

## MEDIA RELEASE

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creating a better life  
for children and young  
people in care

# VICTORIAN LABOR GOVERNMENT WILL SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING FOSTER CARE

## MOST AUSTRALIAN KIDS DON'T LEAVE HOME AT 18 WHY SHOULD YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CARE EXPERIENCE BE ASKED TO?

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

Many young people in out-of-home care have experienced neglect, abuse or trauma during their childhoods. On their 18th birthday, for many young people, their care arrangements terminate and they 'exit' care without the necessary support in place. **Young people leaving care face significantly reduced life outcomes compared with their peers who do not have a care history.** It's hardly surprising that they're vulnerable to crises including homelessness and health problems and often struggle to find or keep jobs or continue at school.

**Victoria's Labor Government has announced a commitment to ensuring young people make a successful transition from state care to independent living by extending their supports up to the age of 21, as part of the 'Home Stretch' initiative which has been lobbying for an extension of the leaving care age to 21.**

Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos announced \$11.6 million over five years towards these initiatives which will be rolled out in the first half of 2019, and will give young people the option of remaining with their carer until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

The funding will benefit 50 care-experienced young people per year, for a period of five years.

"Non-care experienced young people are not told to leave their home on their 18th birthday and as many parents will attest, they support their children well beyond 18 years" said Cathy Carnovale, CREATE's Victorian State Coordinator. "Young people preparing to transition from care are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. Extending care to 21 will be enormously beneficial for young Victorians and their carers, and would also save the government money".

"This is an important piece of progress for the Victorian care sector, but it is not legislation and more needs to be done" said Cathy Carnovale. "It is important that we achieve legislative changes for all care experienced Victorians, and that these changes be adopted nationally as well."

CREATE has, for many years, actively encouraged governments to make supported care to 21 an entitlement, but not at the discretion of the department. Some states/territories have supported this increase in age.

### **national new south wales office**

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“Priority should be on an opt-in approach so that young people are given the choice not to remain in care if they don’t wish to. However, where the young person is in and wishes to remain in a supportive family environment, the carers are financially supported to maintain the placement,” said Cathy Carnovale today.

There are currently more than 46,000 children and young people in care across Australia. For more information on CREATE, please visit our website at [www.create.org.au](http://www.create.org.au)

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Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

- 47,931 children were in out-of-home care across Australia at 30 June, 2017
- 35% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care
- 46% of boys with care experience have had contact with the juvenile justice system
- 29% of young people who have experienced out-of-home are unemployed
- 36% of children and young people are split from their brothers and sisters in care
- 35% of young people in care have 5 or more caseworkers during their time in care
- 67% of young people in care are not aware of leaving care plans

For further comment from a CREATE spokesperson and/or a young person with care experience please call Andrea Doney 0402050418 and [andrea@admarcoms.com.au](mailto:andrea@admarcoms.com.au)

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