call Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800, Lifeline on 13 11 14 to talk about any worries.

CREATE is not a counselling service, but we might be able to answer your questions or let you know who else might be able to help you. Telephone CREATE on 1800 655 105.

If you would like to be included in the draw for a prize in your state, please provide us with your name and a postal address, email address and phone number.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ State _____ Postcode _____

Email: _____

Telephone (include area code):

Tick here if you would like to know the outcomes of the survey.

The prize winners will be required to show proof of care experience, for example by a letter from a foster carer or case worker, or other document showing evidence of being in care.

Contact details will be stored confidentially. They will be separated from survey answers and will not be shared with anyone outside CREATE.

If you filled in a paper copy of the survey, please post it using the Reply Paid envelope we supplied or by sending it to this address, then you won't need a stamp:

Reply Paid 83194
CREATE Foundation
Level 6, 280 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Read on to find out more about CREATE and how to keep in touch.

What is CREATE?

CREATE works with children and young people who are in out of home care or who have had a care experience. We aim to improve the care system based on advice from children and young people themselves. We also help children and young people by putting them in touch with each other and organising activities or programs. We are not an accommodation or individual advocacy or counselling service.

To find out more, call your state CREATE office on 1800 655 105 or visit our web site.

CREATE Foundation: web site: www.create.org.au
CREATE web site for young people leaving care:
www.createyourfuture.org.au

Keeping in touch with CREATE

CREATE would like to keep in touch with you and tell you about other activities or programs we offer for children and young people. You may become a member of clubCREATE, if you are not already one.

clubCREATE is your link to all our programs and events nationally.

By becoming a member of clubCREATE you'll receive:

- A newsletter every three months
- Lucky Member prize draws
- A Birthday Card on your Special Day
- What's on in your State or Territory
- Invitations to fun events and activities!
- Fun Christmas Parties
- You may even submit your own poems, drawings, or photos for our newsletter.

There are three ways you may join clubCREATE:

1. Join online at www.create.org.au follow the clubCREATE link
2. Call your local CREATE Foundation office on 1800 655 105 to join over the phone or find out more details
3. Tick the box below so we may send you a membership form to join clubCREATE.

Please send me a clubCREATE membership form

**Young people's survey 2009 project manager:
Christine Flynn, tel 02 9267 1999.**

CREATE Report Card 2009

Transitioning from Care

LEFT CARE Young People's Survey

CREATE is asking young people about what happens when of-home care, and in the first years after survey, CREATE will prepare services about what could improve things for young people.

The survey is to be answered by young of-home care now or who were in time before they turned 18.

All information collected is anonymous and will be treated confidentially and stored securely. If something a young person says is used as a quote, the source will be indicated using only the age and sex of the participant.

However, remember that if you do provide your name and address at the end of the survey, you will be eligible to be in the draw for a great prize available in each state.

Valuable prizes include: iPod Nano, Panasonic Micro Hi-Fi System and Fuji Digital Camera! There is one prize in each state or territory. To be in the draw, you need to complete the survey and provide your contact details by 30 June. Winners will be chosen on 21 July and notified as soon as possible after that.

Agreeing to participate

Participation is up to you.

You may decide **yes** and go ahead now. You may decide **no** and stop now.

Your foster carer, case worker, parent or guardian may have views about your participation. You might want to speak to them about the research before going ahead.

Just a reminder we will keep your information private. You may stop if you change your mind and the report will not identify you.

Do you want to fill in the survey? YES NO

Instructions

Questions will take a variety of forms in this survey. Some will provide optional answers where you will need to select a response from a list or to mark the box or circle associated with the item that best represents your choice of answer. Other questions will give you a space to type or write your response.

Several questions ask you to choose one answer from a scale. Your responses might be positive or negative on the item. If you feel really strongly one way or the other, use the "Very" option. If your feelings are strong, but not as extreme, use "Quite". If neither of these levels represent

your strength of feeling, use the appropriate midrange values to show which way your responses are tending (positive or negative).

The whole survey should take about 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

Office use only

Interviewer name: _____
(if interviewed by CREATE staff)

Date interviewed: _____

Survey for young people who have left out-of-home care

Demographics

- Are you Female Male
- What is your date of birth? ____ / ____ / ____
(day, month, year)
- In what State or Territory do you live?
 - ACT
 - NSW
 - NT
 - QLD
 - SA
 - TAS
 - VIC
 - WA
- In what type of location do you live at present?
 - Capital city
 - Large city (not a capital)
 - Small city or town
 - Rural area
- What is your cultural background? (tick one box)
 - Aboriginal
 - Torres Strait Islander
 - Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
 - Australian (Other than Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)
 - Other cultural background: which one?

- Have you been in out-of-home care for six months or more, in total? Yes No

7. Are you in out of home care now? Yes No

If you said "Yes", you should complete the STILL IN CARE SURVEY. Please change.

8. Do you have a disability?

- No If "No" go to Q10
- Intellectual disability
- Vision Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- Other physical disability
- Behavioural disorder – eg ADHD, ADD, ODD
- Mental illness, eg Depression, Bipolar disorder
- Multiple disabilities
- Other _____ (give details)

9. Do you receive support for this disability?

- Yes No

Placement information

For the following questions that ask for estimates, give as accurate information as you may. If months are involved, use fractions of years (e.g. 6 months is 0.5 years, 3 months is 0.25 years). For example, three and a half years would be entered as 3.5.

10. About how old were you when you first came into care (years) ? _____

11. About how long were you in care, in total (years)? _____

12. About how many placements were you in over your last 5 years in care or while you were in care (if a shorter time)? _____

13. About how old were you when you started your last out-of-home care placement (years)? _____

14. How old were you when you left out-of-home care for the last time (years)? _____

15. What type of placement you were last in?

- Foster care
- Relative or kinship care
- Family group home
- Residential care
- Permanent care
- Semi-independent supported accommodation
- Independent living
- Other (please say what sort) _____

16. What type of organisation was mainly responsible for your last placement?

- Government department
- Community service organisation/Agency
- None
- Not sure

Education or Employment

17. Are you still going to school or are you in a similar secondary education program?

- YES
- NO (if NO go to Q20)

18. What grade of school are you in now? _____

19. What, if any, support do you need to stay in school?

- Don't need any support
- Financial support
- Extra help with school work
- Counselling
- Help with making friends
- Help with handling bullying
- Other (give details) _____ please go to Q26

20. If you have left school, what was the last year of schooling you completed?

- Less than Year 7
- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Year 12

21. What was the main reason you left school?

- Completed Year 12
- Employment
- Did not like school
- Was not doing well at school
- Expelled
- Other (give details) _____

22. What are you mainly doing now?

- Full time work
- Part time or casual work
- Volunteer work
- Unemployed / Looking for work
- TAFE course
- University
- Other (give details) _____

23. If you are working or looking for work, how easy has it been to find a job?

- Not applicable
- Very hard
- Quite hard
- Hard
- Easy
- Quite easy
- Very easy

24. What, if any, support have you received to find work or continue your education?

25. How helpful has been the support you have received?

- Not helpful at all
- A little helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Reasonably helpful
- Quite helpful
- Very helpful

26. What other support would be useful in helping you find work or continuing your education?

27. How happy do you feel regarding your experience with school?

- Very unhappy
- Quite unhappy
- Unhappy
- Happy
- Quite happy
- Very happy

28. Why do you feel that way? _____

29. Is there anything else you would like to say about Education or Employment?

Finances

30. From what source do you receive most of your income?

- Wages
 - Part Centrelink/Part wages
 - Centrelink
 - None
 - Other (give details) _____
- _____

31. How easy do you find it to manage your money?

- Very hard
- Quite hard
- Hard
- Easy
- Quite easy
- Very easy

32. What, if any, help do you need to manage your money?

- Don't need any support
- Financial & budgeting training
- Financial & budgeting advice
- Support in arranging Centrelink payments
- Other (give details) _____

Accommodation

33. When your care order or voluntary care arrangement expired, did you have to leave your placement?

- Yes
- No if "No" go to Q36

34. If YES, did you know to where you would be moving before you left the placement?

- Yes
- No if "No", go to Q36

35. If YES, how many days before you left did you know where you were going? _____

36. Were you homeless within the first year after leaving out-of-home care, ("Homeless" here means being without safe and adequate housing for more than five nights)?

- Yes
- No If "No" go to Q40

37. How many times were you homeless (use numbers, eg for twice, use 2)? _____

38. About how long were you homeless in that year (days)? _____

39. Are you homeless now? Yes No

40. About how many places have you lived in since leaving care? _____

41. What sort of accommodation did you live in at first?

- Stayed in placement
- Home with family
- Flat/house alone
- Flat/house shared
- Supported accommodation, eg Youth refuge
- Homeless
- Other (say what sort of place) _____

42. About how long have you lived in your current place (months)? _____

43. How easy was it to find accommodation?

- Very hard
- Quite hard
- Hard
- Easy
- Quite easy
- Very easy

44. With whom do you usually live?

- Friend/s
- Partner / Boy/girlfriend/
- My own children
- Birth family
- Former foster carer
- No-one (live alone)

45. How do you pay for your accommodation?

- Rent
 - Board
 - Paying off a mortgage
 - Not paying anything
 - Other (give details)
- _____

46. How easy is it to meet your rent or board commitments?

- Very hard
- Quite hard
- Hard
- Easy
- Quite easy
- Very easy

47. What support, if any, do you need support to keep your accommodation?

_____ Or Don't need support

Relationships

48. If you are you living with any members of your birth family now, who are they (you may choose more than one)?

- None
- Mother
- Father
- Brothers or Sisters
- Grandparents
- Aunts or uncles
- Other (give details) _____

49. How often are you in touch with the following members of your birth family who do not live with you?

Person	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Every 3 months	Every 6 months	Once a Year	Not at all	Not applicable
Mother								
Father								
Sisters								
Brothers								
Grandparents								
Other Relatives								

50. Are there any birth family members you want to have more contact with than you do now (you may choose more than one)?

- None
- Mother
- Father
- Brothers or sisters
- Grandparents
- Aunts or Uncles
- Other (please give details) _____

51. What, if any, support do you need to keep in touch with your family?

- Don't need any support
- Financial support
- Counselling
- Transport
- Access to phone or internet
- To be kept safe
- Other (give details) _____

52. How happy do you feel with the birth family contact you have now?

- Very unhappy
- Quite unhappy
- Unhappy
- Happy
- Quite happy
- Very happy

53. Why do you feel that way?

54. Are you a parent?

- Yes
- No If "No" go to Q61

55. How many children do you have? _____

56. What is the age of your oldest child (years)?

57. What is the age of your youngest child (years)? If only one child write "0"? _____

58. What, if any, support do you need to care for your child/children?

- Don't need any support
- Child care
- Babysitting
- Parenting skills
- Toys, clothes or equipment
- Financial support
- Other (give details) _____

59. Who or what is your main source of support with parenting? _____

60. How helpful has been the support you have received with parenting?

- Not at all helpful
- A little helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Reasonably helpful
- Quite helpful
- Very helpful
- Have not received support

61. Is there anything else you want to say about your family or parenting?

Health and self care

62. How do you rate your health?

- Very poor
- Quite poor
- Poor
- Good
- Quite good
- Very good

63. What, if any, support do you need with any health problems?

64. How often do you access health services?

- Not at all
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Every 3 months
- Every 6 months
- Once a year
- Not applicable

65. How easy is it for you to do the following things?

	Very hard	Quite hard	Hard	Easy	Quite easy	Very easy
Look after your health						
Prepare healthy meals at home						
Look after your place						
Find and use transport						
Make friends						
Get along with people						

66. Since leaving care, have you been involved with the Justice system (for example police, courts, detention)?

- Yes No

67. If "Yes", please give details of any involvement you have had with the justice system?

Planning for leaving care

68. Who, if anyone, spoke to you about what would happen when you left care (you may choose more than one person)?

- No one If "No one" go to Q70
- Foster or Kinship Carer
- Your case worker
- Another worker in placement organisation
- A worker in a Leaving Care service
- Indigenous community person
- Family members
- Friend
- Someone else (give details) _____

69. How old were you when someone first talked to you about leaving care (years)? _____ or Not sure

70. Do you have a Leaving Care or Transitioning from Care Plan?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know If "No" or "Don't know" go to Q73

71. How involved were you in preparing the plan?

- Not involved at all
- A little involvement
- Some involvement
- Reasonable involvement
- A lot of involvement
- Total involvement

72. For aspects of your life covered in your plan, how helpful was that part of the plan?

	Area not covered	Not helpful at all	A little helpful	Somewhat helpful	Reasonably helpful	Quite helpful	Very helpful
Education							
Employment							
Accommodation							
Household goods							
Driver's licence							
Financial plan							
Family contact							
Emotional support							
Cultural support							
Life skills preparation							
Health							
Other (give details)							

73. How happy were you with the planning process before you left care?

- Very unhappy
- Quite unhappy
- Unhappy
- Happy
- Quite Happy
- Very Happy

74. Why do you think that about the process? _____

75. Rate how useful each of these ways would have been for you to learn about leaving care and the support services that are available?

Brochures/booklets	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Web-based information	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Workshops with speakers	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Small group discussions	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Practical hands on experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Mentors (people to guide you)	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Any other suggestions? _____								

76. What events happened to mark the time you finally left care (you may choose more than one)?

- Nothing
- Meeting with case worker
- Case conferences or review meeting
- Letter from Minister or other Departmental official
- Farewells from foster carers/ residential staff
- Other (give details) _____

After care support

77. Who has been helpful to you since leaving care (you may choose more than one)?

- No one
- Foster or Kinship Carer
- Case worker
- Another worker in out-of-home care agency
- A worker in a Leaving Care service
- A worker in an accommodation service
- Indigenous community person
- Family members
- Friend
- Someone else (give details) _____

78. If you were in foster care, how often do you keep in touch with your last foster care family?

- Not in foster care
- Not at all
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Every 3 months
- Every 6 months
- Once a year

79. How often do you keep in touch with your last case worker?

- Did not have a case worker
- Not at all
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Every 3 months
- Every 6 months
- Once a year

80. How much have you used the following types of services since leaving care?

Type of service	Not used at all	Used rarely	Used occasionally	Used reasonably often	Used quite often	Used very often
Out of Home Care placement organisation						
Specialist After Care / Transitioning from Care service						
Indigenous community organisation						
Youth Service						
Housing service						
Health service						
Disability service						
CREATE						

Other (give details) _____

81. How easy has it been to use the following types of services since leaving care?

Type of service	Very hard	Quite hard	Hard	Easy	Quite easy	Very easy	Haven't tried to use
Out of Home Care placement agency							
Specialist After Care / Transitioning from Care service							
Indigenous community organisation							
Youth Service							
Housing service							
Health service							
Disability service							
CREATE							

82. How helpful have the services you have used been?

Type of service	Not helpful at all	A little helpful	Somewhat helpful	Reasonably helpful	Quite helpful	Very helpful
Out of Home Care placement organisation						
Specialist After Care / Transitioning from Care service						
Indigenous community organisation						
Youth Service						
Housing service						
Health service						
Disability service						
CREATE						

83. How easy has it been for you to see your Departmental case file about the time you were in care?

- Have not asked to see file If "Have not asked" please go to Q84
- Very hard
- Quite hard
- Hard
- Easy
- Quite easy
- Very easy

84. Why did you find it that way?

_____ go to Q86

85. If you have not asked to see your file, do you know how to access it if you want to? Yes No

86. If you have you applied for the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) how easy was the process?

- Have not heard of TILA go to Q88
- Have not applied for TILA go to Q88
- Very hard
- Quite hard
- Hard
- Easy
- Quite easy
- Very easy

87. Why did you find it that way? _____

88. What, if any, practical or financial support have you received since leaving care from the Department responsible for you while in care?

89. Did you receive enough information before leaving care?

- Yes No Not sure

90. How helpful has been the assistance you have received since leaving care?

- Have not received assistance
- Not at all helpful
- A little helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Reasonably helpful
- Quite helpful
- Very helpful

Thoughts about leaving care

91. What did leaving care mean to you? _____

92. How happy are you with the support you have received for leaving care?

- Very unhappy
- Quite unhappy
- Unhappy
- Happy
- Quite happy
- Very happy

93. What are you looking forward to in the future?

94. What do you hope to be doing in five years time?

95. Is there anything else you would you like to say about leaving care?

You have finished the survey. Thanks

Read on to find out how to return your survey, be eligible for the prize draw and find out more about CREATE.

Thank you for participating the survey. The information you have provided will be important in arguing for changes to the care system.

We hope you will tell other young people about the survey and encourage them to have their say. You can all help to make a difference.

If the survey has upset you or raised any concerns, it might be useful to talk with someone, such as your carer, parent or case worker. If you are not sure who to talk to, you may call Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800, Lifeline on 13 11 14 to talk about any worries.

CREATE is not a counselling service, but we might be able to answer your questions or let you know who else might be able to help you. Telephone CREATE on 1800 655 105.

If you would like to be included in the draw for a prize in your state, please provide us with your name and a postal address, email address and phone number.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ State _____ Postcode _____

Email: _____

Telephone (include area code):

Tick here if you would like to know the outcomes of the survey.

The prize winners will be required to show proof of care experience, for example by a letter from a foster carer or case worker, or other document showing evidence of being in care.

Contact details will be stored confidentially. They will be separated from survey answers and will not be shared with anyone outside CREATE.

If you filled in a paper copy of the survey, please post it using the Reply Paid envelope we supplied or by sending it to this address, then you won't need a stamp:

Reply Paid 83194
CREATE Foundation
Level 6, 280 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Read on to find out more about CREATE and how to keep in touch.

What is CREATE?

CREATE works with children and young people who are in out of home care or who have had a care experience. We aim to improve the care system based on advice from children and young people themselves. We also help children and young people by putting them in touch with each other and organising activities or programs. We are not an accommodation or individual advocacy or counselling service.

To find out more, call your state CREATE office on 1800 655 105 or visit our web site.

CREATE Foundation: web site: www.create.org.au
CREATE web site for young people leaving care:
www.createyourfuture.org.au

Keeping in touch with CREATE

CREATE would like to keep in touch with you and tell you about other activities or programs we offer for children and young people. You may become a member of clubCREATE, if you are not already one.

clubCREATE is your link to all our programs and events nationally.

By becoming a member of clubCREATE you'll receive:

- A newsletter every three months
- Lucky Member prize draws
- A Birthday Card on your Special Day
- What's on in your State or Territory
- Invitations to fun events and activities!
- Fun Christmas Parties
- You may even submit your own poems, drawings, or photos for our newsletter.

[here are three ways you may join clubCREATE:](#)

1. [Join online at www.create.org.au](http://www.create.org.au) follow the clubCREATE link
2. Call your local CREATE Foundation office on 1800 655 105 to join over the phone or find out more details
3. Tick the box below so we may send you a membership form to join clubCREATE.

Please send me a clubCREATE membership form

**Young people's survey 2009 project manager:
Christine Flynn, tel 02 9267 1999•**

CREATE Your Future

Background

CREATE Your Future was established in NSW in 2006, and was run in partnership with Atari Australia. The pilot project was run with a group of severely disadvantaged, unemployed young people in out of home care in NSW.

In light of the findings of the 2008 CREATE Report Card: Transition from Care, CREATE management commissioned a review of the CYF Program. At the 2009 Inaugural National Youth Advisory Council Summit, young people again identified Transition in the top 4 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 that takes a more holistic hands-on approach to working with disengaged and highly disadvantaged young people.

The content of the workshops and program ensures barriers to employment (social, emotional, problem solving, and job seeking) are addressed in an integrated way, at the same time, are tailored to address the specific barriers of the group in a flexible manner. Once young people have completed the course they have the opportunity to become mentors for new participants, creating a new and much needed peer leadership base.

In 2009 the ACT has been the first state to run the redeveloped CREATE Your Future Model.

"This program is really great, I get to learn so much" ACT participant

The CREATE your Future Program is broken into three learning styles including 4 stand alone workshops, an 8 week training course and a specific leaving care website and in 2009 the CREATE Your Future Grant Scheme was also launched.

Aims of the Program

- 1) Improve the potential life outcomes for highly disadvantaged children and young people in care
- 2) Empower these young people to feel equipped to transition from State Care and
- 3) Showcase the issue of transitioning from care to carers (both paid and volunteer) and to them to support young people with life skills development throughout their journey to independence.

The Workshops

Four independent workshops are delivered periodically between program delivery. The workshops are designed to complement the program. Participants who have attended and require additional support, more information, or to enjoy a connection activity with other young people have an opportunity to do so. They also provide access to workshops for young people who, for whatever reason, are unable to commit to an 8 week program.

Workshop 1 : The Great Race | Workshop 2: Think Outside the Square | Workshop 3 : Pathways to independence | Workshop 4 : Job Readiness



The Program

For 8 weeks, participants aged 15-24 who are in care or have a care background learn what it means to leave care.

The program is an action packed learning experience that takes a holistic approach in developing life skills, according to the real needs of young people.

Modules cover:

Health & Wellbeing: General Health, Dental Health, Mental Health, Sexual health, Medicare, Ambulance Cover

Housing: Shared housing, government housing, private housing, boarding houses, supported accommodation, how to look after your house, renters rights & responsibilities

Life Skills: Cooking classes, nutrition, comfort zone, what is success, team work, conflict management, chunking

Job Readiness: The career quiz, Casual, part time & full time work, cover letters, dressing for success, finding your first job, your first day, preparing for and interview, responding to a job ad, resumes, tax, superannuation & pay slips.

Education and Training: Learning styles, career advice, Centrelink, Uni, alternative education, apprenticeships, traineeships,

Finance: Budgeting, Debt, contracts, project planning, Centrelink, TILA, how to manage your mobile phone bill, credit cards, buying a car, the difference between rational and emotional buying.

Transport: How to get your L's, how to get your P's, navigating public transport

Young people leave the course equipped with practical resources and skills including a resume and how to prepare and present for a job interview, conflict resolution skills, computer skills, self confidence, goal setting, an action plan for life, a Medicare card, their ID, and how to cook more than just spaghetti bolognaise.

The Website

The CREATE Your Future web-site, <http://www.createyourfuture.org.au> is specifically designed with and for young people. The information contained on the site is tailored not only to general issues faced by all young people leaving care nationally, but takes it one step further to incorporate state-specific services and issues. The site is updated and improved continuously ensuring the views; experience and expertise of young people is used to keep the site fresh and up to date.



The Grant Scheme

The Grant Scheme was launched in 2009 to assist young people financially to reach their potential. Young People 15 – 25 years with a care experience can apply to the grant scheme. Grants are awarded between \$300 and \$3000 for assistance under the categories: Accommodation/Living, Education/Training, Driving Lessons Subsidy, Travel/Conferences, Health & Wellbeing & Other. For more information and opening dates, refer to <http://www.createyourfuture.org.au> or by calling 1800 655 105.

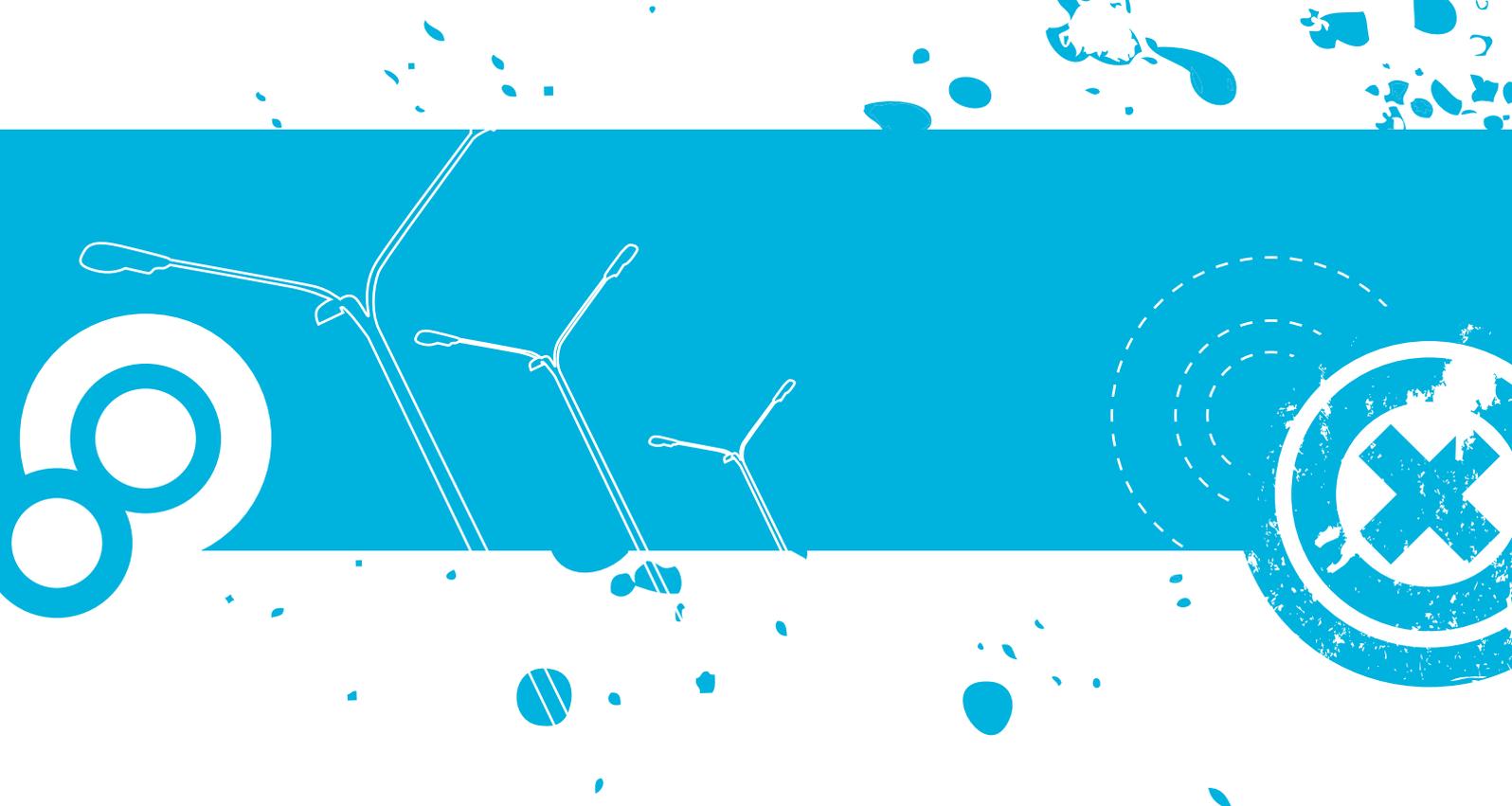
Anticipated Outcomes:

- 50% of participants accessing or supported to access appropriate housing
- 30% in employment
- 10% in rehabilitation/counselling
- 50% reconnected with education
- 100% connected to relevant youth services.





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