The ACT Community Services Directorate acknowledges the significant contribution of the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to the development of this paper.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Transition from Out of Home Care to Adulthood: mapping legislation and policy across Australian jurisdictions discussion paper compares the supports available for young people transitioning from out of home care to independent adulthood across all Australian jurisdictions.

Young people leaving care often transition to independence at an earlier age and with fewer supports than their peers without a care experience. This increases their risk of experiencing negative outcomes, including homelessness, leaving school early and not undertaking further education or training, unemployment or involvement with the criminal justice system.

Successful transition relies on a number of factors both while young people are in care, such as stable placements, strong connections to community and effective planning and preparation for leaving care, and after leaving care, such as ongoing support and a tailored and more gradual transition process.

The paper provides an overview of the in-care and post-care transition supports provided by each jurisdiction. All jurisdictions currently offer access to a range of supports that may include financial support and casework support to link young people with services that can assist with the transition to independence, for example through support with education, accommodation, employment and health care.

Evidence increasingly demonstrates that young people leaving care benefit from support that extends beyond 18 years, including support to remain in care where appropriate. Recent legislative and policy changes across a number of jurisdictions facilitate increases in support beyond 18 years. Support to enable young people to remain in care into early adulthood often focuses on ensuring young people are able to complete their secondary education, while other changes have focused on increasing case work support available for young people to 25 years.

An important future focus for work in this area will be to review the progress and impact of policy and legislative changes to extend support for young people leaving care. Supports differ across jurisdictions in the scope, intensity, reach and length of support provided to young people leaving care, making it difficult to directly compare the supports available. Additionally, states and territories have undertaken substantial work in recent years to improve support for young people to successfully transition from care, and this continues to be an area of significant focus and ongoing reform. In most jurisdictions, there has been insufficient time since reforms were introduced to determine their impact.

The paper identifies ongoing challenges jurisdictions face in providing support to young people transitioning from care. One challenge common to all jurisdictions is the need for culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, who are over-represented in the out of home care system across Australia and are more likely to leave care early, less likely to go on to further education or training and are disproportionately represented in the justice system. Reform work is underway across several jurisdictions to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community involvement in decision-making about young people in care and to provide culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people leaving care. For example, in Victoria the Leaving Care Support for Aboriginal Young People program provides a model of culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 16–21 years transitioning from care.

A number of other challenges were identified, some of which were common across jurisdictions. These include:

- support for young people to remain in care beyond 18 years
- ensuring young people leaving care have a transition plan and are actively engaged in the planning process
- housing availability and affordability for young people leaving care
- delivery of transition services to young people in rural and remote areas
- increased demand for services without a corresponding increase in funding
- breaking the cycle between out of home care and the justice system.

Looking ahead, support for young people to successfully transition from care to independent adulthood will continue to be a key focus for all jurisdictions. This will include work to review the progress and impacts of recent legislative and policy reforms to better support young people transitioning from care. Preparing young people for independence through a gradual and supported transition from care will help to ensure that young people thrive when they leave care and have the best start to their life as an independent adult.
INTRODUCTION

The Transition from Out of Home care to Adulthood: mapping legislation and policy across Australian jurisdictions discussion paper was developed to support an evaluation of states and territories' support for young people leaving out of home care and transitioning to independent adulthood.

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020 (the National Framework) is a long-term commitment between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children. It aims to deliver 'a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect over time'. The National Framework recommends that all jurisdictions improve support for young people leaving care, including through policies and initiatives to reduce homelessness and support young people to establish their independence.

The National Framework is supported by a series of three-year action plans that target critical areas to drive change. The Third Action Plan 2015–18 focused on three strategies:

- **Strategy 1** Early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1000 days for a child.
- **Strategy 2** Helping young people in out of home care to thrive in adulthood.
- **Strategy 3** Organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe.

Strategy 2 identifies the need for all jurisdictions to 'develop and strengthen support for young people in care transitioning to adulthood and improve priority access to support services'.

SCOPE

This discussion paper was developed to progress work under Strategy 2 of the Third Action Plan. Action 2.1.4 under Strategy 2 is to evaluate the impact of jurisdictions' policy changes to extend statutory responsibility and access to services to young people who exit out of home care over the age of 18 years. This discussion paper maps policy and legislation across Australia that assists young people to transition from out of home care to adulthood. It provides a foundation for future work to evaluate the impact of these supports for young people transitioning from out of home care across Australia.

METHODOLOGY

This paper draws from input provided by jurisdictions about their policies and legislation to support young people transitioning from out of home care, as well as research papers, government and community sector reports, and the 2017 final reports of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. Jurisdictions completed a comprehensive survey of their policies and legislation in late 2016, and additional feedback was provided by jurisdictions in September 2017, May 2018 and September 2018.

Throughout this paper, the term 'in-care transition support' is used to describe support provided to young people before leaving out of home care, usually before age 18. 'Post-care transition support' is used to describe support provided to young people who have left out of home care, usually aged 18 or above.

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2 Commonwealth of Australia 2009, p. 27.
4 Commonwealth of Australia 2015, p. 5.
TRANSITIONING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM CARE

The Third Action Plan notes that ‘research consistently points to the poor social and economic outcomes of many young people in out of home care’. Young people leaving care transition to independence at a younger age, more quickly and with fewer supports than their peers who are not in care. They are more likely to:

- leave school early
- be unemployed, underemployed or earning a lower wage
- be homeless or living in unstable housing
- have children at a young age
- be involved with the criminal justice system
- have health and substance abuse problems
- lack a supportive social network of family and friends.

Some young people are at particular risk of poor outcomes when transitioning from out of home care and may need extra support, or may be more likely to miss out on support when it is available. These include young people who have had multiple placements, those with challenging behaviours or health issues that are often related to their childhood experiences of trauma and abuse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, young people with disability and young parents.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse noted that of the young people who transition from out of home care each year, it is likely that there will be some who have been sexually abused as children and some who may not have been abused directly but have witnessed or been affected by the abuse of other children. These young people may or may not have disclosed that abuse, as evidence suggests that disclosures often come many years after the abuse. Post-care transition supports are particularly important to assist these young people to successfully and safely transition to independent adulthood.

Providing a more supported transition to adulthood and independence for young people in out of home care can improve these outcomes. However, as international and Australian research demonstrates, successful transition of young people from care to independent adulthood is contingent on several key elements.

These include:

1. ensuring young people have stable placements with a high quality of care
2. reforming the transition process to be more gradual and adaptable to individual circumstances
3. improving planning and preparation for young people before they leave care, including emotional support and developmental readiness
4. supporting the development of strong and stable relationships and connections to community
5. improving ongoing access to support services for young people once they have left out of home care, including options up to 25 years of age.

Transition to adulthood and independent living provides a key opportunity to improve outcomes for young people leaving out of home care. Practical actions that can support achievement of the five key elements listed above include:

- enable young people to remain in out of home care until 21 years (with ongoing post-transition support until 25 years)
- provide targeted transition plans that incorporate individual needs, support requirements and transition goals, and that enable active participation of young people in leaving care planning
- increase investment in specialist aftercare support services, including developmentally appropriate emotional and financial support
- assist young people to develop resilience and independence both while in care and post transition from care, including through access to specialised services, formal and vocational education and life skills development
- increase housing support with options that meet the needs of young people transitioning from out of home care.

5 Commonwealth of Australia 2015, p. 10.
7 Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS); Child Family Community Australia 2016, Supporting young people leaving out-of-home care, CFCAP PAPER No. 41 2016 pp. 2–6.
9 Beauchamp, T 2014 Young people transitioning from out-of-home care to adulthood: review of policy and program approaches in Australia and overseas, UnitingCare, Sydney.

18 Beauchamp, T 2014, p. 52.
The number of young people transitioning from out of home care varies across jurisdictions. In 2016–17, the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (AIHW) reported that a total of 3,160 young people aged 15–17 years transitioned from out of home care across Australia.

Table 1  Young people aged 15–17 years discharged from out of home care, 2016–17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>1,195</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,160</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of all children and young people discharged from out of home care 2016–17.

This data does not specify whether young people exited out of home care because they were transitioning to independent adulthood, or for other reasons such as returning to their birth family. Data is not currently reported nationally on the number of young people who exit out of home care over the age of 18.

In 2016, data on young people exiting out of home care in the Australian Capital Territory was included with the 15–17 age range. This lack of data presents a challenge for evaluating the impact of policy and legislative changes on young people exiting out of home care over the age of 18 years.

2 TRANSITION SUPPORT

In all jurisdictions, young people transition from four main types of out of home care:

- home-based care
- family group homes
- residential care
- independent living.

The majority of children and young people living in out of home care (94%) are in home-based care, meaning either foster or kinship care. A small number of children and young people are placed in residential out of home care (4.8%) and the remainder in family group homes, independent living or other arrangements. Different types of care may present different challenges for young people transitioning from out of home care to independent adulthood.

Transition support occurs both while young people are in care and after they have left. Historically, most young people left out of home care at 18 years. However, jurisdictions are increasingly recognising that young people benefit from being supported to remain living or maintain strong connections with their foster care families to a later age, and supports are adapting to enable this to occur. While states and territories offer a wide range of support services, post-care transition support is discretionary rather than mandatory. A greater proportion of funding is allocated to in-care transition support (15–18 years) than post-care transition support (18–21/25 years).

Types of support commonly offered by each state and territory include:

- information on services available
- accommodation
- education and training
- employment
- legal advice
- financial management
- access to health and community services
- counselling and support services
- brokerage
- assistance to access records.

Transition planning commonly involves an assessment of the young person’s needs, including independent living skills, accommodation needs and employment and income support needs. While all jurisdictions offer a range of support to young people transitioning from out of home care, there are differences in the scope, intensity, reach and length of support provided.

IN-CARE TRANSITION SUPPORT

All jurisdictions commence pre-transition support for young people in out of home care from age 15. This includes developing a transition or leaving care plan that sets out priorities to ensure a successful transition to adulthood and independence.

Leaving care plans support young people by providing tailored information and advice about how to access support around housing, education, health, training, employment, relationships and financial management.

Jurisdictions are not uniform in their policy and practice approaches to these plans, including whether plans must be made for all young people; what they must include; whether the young person must be involved in developing them; and how they will be implemented. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found that despite all jurisdictions emphasising the importance of transition planning, ‘leaving care plans are often not done, or not done well’.

In some jurisdictions, reviews have found that not all young people have plans when required. For example, the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory noted that 73 per cent of young people in out of home care in the Northern Territory over 15 years in 2015–16 did not have leaving care plans.

A recent longitudinal study in Victoria found that many young people leaving care could not recall having a transition plan, which may indicate that where plans were made, many young people were not actively engaged in the planning process. Research has found that non-collaborative transition planning can result in challenges for young people leaving care.

The table on the following page sets out the policy and legislative requirements for leaving care plans in each jurisdiction.

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22 Beauschamp, T 2014, pp. 4–6.
23 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2017, p. 338.
24 Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory noted that 73 per cent of young people in out of home care in the Northern Territory over 15 years in 2015–16 did not have leaving care plans.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACT</strong></td>
<td>A transition plan must be developed for all young people in out of home care aged 15 or older. It must be regularly reviewed. The primary goal of this transition plan is that the young person transitions successfully to adulthood and independence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NSW</strong></td>
<td>Departmental case workers encourage young people to participate in the development of their transition plan, but where a young person will not engage, a plan is developed on their behalf with support from those best placed to understand the young person’s needs and wishes. If a young person exits care without a leaving care plan and later requests aftercare assistance, a plan is prepared at that time by the agency that last supervised the young person’s placement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NT</strong></td>
<td>Section 71 of the Care and Protection of Children Act (NT) requires Territory Families to ensure that all young people in care aged between 15 and 18 years have leaving care plans, which must be reviewed every six months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QLD</strong></td>
<td>Changes made by the Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017 (to be implemented through a staged approach) will introduce a legislative obligation of the existing policy position for transition to independence planning to commence for a child in care from the age of 15 years. This planning will be included in the child’s case plan from the next case plan review after the child turns 15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SA</strong></td>
<td>The Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (fully commenced on 22 October 2018) requires that all children or young people transitioning from care have a plan setting out steps to assist their transition, and that assistance be offered to make the transition as easy as reasonably practicable. The Act details the types of assistance that may be included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TAS</strong></td>
<td>Young people aged 15 years are supported by their Child Safety Officers to develop their transition plan. This is then reviewed on at least an annual basis until the young person attains adulthood. Development of transition plans is expected to occur with the support of a care team, chaired by the case manager and comprising key support people for the young person, including family, carers, and relevant professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VIC</strong></td>
<td>Young people on statutory orders who are residing in out of home care will have an allocated case manager who is responsible for the preparation of leaving care plans and associated records. Every young person over the age of 15 years in out of home care should have a 15+ Care and Transition plan and along with members of the care team, should contribute to its development. Preparation and planning for leaving care should ideally commence two years prior to a young person’s transition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WA</strong></td>
<td>Departmental caseworkers are required to commence leaving care planning when the young person turns 15 and the young person’s care plan must be modified by the case worker to reflect leaving care planning. The Children and Community Services Act 2004 provides that young people leaving care are entitled to personal material, social services, assistance for education/training, housing, employment, legal, health (including dental, mental, medical), counselling and financial assistance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All jurisdictions provide some pre-transition support through casework and access to information, but jurisdictions differ in whether all young people are provided with support, or whether support is only provided if the young person seeks or requests it.

Most available in-care transition support is non-financial support delivered by case workers. For example, this might include assistance with developing independent living skills and linking young people with services that can assist with housing, education and training, employment and social support. In some cases, young people can access Centrelink payments and the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) before they leave out of home care. Caseworkers will assist young people to access these payments where appropriate. Further information about accessing TILA is provided below.
Across jurisdictions there is a broad range of support offered for young people who have left care and are transitioning to adulthood. Support includes providing information about services available, referrals to the relevant services, case management to find appropriate services, and financial support to access services. It is difficult to directly compare the extent of support offered by different jurisdictions. Some specify an amount of funding that can be put towards services required by a young person while others link young people with appropriate services. The type and availability of services vary across jurisdictions; for example, there may be differences in service accessibility for young people living in remote areas, or the number of years beyond the age of 18 during which a young person can continue to access the service.

The extent of financial post-care transition support available to young people varies by jurisdiction. Most jurisdictions provide some level of financial support, supplemented by access to TILA. This may include, for example, access to brokerage for one-off costs associated with transition, such as purchasing large household items or paying a rental bond. Some jurisdictions prefer to link young people to community sector support services, rather than provide brokerage. For example, in New South Wales young people are linked with mainstream services (that is, services that are open to anyone requiring them and are not specific to out of home care) or community sector organisations that may be able to provide the required support. Some jurisdictions also offer financial support to carers if young people remain living with them past the age when care formally ceases. For example, in Queensland, the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women can continue to pay a fostering allowance to carers for a limited period after a child turns 18, for example, to support a child to finish their schooling.

All jurisdictions offer non-financial post-care transition support. This support may be provided through case work delivered by the relevant government agency or a non-government community partner, or may be funded by government but provided by the community sector. It is likely to include support with housing, health, education and employment, as well as strengthening connections to the community, family and friends. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse noted the importance of ongoing casework support to at least 25 years for young people who have survived child sexual abuse in out of home care, to enable young people to access targeted supports such as therapeutic treatments.26

A challenge some jurisdictions have experienced in providing post-care transition support is that support must be provided on a voluntary basis, with the consent of the young person receiving support. While the young person is under orders up to age 18, government and relevant community agencies have parental responsibility and legal grounds to work with them. After the young person turns 18, there is a greater onus on them to seek support and provide consent to receive ongoing support. Operational issues around keeping a case file open without a legal order can also impact provision of support.

The table on the following pages summarises the support across jurisdictions for young people leaving out of home care, as well as support provided to carers.

---

## Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACT</th>
<th><strong>Support for young people</strong></th>
<th><strong>Support for carers</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under <em>A Step Up for Our Kids: One Step Can Make a Lifetime of Difference</em> (Out of Home Care Strategy 2015–2020) financial and casework support for young people has been increased to 25 years.</td>
<td>Financial support for carers may be provided until the young person reaches 21 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>A transition panel comprising members from government, the community sector and the Public Advocate provides specialist knowledge and advice to case workers on transition from care planning.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Post-care support through ACT Together, a consortium supporting young people in out of home care in the ACT, includes:</strong> case work coordination; planning and oversight of therapeutic interventions; assisting and supporting young adults to access their care records and life story work; practical supports; time limited brokerage; referral to services; and mediation work with families and/or carers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| NSW | **Services and financial assistance to support a young person’s transition from out of home care to independent living arrangements are provided to 25 years.** | Financial support for carers may be provided until the young person completes Year 12 (or equivalent). |

| NT | **Ongoing support, with a focus on needs-based transition support, can be provided up to 25 years.** Territory Families continues to revise and improve planning processes, support options and pathways for young people transitioning from care. | Under the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* (NT), Territory Families may provide ongoing financial support for carers to assist a young person who has been in care up to 25 years, if the young person is able to continue living with the carer and this was identified in the young person’s leaving care plan. |

|     | **Following the release of the report from the *Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory*, the Northern Territory Government is undertaking substantial reform of its child protection and youth justice systems, including transforming out of home care and supporting better transition and restoration practices.** Territory Families employs a dedicated transition from care officer in each region. These officers are involved in leaving care planning and play a role in organising meetings between the young person and relevant service providers, to engage the young person in their transition. Transition from care officers also work with case managers and the young person to ensure that tasks listed on the leaving care and after care support checklist are completed (NT Government: Territory Families 2018, *Safe, Thriving and connected: Generational change for children and families 2018–2023*). Territory Families funds Anglicare to deliver the Moving On program, which provides after care support and brokerage for young people up to 25 years. The program operates territory-wide and provides information and referrals; accommodation advice; brokerage assistance; access to health and legal services; support for education, training and employment matters; and support for future planning. | |

<p>| QLD | <strong>Section 75 of the <em>Child Protection Act 1999</em> currently places an obligation on the Chief Executive to support children in their transition to independence and does not put an age limit on this support.</strong> Transition support may continue to be provided to age 19, with tailored individual support in areas such as housing, education, training and employment offered to age 21, through the Next Step After Care program. | Sections 75 and 159 of the <em>Child Protection Act 1999</em> (QLD) provide the Chief Executive of the Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women with authority to continue to provide financial support to a foster or kinship carer for a young person who has transitioned from care to adulthood. This payment is continued on a case by case basis, for example, where a young person continues to live with a foster or kinship carer while completing their schooling. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support for young people</th>
<th>Support for carers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>QLD cont.</strong></td>
<td>The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women can continue to support a young person who has transitioned to independence through a support service case. A support service case would be offered to a young person to assist them to achieve unmet case plan goals after turning 18 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SA</strong></td>
<td>New legislation has made a clear commitment to extend post-care support to young people leaving care up to and including 25 years. Housing assistance is currently available to age 25 and there is no upper age limit for post-care support through Relationships Australia South Australia (RASA). The state government has also extended the Rapid Response policy to age 25. This policy enables children and young people under guardianship to receive priority access to whole-of-government services, including health, housing, education, training supports and services. Support can include responding to phone calls and online queries; information and referral; advocacy; financial support; case management; and intensive therapeutic support. Face-to-face services are not available for young people outside of the Adelaide metropolitan area. Financial counselling services are funded through the Department for Child Protection to increase accessibility for young people post-care. Services include budgeting assistance, advocacy, emergency financial supports and supporting access to grants such as the Dame Roma Mitchell Funds and TILA to support independent living. The Dame Roma Mitchell Trust Fund provides grants to young people who have been in care up to 30 years of age for a range of social, recreational and self-development opportunities. It is anticipated that planned increased funding to RASA will enable a much greater number of young people transitioning from care to access support services in the future. Additionally, a pilot program offering intensive case management for care leavers with the highest complexity of need is currently being trialled in rural South Australia in the Port Augusta, Port Pirie and Whyalla region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TAS</strong></td>
<td>Financial support of up to $2,500 is available to young people who have left out of home care each year until 24 years, to enable a young person to continue education or training, access counselling services, improve employment opportunities and to participate in social activities. In addition, the After Care Support Program provides referrals to government and community services such as education, housing and health services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VIC</strong></td>
<td>Support is offered to age 21, with scope for it to be extended for a further six months in some circumstances. Supports available include: the Springboard program, which helps young people living in residential care to get back into education, training and employment; a state-wide hot line; post-care support, referral and information services; specific services for Aboriginal young people leaving care; brokerage for a range of tailored supports; and mentoring. Victoria has expanded the number of young people able to access leaving care services. Home Stretch, an initiative that extends the age of leaving care, will be implemented in Victoria from early 2019. The initiative will enable young people in home-based care to remain with their carer until 21 years. Financial support for carers may be provided until the young person completes Year 12 (or equivalent). The COMPASS Social Impact Bond, which commenced in October 2018, provides support for young people in home-based care arrangements to remain with their carer beyond 18 years. The Home Stretch initiative, to commence in early 2019, will enable eligible carers to continue to receive carer allowance payments until the young person turns 21.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support for young people | Support for carers
--- | ---
**VIC cont.** |  
Young people leaving residential care will be eligible to receive an accommodation allowance. Case work support and flexible funding will be included in the model. Victoria also invests in family services and early intervention programs. Young care leavers who are parents can access these programs, including: Child FIRST/Orange Door, Family Services, Cradle to Kinder and Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies. These programs support young parents and children at risk by providing parenting and family support.

**WA** |  
Support is provided to age 25. Western Australia is undertaking a suite of reform actions aimed at evaluating and ultimately sharing responsibility to deliver post-care services with the community sector, as the state strengthens the post-care supports available to young people leaving care. Young people can seek post-care assistance from funded service providers and may also approach any departmental district office for assistance at any time until they reach 25 years.

Financial support for carers may be provided until the end of the calendar year in which the young person turns 18, if they are in their final year of school.

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**RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUPPORT**

In all states and territories, support for young people to transition from out of home care to adulthood is provided by a mix of government and community sector services.

In most jurisdictions, government departments partner with or fund community sector organisations to deliver support. For example, post-care transition support services in Victoria are funded by government but delivered entirely through the community sector; Western Australia funds three community sector organisations to provide transition from care and post-care services; and in the Australian Capital Territory support is coordinated by government (Child and Youth Protection Services), while responsibility for some services has transitioned to the community sector.

For young people with disability, specialist disability supports to assist with transition to adult living and independent supported living will be the responsibility of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

In some states and territories, young people may be case managed by either government or community sector organisations, depending on the type of care they are in (for example, kinship, foster or residential care) or the type of orders they are on (for example, long-term or short-term orders). In South Australia, young people from rural and remote areas are supported by the Department of Child Protection, while young people in metropolitan areas are supported by both the department and non-government partners.

**TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENT LIVING ALLOWANCE**

Young people aged 15 to 25 years who are leaving out of home care and transitioning to independent living are eligible for the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA).

TILA is a nationally available one-off government payment of $1,500 to assist young people leaving formal out of home care to transition to independence. This payment is available to young people from the point of leaving care (young people are eligible from age 15 until 25 years) to pay for a range of goods and services related to their formal Independence Plan.

The payment is used to meet some of the costs involved in transitioning to independent living, such as expenses related to accommodation, developing life skills and accessing employment or education. Items are purchased on the young person’s behalf by the organisation that assisted the young person to submit their application, rather than the young person receiving funds directly.
3 SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER YOUNG PEOPLE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are disproportionately represented in out of home care in all states and territories.

Nationally, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out of home care is over nine times the rate of non-Indigenous children and young people.27

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people leave care at an earlier age, are less likely to have finished school or go on to further education and training, and are disproportionately represented in the justice system.28

All jurisdictions have endorsed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) in legislation and/or policy. Queensland has legislated the ATSICPP in full. The ATSICPP establishes five core elements: prevention; partnership; placement; participation; and connection.

It promotes the rights and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, their families and communities by working across the continuum of child protection systems and services.

SNAICC: Voice for our Children, a national non-government peak body representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, has developed a baseline analysis of progress by states and territories towards implementing the ATSICPP.29 The ATSICPP does not have specific provisions relating to transition from out of home care; however, elements of the ATSICPP can be applied to the development of transition or leaving care policy.

Table 4  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community involvement in transition support by jurisdiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement in transition</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives is required in decision-making about the care and protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, although involvement with in-care transition planning or post-care support is not specifically required.</td>
<td>FACS works with peak bodies, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives, to design and implement transition support. For example, FACS funds Aboriginal Aftercare Statewide Services, which help to develop transition plans that are culturally appropriate and provide post-care support up to age 25.</td>
<td>Territory Families employs Aboriginal Community Workers and Aboriginal Practice Advisors who work in partnership with child protection and out of home care workers where clients are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Territory Families’ Remote Family Support Services funds Child Safety Coordination Groups. These multi-agency groups aim to enhance case coordination, service delivery and support for families to enable local people to generate solutions for their children and young people.</td>
<td>Next Step After Care services work closely with broader community services, which may include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers.</td>
<td>Policy in this area is currently under review, but future policy regarding transition support will ensure the active engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives.</td>
<td>Care Teams are expected to include key supports for young people including services relevant to their communities. After leaving care the young person will fully determine who is involved in the development of any case plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2017, SNAICC published the table below to show the alignment of state and territory child protection legislation with different aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making. While the table does not specifically refer to participation in transition support, it provides a useful indication of legislative alignment with the principles of participation in decision-making for children in out of home care across Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE KEY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Legislation:</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Act...</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>includes self-determination as a recognised principle</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>includes participation and/or consultation as a decision-making principle</td>
<td>!</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expressly requires consultation/participation for all significant decisions</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>!</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Participation requirement is not specific to decision making.
^ Required by principle but no enabling process is specified.
 Required by agreed protocol, but not legislation.
+ Recent legislative reform in South Australia has strengthened Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making (see the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 s112(b)(b) and (c)).

SERVICE PROVISION FOR TRANSITION AND POST-CARE SUPPORT

Approaches to services providing support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people transitioning from care vary across jurisdictions. Services might include, for example, culturally aware services that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to remain in or return to their own family and community after their transition from care.

In the Australian Capital Territory, transition policies note the importance of preserving children’s sense of cultural identity and building connections to community. The Cultural Support Team works with case workers on young people’s cultural plans and care plans, and young people may be referred to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service provider as required. The community sector organisation with responsibility for young people in out of home care has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative on the placement panel who can be involved in transition planning.

In New South Wales, in addition to Aboriginal Aftercare Statewide Services, Link-Up NSW works with Aboriginal people who were separated from their families as children and provides services including family reunions and counselling. Western Australia is currently considering implementing targets for providing support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, including care leavers.

In addition to the provisions under Section 18 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC), the Victorian Leaving Care Support for Aboriginal Young People program provides a model of culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 16–21 years transitioning from out of home care to independence. Young people are assisted to maintain and strengthen their connection or to re-connect with their culture, family and identified community. Both Better Futures trials within Victoria include partnerships with ACCOs, with Better Futures South also including minimum targets to support Aboriginal care leavers.

In the Northern Territory, Territory Families provides After Care Family Support Services if this was identified as part of the young person’s leaving care plan, and/or Remote Family Support Services that include multi-agency support to enhance case coordination, service delivery and support for families to enable local people to generate solutions for their children.

Other jurisdictions provide fewer specialised services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people leaving care. For example, some service funding agreements may require that young people be assisted to connect to their family and community, or the best interests of the child be upheld, without acknowledging the particular challenges or vulnerabilities facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in care.

There is a gap in services in many jurisdictions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people leaving care. Future considerations for jurisdictions could include policy or legislative requirements for targeted support to be provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people leaving care.
4 CHALLENGES

There are a number of overarching challenges facing each jurisdiction in effectively supporting young people to transition from out of home care to adulthood.

For young people leaving out of home care, these include:
- poor life outcomes compared to young people who were never in care, for example, increased rates of homelessness or poor access to education and employment
- significantly shorter transition to independence than young people who were never in care
- lack of information about transition support and services.

For services, challenges include:
- increasing demand for services without equivalent increases in service funding
- lack of focus on transition planning and support due to limited resources being increasingly directed towards crisis-driven work
- data collection on young people who have left care and evaluation of post-care support services
- timely planning and access to post transition supports/ supported accommodation via the NDIS.

In all jurisdictions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are over-represented in out of home care. For example, in Western Australia, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out of home care was 16.3 times the rate of non-Indigenous children and young people at 30 June 2016. The intersection of challenges facing young people transitioning from care is exacerbated in the Northern Territory. A high proportion of young people in care in the Northern Territory are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, who are often placed in urban placements for care before returning to their community after their transition to adulthood. Many of these communities are in regional or remote areas where post-care support services are limited.

Almost all jurisdictions noted the challenge of delivering services to young people in remote, rural or regional areas. These challenges include:
- a lack of transition-specific services in rural or remote areas
- a lack of mainstream services in rural or remote areas that young people leaving out of home care can be referred to or access
- complexities of delivering services in remote or rural areas
- limited options for transporting young people from remote or rural areas to population centres where services are located.

Housing and homelessness is another significant challenge across jurisdictions for young people transitioning from care.

Young people leaving care are at high risk of homelessness, with limited availability and affordability of appropriate housing. A recent report from the Australian Institute of Family Studies noted that securing housing for young people leaving care is often the top priority for both young people and their case workers. The focus on post-care accommodation needs can sometimes be prioritised over other transition planning due to the urgency of the issue, which can mean young people miss out on support for other key needs such as their health or social and emotional development. Despite this focus on housing support, young people who have left care continue to be over-represented in homelessness data, with a 2011 report by the CREATE Foundation finding that approximately 35 per cent of young people leaving care experienced homelessness within the first year after care. Recent research suggests that extending care to 21 years reduces homelessness among care leavers by providing additional time for young people to prepare for adulthood.

Other challenges common across jurisdictions include breaking the cycle between out of home care and the justice system, and breaking the intergenerational cycle that sees the children of young people leaving out of home care more likely to be taken into care. Challenges in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory include streamlining service delivery, with the Australian Capital Territory transferring some responsibilities for out of home care to community organisations and New South Wales working with more than 30 out of home care agencies providing services in its jurisdiction.

Further challenges identified by jurisdictions include:
- limited post-care therapeutic and mental health support services
- lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers
- lack of flexibility in service provision
- disconnection with family, culture and identity
- ongoing dependence on social welfare
- late and/or ineffectual transition planning
- difficulty maintaining contact with young people who have left care
- engaging young people with substance abuse issues and ongoing behavioural problems
- supporting young parents who are transitioning or have transitioned from out of home care
- stigma from being a child in care.

31 AIFS 2016.
34 McDowall, JJ 2011, p. 12.
5 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

All jurisdictions have committed to improving support for young people leaving care. Several jurisdictions have undertaken, or are currently undertaking, significant reforms to their child protection systems, including the provision of support for young people transitioning from care.

Reform may occur as a result of new research and improved understanding of the challenges in this area, or following major inquiries that have taken place in jurisdictions, such as the 2014 Child Protection Systems Royal Commission in South Australia.

Since the introduction of the National Framework, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria have made significant changes to legislation and policy regarding transitioning young people from out of home care to adulthood. New South Wales has implemented a range of policy reforms to support young people leaving care. South Australia and Queensland have also passed legislation containing significant reform, with South Australia’s legislation fully commenced on 22 October 2018 and Queensland’s to commence at a date to be determined.

In many jurisdictions, approaches to supporting young people are shifting from needs-based to strengths-based to better respond to the individual circumstances of young people leaving care. Victoria is actively shifting towards strength-based programs and New South Wales focuses on strengths-based transition planning to build resilience and the skills necessary for independence.

It is anticipated that future reform may result from trials of new initiatives, such as the Towards Independent Adulthood (TIA) trial currently occurring in Western Australia. The TIA trial is expected to be finalised in 2020 and the results of its evaluation may guide future investments for young people leaving care.

EXTENSION OF SUPPORT BEYOND 18 YEARS OF AGE

Jurisdictions are increasingly recognising that best practice calls for transition support to begin early and last longer for young people leaving care. Australian and international research demonstrates that extending support to young people beyond 18 years can assist their smooth transition from out of home care to independent adulthood.

This additional support helps these young people achieve outcomes similar to their peers who do not have a care experience and who are often able to remain at home beyond 18 years.36

Nationally, there is limited data on how different care leavers experience their transition to adulthood and the pathways most likely to lead to positive life outcomes, because most jurisdictions do not maintain contact with and continue to collect data on young people after they leave care.37 A 2016 report commissioned by Anglicare Victoria focused on the potential socio-economic benefits of extending care to 21 years for young people in care in Victoria. The report considers Australian data as well as international research, and found that the economic impacts of extending care stem from young people leaving care experiencing improved access to education and employment, increased housing stability, reduced contact with the justice system, increased access to healthcare, and reduced drug and alcohol dependence. The report focused on Victoria as a case study, but its findings demonstrate a significant benefit to cost ratio for public spending in supporting young people to stay in care to 21 years, which may be applicable more broadly in the Australian context.38

All jurisdictions begin in-care transition support from age 15, including development of transition or leaving care plans. All states and territories, with the exception of Victoria, now offer some form of post-care transition support to young people who have left care up to the age of 25 years. A detailed comparison of the extent of post-care support provided by states and territories is outlined under Transition Support, above.

SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Recent developments in many jurisdictions to extend support to young people beyond 18 years are closely related to ensuring young people leaving care complete education and training.

Jurisdictions have focused on ensuring that young people transitioning from care can access support and funding to successfully complete high school or undertake an apprenticeship or further study.

In the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia, this support can take the form of additional payments to carers to enable the young person to remain with them while completing their education. New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia provide continued funding to carers to enable a young person to complete Year 12 or equivalent. The Australian Capital Territory can provide funding to carers until the young person reaches age 21, at the discretion of the Director-General of the Community Services Directorate. In South Australia, recent policy and legislative changes enable the extension of funding for carers past 18 years.

Additional developments to support young people through education and training include fee-waiver scholarships in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia for vocational education.

36 Beauchamp, T 2014.
and training for young people who have been or are currently in care. Some universities in New South Wales and Victoria also offer scholarships or bursaries specifically for care leavers. In Queensland, the Care2Achieve program provides scholarships to support young women who are finishing Year 12 and transitioning from care, or who have already transitioned from care, to undertake higher education studies. The program supports up to four years’ tertiary study at university or TAFE and includes financial assistance, mentoring, coaching and other supports. Other programs that are not specifically for care leavers can also provide support, such as the Aboriginal Pathways Program at the University of South Australia that provides a fee free, tailored foundation program including mentoring and tutoring for young Aboriginal people.

HOUSING SUPPORT

Recent developments in several jurisdictions focus on accommodation support, particularly affordable housing. While the case management support offered in most jurisdictions can include referrals to services that offer housing support, there is generally limited housing support specifically tailored for care leavers.

In New South Wales, the 2016 Care for My Future — better outcomes for children and young people in Out of Home Care strategy has a renewed focus on preparation and planning for independence. This includes a new emphasis on rent assistance that prioritises young people leaving care and user-friendly ways for young people leaving care to find information and help, with the aim of reducing homelessness and promoting vocation pathways.

In South Australia, the Housing Assistance for Young People Transitioning from Care to Independence 2018–2019 operational protocol between the Department for Child Protection and Housing SA (now the South Australian Housing Authority) aims to ensure that these government departments collaborate to provide young people under the guardianship of the Minister with the optimum level of care and support as they transition to independence.

In the Australian Capital Territory, Youth Housing Managers provide support for young people who meet the eligibility criteria for public housing assistance, including young people transitioning from care. Youth Housing Managers provide a single point of contact to support young people with their housing application and ongoing tenancy, and may offer additional support as required, for example through linking the young person to appropriate services.

In Victoria, recent investment of $10.1 million over four years has been allocated to strengthen housing support for young people transitioning from care and exiting youth justice.

TRANSITION OF SERVICE PROVISION TO COMMUNITY SECTOR

A recent development across a number of jurisdictions has been a shift towards the provision of transition support services by the community sector rather than government. Government is increasingly working with the community sector around service provision of long-term support for children and young people in out of home care, including transition support.

The Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia in particular emphasise close collaboration with the community sector, sharing responsibility for provision of care leaving services and outcomes. Queensland also collaborates closely with the community sector, and committed to funding and supporting transition services as a key deliverable in 2017–18.39

Victoria is demonstrating its commitment to greater collaboration by trialling the Better Futures post-care support model, and commencing to roll out Home Stretch within the Barwon area and the south of the state. In addition, Victoria is working closely with the Brotherhood of St Laurence to design a new leaving care practice framework to support the work of these programs. South Australia has funded Relationships Australia to provide post-care services since 2012. In response to the recommendations of the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, South Australia committed to a significant increase in funds to enable this service to be provided more flexibly and assertively. A review of care leavers’ needs also led to a pilot program of intensive case management in rural South Australia.
As noted in the introduction, this paper progresses work under Action 2.1.4 of the Third Action Plan. This paper provides a basis for further work to evaluate the impact of jurisdictions’ legislative and policy changes to extend statutory responsibility and access to services to young people who exit out of home care beyond 18 years.

Although most jurisdictions have done recent work on reforming policy or legislation around transitioning young people from out of home care to adulthood, there is limited information about the impact of these changes. Most jurisdictions noted in their response to the survey that informed this paper that it was too early to measure or evaluate the impact of these changes on young people’s lives. In order to further progress Action 2.1.4 and provide an evaluation of the impact of policy and legislative changes, all jurisdictions will need to collect and analyse further data and evidence.

The following jurisdiction reports demonstrate how changes to legislation or policy have led or were anticipated to lead to improved outcomes for young people transitioning from care.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Under A Step Up for Our Kids: One Step Can Make a Lifetime of Difference (Out of Home Care Strategy 2015–2020) financial and casework support for young people leaving care has increased from 18 years to 25 years in the Australian Capital Territory.40 In some cases carer subsidies continue to be paid to the carers of young people beyond 18 years, enabling a more gradual transition from care than would have been possible before this reform was implemented.

ACT Together, a consortium supporting young people in out of home care in the Australian Capital Territory, is developing and embedding new programs to help young people gain independence and successfully transition out of the care system. These include lead tenant models, semi-independent living and pre semi-independent living. These initiatives offer alternatives to traditional models of residential care.

NEW SOUTH WALES

In New South Wales, while it is still too early to determine the impact of many recent initiatives, there is evidence of increased take-up of supports provided as a result of policy change in this area. There has been an increase in access to resources, with more than 460 calls and 150 emails to the CareLeaver line in its first year of operation. There have been 800 downloads of the mobile app ‘Resolve’, which supports care leavers to transition to independence by providing information and linking to services. Additionally, in the 12 months to June 2017, 626 care leavers aged 18 years or over received financial aftercare assistance from FACS.

An independent review of the New South Wales out of home care system in 2015 led to the development of Their Futures Matter: a new approach, identifying the need for increased investment to better support young people leaving care and expand specialist aftercare services. A recent development in New South Wales includes the development of the Foyer51 program, to commence in 2020, which will provide apartments, intensive support services and on-site care over eight years to up to 300 young people. This work includes a focus on improved future planning and targeted responses to cohorts of vulnerable young people, including pregnant teenagers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and young men.

Another recent development is the introduction of additional support to enable care leavers to access driving lessons and the Safer Driver Course to support their transition to independence. New South Wales has also acknowledged that a lack of available information is an issue for young people leaving care and has developed a number of new resources to support transition to independence, including resources for young people and for carers.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Legislative reform of the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 (NT) is underway in response to recommendations made by the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. The reforms will introduce a requirement for transition planning to commence when a young person in out of home care turns 15. The amendments will clarify that the Chief Executive Officer is to ensure, as far as practicable, that help is available to assist a young person to transition from care to independence from the time they turn 15 years up to the age of 25 years. The proposed reforms have been informed by a comprehensive review of the child protection system, reflect contemporary evidence and research, and were positively endorsed by SNAICC.

QUEENSLAND

More than 1,530 young people have accessed support through the Next Step After Care program since it commenced in March 2015. The program is delivered by community organisations including Life Without Barriers, Youth Empowered Towards Independence (YETI) in Far North Queensland, Integrated Family and Youth Services (IFYS) in North Coast and South Burnett CTC Inc (CTC), working with the Queensland Government. Young people can access services under the program for support with
education, job-ready skills, independent living skills and finding accommodation. An evaluation of the program was undertaken between February and October 2017. The evaluation provided a detailed description and analysis of the implementation and efficacy of the service model, and investigated the impact of the initiative on improving outcomes for young people leaving care. Queensland is currently considering the recommendations from the evaluation. From commencement of the Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017, young people aged 15–24 years inclusive will be eligible to access Next Step After Care supports.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

New child protection legislation in South Australia fully commenced on 22 October 2018. The legislation provides requirements regarding transition from care and there is potential to review the impact of the new legislation in the future. A review of care leavers’ needs in South Australia identified additional barriers to support for young people in rural areas, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, young people with disability and young people leaving care from a residential care placement. A pilot program has been funded to provide intensive case management to the most vulnerable care leavers in regional South Australia, in the Port Augusta, Port Pirie and Whyalla region. It is anticipated that data from this pilot, once available, will demonstrate the effectiveness of intensive case management in securing positive outcomes for vulnerable young people leaving out of home care.

TASMANIA

The After Care Support Program in Tasmania has received a steady increase in applications over the last 10 years. Support provided by the program includes assistance with independent living, access to education and training, developing and maintaining relationships with family members, and improving employment opportunities, among others. Funding is used flexibly within the guidelines to enable the most appropriate support to be provided to a young person.

The Tasmanian Government is currently considering additional supports for young people and has already begun providing the option for young people who are still completing their secondary education (or equivalent) to remain with their family-based carer until the end of the year in which the young person finishes their studies.

VICTORIA

The Better Futures trials have supported more than 150 young people with their transition towards independent adulthood. Young people have been engaged in earlier planning, with a focus on strengthening the voice of the young person in planning and goal setting. Young people are supported via a key worker as they transition from out of home care to independent living arrangements across five life domains: education; employment; health and social wellbeing; connections; and housing and living skills. The Better Futures workers aim to develop young people’s resilience and social skills, including in the areas of respectful relationships and sexual health, to reduce intergenerational disadvantage and the ratio of early parenthood amongst young care leavers. Early learnings from the trial sites show promising outcomes due to their focus on earlier engagement, relationships with key workers and holistic outcomes.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Statutory Review of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 aims to legislate a number of provisions currently existing in policy that will embed existing processes for young people transitioning from care into adulthood. These include legislating:

- the commencement of leaving care planning when a young person reaches 15 years of age
- provision of other personal materials and documents
- provision of information to young people about their leaving care entitlements
- access to social services regardless of whether a matter is expressly identified in the young person’s leaving care plan.

The updated Better Care, Better Services: Safety and quality standards for children and young people in protection and care (Better Care, Better Services) was released in 2017. Better Care, Better Services outlines a commitment to adequately prepare and support young people as they transition from care into adulthood. As a result, young people have access to appropriate supports and services to assist in making a positive transition and to maintain safety and stability, and connections to family, friends and local communities. Leaving care planning commences from 15 years of age and allows the young person to identify current and future needs and goals up to when the young person is under 25 years of age. Young people are involved in their preparation and planning for transitioning from care and their care team supports them in the development of independent living skills.

The implementation of the Towards Independent Adulthood (TIA) trial in Western Australia has enabled a maximum of 80 young people aged 16 years to access a community service organisation youth worker who provides intensive case management support over three years. The TIA trial focuses on improving outcomes for vulnerable young people who are transitioning from care, and reducing their reliance on services. Assistance provided has included help with education, employment and health, and accessing appointments. Feedback on the TIA trial to date has been positive, with young people highlighting the value of having a dedicated support person and timely assistance available to them.
MONITORING AND EVALUATION

No jurisdiction currently has a dedicated evaluation framework to monitor and evaluate post-care support for young people leaving out of home care. However, jurisdictions use a variety of outcome measures to monitor and evaluate post-care support, including longitudinal studies and existing monitoring mechanisms.

The Australian Capital Territory has developed an evaluation framework to measure outcomes under *A Step Up for Our Kids* (Out of Home Care Strategy 2015–2020). Evaluation of the strategy will consider several strategic domains, including the continuum of care and key areas of support that build a foundation for young people to successfully transition from care to independent adulthood. Victoria is establishing a learning system, which will encompass evidence-based practice and programs for vulnerable children and families, including for young people transitioning from care. New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia are undertaking longitudinal studies into the outcomes for young people who have left out of home care. South Australia monitors post-care support through contract monitoring and by ensuring compliance with key performance indicators in service agreements. Queensland is currently considering the recommendations from the evaluation of the Next Steps After Care program.
This discussion paper identifies a number of challenges for supporting young people transitioning from care and improving their life outcomes. The work in this space across all jurisdictions reflects that transition from care is currently an area of significant focus and ongoing reform.

Areas identified for future focus include:

- ensuring supports are comparable across jurisdictions in terms of scope, intensity, reach and length of support available
- ensuring all young people aged 15 years or over in care have a transition plan and are actively engaged in the planning process
- providing appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- increasing support for young people in rural, regional and remote areas
- increasing housing availability and affordability
- improving data collection, including on young people exiting care over 18 years
- reviewing the progress and impact of recent policy and legislative changes to transition support.

In addition, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended (recommendation 12.22) that ‘state and territory governments should ensure that the supports provided to assist all care-leavers to safely and successfully transition to independent living include:

a strategies to assist care-leavers who disclose that they were sexually abused while in out-of-home care to access general post-care supports

b the development of targeted supports to address the specific needs of sexual abuse survivors, such as help in accessing therapeutic treatment to deal with the impacts of abuse, and for these supports to be accessible until at least the age of 25’.41

This recommendation aligns with the findings in this discussion paper, demonstrating a need for consistent and tailored support for young people transitioning from out of home care to independent adulthood.

It will be important that next steps for jurisdictions include reviewing the progress and impact of policy changes to extend support for young people transitioning from care. Many changes in this area have either occurred only recently, or are still in the process of being implemented, and evaluation work is yet to be undertaken. Going forward, evaluating the impact of policy changes will enable the development of evidence-based policy to improve outcomes for young people leaving care and ensure the best start towards independent adulthood.

41 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2017, p. 341.
REFERENCES

Action 2.1.4 Survey to Australian Jurisdictions surveys completed by each jurisdiction to inform the discussion paper.


Beauchamp, T 2014, Young people transitioning from out-of-home care to adulthood: review of policy and program approaches in Australia and overseas, UnitingCare, Sydney.


Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, 2017, Report of the Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

## JURISDICTIONAL SNAPSHOT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation and policy reform</th>
<th>In-care transition support</th>
<th>Post-care transition support</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACT</strong></td>
<td>Legislation requires that all young people aged 15 years have a transition plan. Young people are paired with relevant support agencies at 17 years. Young people are linked with public housing services.</td>
<td>Financial support is available through Government for one-off expenses, or through community services. Case work and housing support is provided as needed. Care leavers may continue to access support to 25 years. In negotiated circumstances, carers may continue to receive subsidies until the young person reaches 21 years, enabling them to stay at home longer.</td>
<td>Policy requires Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be involved in decision-making about care and protection matters in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Cultural Services Team works with case workers on transition plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care leavers.</td>
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<td>Since 2015, policy and legislative reform has occurred as a result of <em>A Step Up for Our Kids (Out of Home Care Strategy 2015–2020)</em>. Reform has included increased case work and financial support to care leavers and transition of some support services to the community sector.</td>
<td>Case workers develop a leaving care plan and engage young people in its development. Young people and carers are provided with information booklets. Case workers support young people to develop independent living skills and plan concrete actions relating to income, accommodation, health, education and training, employment and any legal matters.</td>
<td>Care leavers receive additional support where their needs will not be sufficiently met by mainstream services. Care leavers may continue to access support to 25 years. Care leavers may access support and information through the Care Leavers Line and mobile app ‘Resolve’. Carers may continue to receive support after the young person turns 18 years until the young person finishes Year 12 or equivalent.</td>
<td>Government works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives in designing and implementing in-care and post-care transition support. Government funds Aboriginal After Care Statewide Services that offer post-care support and help Aboriginal young people and community sector agencies to develop culturally appropriate leaving care plans.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NSW</strong></td>
<td>Care plans are developed for all young people and updated every six months. Leaving care planning covers nine key areas of health, housing, education and training, employment, financial security, legal matters, identity and culture, social relationships and support networks, and life skills. Transition from care officers have been recruited in each region, in accordance with Royal Commission recommendations.</td>
<td>Government and community sector organisations provide assistance and casework support for a variety of needs including accommodation, employment, education, legal services, health services and counselling services. A new housing brokerage and support service is currently being established. Care leavers may continue to access support up to 25 years. Carers may continue to receive support if the young person is able to continue living with them after 18 years. Territory Families is introducing additional data collection and reporting mechanisms to improve monitoring and reporting on outcomes for young people and families as they transition from out of home care.</td>
<td>Government employs Aboriginal community workers and practice advisors to work with child protection where clients are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.</td>
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<td>Since 2009, a number of changes and new supports for care leavers have been introduced. In 2016, the <em>Care for My Future Strategy</em> was endorsed. The Strategy identifies actions and initiatives to better prepare and support care leavers.</td>
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<td>In 2018, the Northern Territory Government released Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families 2018-2023, to address recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. A specific leaving care plan template is currently being developed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legislation and policy reform</td>
<td>In-care transition support</td>
<td>Post-care transition support</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support</td>
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<td><strong>QLD</strong></td>
<td>Young people are supported to develop a Transition from Care Plan. Planning has a holistic focus and encompasses wellbeing areas that include relationships and connections, cultural and personal identity, placements and housing, education and training, employment, health and life skills.</td>
<td>Support is provided to young people through the Next Step After Care program and Government funded community sector organisations. Additional support is also provided by other Queensland Government agencies, including priority access to young people formerly in out of home care. This support will be extended up to 25 years once the changes made by the Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017 commence.</td>
<td>Next Step After Care services work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers. Recognised Entities are required to be engaged in planning and decision making for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children while they are in out of home care. Once changes made by the Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017 commence, independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities will support the child and their family to participate in transition to independence processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SA</strong></td>
<td>Young people are provided with case management support and a case plan. Young people are assisted with developing the skills and connections needed to successfully live independently. Transition planning is legislated in the new Act.</td>
<td>Additional assistance is available through fee-free TAFE courses and housing assistance. Care leavers may continue to access post-care support through the post-care program delivered by Relationships Australia South Australia. A financial counselling services program is available to care leavers. Carers may continue to receive support until the young person finishes post-secondary education or training - including university, apprenticeships or vocational studies.</td>
<td>Transition policies are currently under review. Future policies will ensure the active engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives in transition planning and implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TAS</strong></td>
<td>Young people are supported through CREATE, for example through the Go Your Own Way leaving care kit and through CREATE Your Future workshops. Young people who have not completed their secondary education and who are in family-based care when they turn 18 will have the opportunity to remain in care until they complete their education.</td>
<td>Financial support of up to $2,500 is available to care leavers each year up to 24 years, to support education and training, employment, counselling, developing and maintaining relationships and links to the wider community, and participating in sporting and creative activities. Additional support is offered through the After Care Support Program.</td>
<td>Young people who are linked to cultural organisations have community representatives involved in transition planning. No funding is currently allocated to cultural organisations to deliver post-care support. The After Care Support Program engages with community sector organisations to provide culturally responsive services.</td>
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</table>

As a result of the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, South Australia is currently undergoing a process of significant reform, including legislative reform. The Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (fully commenced on 22 October 2018) legislates supports to eligible care leavers over 16 but younger than 26 years.

The Leaving Care policy is currently being reviewed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation and policy reform</th>
<th>In-care transition support</th>
<th>Post-care transition support</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>VIC</strong> New activities to support care leavers and strengthen post-care services are currently being trialled and progressively established. Young people are provided with case management support and a 15+ Care and Transition Plan. The Springboard Program provides intensive, youth-focused one to one assistance to young people aged from 16 years who are in, or have recently left, residential out of home care and are disengaged from education, vocational training or employment.</td>
<td>Care leavers may be supported through brokerage, case support, information and referral, mentoring, a fee waiver for education, housing assistance and support from community sector agencies. There is insufficient capacity for all care leavers to access this service. Care leavers may continue to access support up to 21 years.</td>
<td>The Leaving Care Support for Aboriginal Young People program provides a model of culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal young people aged 16–21 years transitioning to independence. Young people will be assisted to maintain and strengthen connection or to re-connect with their culture, family and identified community. In addition, dedicated targets for support to Aboriginal young people leaving care are included in trials of new post-care support models. Community practice meetings involve working with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WA</strong> Policies are currently being reviewed as part of the Building a Better Future: Out-of-Home Care Reform in Western Australia strategy. Care plans for young people are modified to reflect leaving care planning. Leaving care planning considers the young person’s needs in preparing to transition and the steps needed to assist the young person to meet those needs.</td>
<td>Care leavers may receive financial support through the leaving care fund and assistance in areas including accommodation, education and training, obtaining legal advice, employment and accessing health and counselling services. Care leavers may continue to access support up to 25 years. Carers may continue to receive support until the end of the calendar year in which the young person finishes Year 12 or equivalent.</td>
<td>At present, the provision of post-care support services through the community sector to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people appears disproportionately low. This is being addressed through reform work currently being undertaken. The reform work and the Aboriginal Services and Practice Framework 2016–2018 incorporates a strengthened role for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and enables pathways for ACCOs to develop and expand as service providers in the community services sector. Reform work is also exploring the implementation of targets for provision of out of home care and other services to Aboriginal children and families, including care leavers.</td>
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ACTION 2.1.4 SURVEY TO AUSTRALIAN JURISDICTIONS

The following survey was provided to each jurisdiction to inform the development of this discussion paper.

AIM

This survey falls under action 2.1.4 of the Third Action Plan for implementing The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020. The ACT has been nominated to undertake a mapping exercise of the current policies and legislation across all Australian jurisdictions covering transitioning young people from out of home care to adulthood.

The purpose of this survey is to collect baseline data for this mapping exercise, which will be provided to the National Forum.

DEFINITIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support and services that are exclusively for young people transitioning from out of home care (OOHC), excluding universal services provided on a population basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>Young people who are in, or have been in, OOHC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Out of Home Care</td>
<td>Alternative accommodation for children and young people who are unable to live with their parents. In most cases, children in OOHC are also on a care and protection order. OOHC includes foster care, relative or kinship care, residential care, family group homes, and independent living. Definition of OOHC from the Department of Social Services and the AIHW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Care Support</td>
<td>Support for young people who have left OOHC and are transitioning to adulthood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>This survey considers policy and legislation around the transition of young people from OOHC to adulthood. Policy for the purposes of this survey may include formal, written organisational policies, practice guides, and procedure documents.</td>
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</table>


Survey questions

Definitions and Baseline Information

1. If your jurisdiction defines OOHC differently to the definition given above, please provide your definition.

2. If your jurisdiction defines ‘policy’ differently to the definition given above, please provide your definition.

3. At what age do young people transition from OOHC in your jurisdiction? These questions refer to 18 as the age when a young person transitions from out of home care to adulthood. If the transition age is different for your jurisdiction please use that when answering the questions.

4. How many young people in OOHC in your jurisdiction turned 18 in 2014–15?

5. What are the stated purpose of transition policies in your jurisdiction?

Support

6. Who in your jurisdiction is responsible for providing support for young people to transition from OOHC to adulthood? E.g. government, community sector.

7. At what age does your jurisdiction commence pre-transition support for young people? (support provided in the lead up to the transition from OOHC to adulthood)

8. What pre-transition support is provided for young people? E.g. young people may be assisted by a caseworker from age 16 to develop a transition plan.

9. What post-care support is provided for young people? (support provided for young people over the age of 18 who are transitioning from OOHC) Financial Support (e.g. assistance purchasing education items): Social support (e.g. case work, employment assistance): Other:

10. When do these supports end? E.g. when the young person turns 21, when they have full-time employment.

11. Is any support offered to carers after a young person turn 18? E.g. in some circumstances payments being extended until the young person is 21.

12. What support is provided for young people wishing to access their personal information after they have left OOHC?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support

13. Are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives involved in the design and implementation of pre-transition and post-care support in your jurisdiction?
Survey questions

14 Do post-care supports in your jurisdiction provide services that specifically assist or enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to remain in their own family and community after their transition from care?

15 Do post-care supports in your jurisdiction provide services designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people transitioning from care?

Policies and Legislation

16 Thinking about the answers you have given to questions 6–15, is this required by or written in policy, legislation or elsewhere?

Changes and Updates

17 If any of the policies or legislation around transitioning young people from out of home care to adulthood have changed since The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020 was introduced in 2009, please outline below.

18 If responsibility for delivering post-care services and support has changed since 2009, please outline below.
E.g. if some aspects of post-care support have been transitioned from government to community sector agencies.

19 Are there any planned changes to policy or legislation in this area which are yet to be implemented?

20 What were the key drivers for the changes listed above?
E.g. responses to reviews or royal commissions, or the development of strategic pieces of work such as the ACT OOHC strategy

21 What has been the impact of these changes?

Challenges

22 What are the challenges specific to your jurisdiction that impact post-care support?
E.g. delivering transition services in remote and rural areas, breaking the cycle between OOHC and the justice system, low employment opportunities.

23 What is being done in your jurisdiction around these challenges?

24 Are there any specific demographic factors to consider that might impact post-care support in your jurisdiction?

Data

25 Has your jurisdiction adopted any specifically constructed outcome measures to monitor and evaluate post-care support?

26 What are the measures?
Please attach your outcomes framework if possible.

27 How is your department tracking with their commitment to support young people transitioning from OOHC to adulthood?

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full title/term</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
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<td>ACCO</td>
<td>Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisation</td>
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<td>AIFS</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Families Studies</td>
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<td>AIHW</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</td>
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<td>ATICPP</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle</td>
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<td>FACS</td>
<td>New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services</td>
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<td>NDIS</td>
<td>National Disability Insurance Scheme</td>
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<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>NT</td>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
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<td>QLD</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
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<td>RASA</td>
<td>Relationships Australia South Australia</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
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<td>TAS</td>
<td>Tasmania</td>
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<td>TIA</td>
<td>Towards Independent Adulthood trial</td>
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<td>TILA</td>
<td>Transition to Independent Living Allowance</td>
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<td>VIC</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<td>WA</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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