

Dear _____,

Re : The right for young people to have a placement supported within the out-of-home care system until 21 years.

I write to you about an issues I feel particularly passionate about: improving opportunities and life outcomes for young people who have grown up in state care. Did you know that each year thousands of young Australians who have grown up in state care (foster, kinship, residential care) turn 18 and their living arrangements cease to be supported by the government? Consequently 35 percent¹ experience homelessness after turning 18. Whilst young people in the general community continue living with their parents to an average age of 26, those who have been in care are forced to rely on the kindness of foster carers or try their luck with housing systems. The questions for you as someone with the power to change this situation - **is this something you expect for your own children?**

I am calling on you to do everything within your power to enshrine the right for young people to have a placement supported within the out-of-home care system, until the age of 21.

This change is important for the following reasons:

- **It will improve life outcomes for young people.** Young people with a care experience face significantly poorer life outcomes across the multiple life domains (like health, housing, education and employment), compared to young people who are not in care². In a climate where young people who have family support are choosing to remain with their parents well in to their late 20's, young people transitioning from out-of-home care do not have this option as a standard. Foster families are not provided with financial or program support and extended support is not set as a standard across all care types or circumstances.
- **It has been introduced overseas and it works.** Compelling evidence from the UK, USA and Canada shows that providing the option to young people of a supported placement within the care system until 21 years, results in improved education and employment outcomes for them.³
- **It will save money.** Analysis by Deloitte Access Economics has determined that each dollar invested in increasing the out-of-home-care leaving age would see a \$1.84 return.⁴

¹ McDowall, J. J. (2009). CREATE Report Card 2009 - Transitioning from care : Tracking progress. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

² McDowall, J. J. (2009). CREATE Report Card 2009 - Transitioning from care : Tracking progress. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

³ Courtney, M. E., Dworsky, A., Brown, A., Cary, C., Love, K., & Vorhies, V. (2011). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 26. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

⁴ Raising our children: Guiding young Victorians in care into adulthood, Socioeconomic cost benefit analysis by Deloitte Access Economics, April 2016.

I ask you to introduce this important legislative change so that young people with a care experience are not further disadvantaged.

Yours sincerely

Signature

Full name