



Beyond the extended care safety net: Which young people will need additional support between 18 & 21?

Address to Home Stretch Symposium 2023

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Acknowledgement of Country

Monash University recognises that its Australian campuses are located on the unceded lands of the people of the Kulin Nations, and pays its respects to their Elders, past and present.

From laggard to global leader

- Since 2017, Australia has moved from an international laggard to a recognized leader in global leaving care policy and practice as acknowledged by the inaugural June 2022 OECD report.
- Yet, further work is required to broadly address three major areas: eligibility, adequacy, and national inconsistency.

Policy Challenges

- **Challenge one: young people leaving residential group home care**

Can't remain in existing group homes, and to date no Staying Close scheme established in Australia.

- **Challenge two: payment adequacy**

Victoria provides the most generous housing allowance followed by WA and then NSW. The Commonwealth needs to benchmark a uniform extended care payment.

- **Challenge three: housing stock**

Care leavers need to be prioritized as the key target group for social housing given that all jurisdictions have adopted a legal and ethical corporate parenting responsibility to enhance their life chances.

- **Challenge four: costing of real needs**

- We need an independent evaluation of the existing extended care models to ensure that the real needs of care leavers including particularly housing are fully recognized and costed.

Policy challenges continued

Challenge five: intersectional inequalities

We know that all care leavers experience life-long intersectional inequalities in areas such as health, housing, education and employment compared to their non-care peers. But some sub-groups of care leavers experience additional disadvantage and may require longer and specialized forms of assistance.

They include:

- A) young parents;
- B) Those with a disability or poor mental health;
- C) Those leaving youth justice custody
- D) Those living in remote communities
- E) Those leaving residential care as already noted
- F) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who may lack connection with their culture and identity

Additionally, there is an overwhelming argument that all extended care programs should be extended till at least **22 years** so that care leavers if necessary can then access the adult rate of JobSeeker Allowance which is \$693 a fortnight compared to the \$562 a fortnight Youth Allowance paid to those under 22 years of age.

Further Reading

Philip Mendes, Jenna Bollinger and Catherine Flynn (2022) “Young people transitioning from residential out-of-home care in Australia: The case for extended care”, Residential Treatment for Children & Youth, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0886571X.2022.2139330>.

Philip Mendes (2022) “The case for a national extended care framework to lift the outcomes for care leavers”, Australian Social Work, 75(1), 122-132, DOI: 10.1080/0312407X.2021.1910323.

Philip Mendes, Rachel Standfield, Bernadette Saunders, Samone McCurdy, Jacinta Walsh, Lena Turnbull and Emily Armstrong (2020) Indigenous care leavers in Australia: A national scoping study. Monash University, Melbourne, <https://apo.org.au/node/307306>.

Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow (2016) Young people transitioning from out-of-home care: International Research, Policy and Practice. Palgrave Macmillan. London.