



Afternoon Session E

Discussion Paper 11

Leaving Care - What are the short/medium/long term housing options that need to be available for young people leaving statutory care?

CHALLENGE OUTLINE:

1. Every year in Victoria approximately 500 young people, 16 to 18 years of age, have their Care by Secretary Order or Long Term Care Order cease and transition from out-of-home care into adult independence. For too many the transition is a rupture.
2. In 2017, Aboriginal young people in Victoria were 16 times more likely to be part of this cohort (a rate of 88.8 per 1,000 children and young people in out of home care). (Table 16A.2 Report on Government Services (RoGs), 2019)
3. A 2009 CREATE foundation survey of young people leaving state care found that within a year of leaving care:
 - a. 35% were homeless
 - b. 46% of boys were involved in the juvenile justice system
 - c. 29% were unemployed.
4. Other Australian research suggests more than 40% of this cohort are pregnant in adolescence (Care Leavers Network), extending the cycle of vulnerability to a new generation.
5. The over-representation of Aboriginal young people in out of home care (almost one in ten) and the over-representation of this cohort in the homeless population within a year of leaving (more than one in three) helps explain why more than half of the Aboriginal people in contact with homeless services in Australia are aged under 25.
6. The Victorian Government has recently committed (in response to *The Home Stretch* campaign) to extend out of home care from age 18 to age 21. This recognises that most young people are now dependent on adult support into their early 20s.
7. DHHS funds the Aboriginal Leaving Care program to provide services for young people who:
 - require support to transition from kinship care arrangements and
 - are no longer involved with Child Protection, but still require assistance.



Source: The Home Stretch Campaign

POSSIBLE RESPONSES:

1. According to the Home Stretch campaign, international research suggests that, where care is extended until the age of 21, education participation doubles and homelessness rates are halved. It is critical that the extension of support includes Aboriginal young people and that the commitment to the extension is monitored and evaluated.
2. Where young people cannot remain in care, young people leaving should be assigned the highest priority for independent supported accommodation.
3. Young people in care should be supported, wherever possible, to remain in education or training and to achieve qualifications.
4. Young people in care need mentors and adult advocates to help them navigate a pathway to independence which can otherwise be extremely daunting. Kinship care is vital.
5. Aboriginal organisations delivering the Aboriginal Leaving Care program require adequate support and to be linked with housing providers who can meet the accommodation needs of these young people.
6. A significant challenge exists to identify new models to support young Aboriginal people in stable housing so that they can successfully transition to independence and self-sufficiency.