

# Stable Housing Options for Young People Leaving Care: Environmental Scan

Developed for Home Stretch

June 2023



# Acknowledgement of Country

**KPMG acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and future as the Traditional Custodians of the land, water and skies of where we work.**

At KPMG, our future is one where all Australians are united by a shared, honest, and complete understanding of our past, present, and future. We are committed to making this future a reality. Our story celebrates and acknowledges that the cultures, histories, rights, and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are heard, understood, respected, and celebrated.

Australia's First Peoples continue to hold distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economical relationships with their land, water and skies. We take our obligations to the land and environments in which we operate seriously.

We look forward to making our contribution towards a new future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples so that they can chart a strong future for themselves, their families and communities. We believe we can achieve much more together than we can apart.



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# Introduction and context

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a significant stage of the life cycle in developmental, emotional and social terms. Many young people leaving out-of-home care (OOHC) face the transition to adulthood without family support and other barriers such as poor mental health, the ongoing impacts of trauma, intellectual and physical disabilities, and developmental delays. They are further disadvantaged through structural impediments and economic and social policy factors, such as the lack of affordable or appropriate housing and high unemployment<sup>1</sup>.

Studies in Australia and overseas have demonstrated that young care leavers experience significantly poorer outcomes than their peers across a number of areas. They are:

- more likely to be homeless;
- less likely to complete school beyond Year 10 or participate in further education;
- likely to be unemployed;
- more likely to experience poor health outcomes, including mental health;
- more likely to suffer harm associated with alcohol and other drug use; and
- more likely to be involved with the justice system<sup>2</sup>.

As well as the personal cost to these young people, these outcomes represent significant costs to the community when challenges become entrenched and people call on the health and social care services and income support services for ongoing support. Preventative and earlier intervention strategies are therefore crucial<sup>2</sup>. Preparing for a successful transition from out of home care is key to achieving positive outcomes for these young people, and having a safe and stable home, in line with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, is vital to achieve this.

Although all jurisdictions have legislation that outlines support needs to be provided to young people leaving care, it is less clear on what this support entails. More recently the Home Stretch campaign has led to all jurisdictions in Australia extending care to 21 years. All young people in home based care (foster and kinship care placements) will now have the option to remain with their carers until they are 21 and most jurisdictions are providing allowances for young people leaving residential care, however there is more work to be done to ensure that every young person leaving care guaranteed accommodation and supports until 21.

## Factors influencing the paper:

The housing, leaving care and extended care space in Australia is evolving. New initiatives and announcements are being made regularly, with governments looking for ways to respond to the complex policy areas of housing and young people leaving care. A number of initiatives are being driven through state government areas that respond to child protection and housing, as well as the Commonwealth, however these are not always coordinated, broadly available or clear. This can create challenges in navigating the system for staff working with young people and young people themselves.

Interviews were held with representatives in each Australian jurisdiction working in the leaving care space to understand the current housing options available to young people leaving OOHC to complete this scan. These interviews were supported by desktop research. The information presented in this paper represents our best endeavours to capture existing stable housing options. We recognise, however, that this may not include all options available.

Options outlined in this paper **do not include social (public and community) housing options which are available across every state**. It was noted through consultation that whilst these options are available, the waitlist are long and therefore they are not always accessible.

We have also **not included the stable housing option of extended care placements for young people in foster and kinship care in this scan**. We note that all jurisdictions, through the Home Stretch campaign, have confirmed they will extend care placements for those young people and carers who want to remain in their foster and kinship placements.

# A focus on extended care supports

Since the inception of the Home Stretch campaign, there has been a focus on extended supports for young people leaving care. Extended care is when the provision of care can be extended to any young person needing or seeking this, until 21 years. This is being achieved in two main ways:

1. Young people who are in foster, permanent or kinship care remain with their carer/s, who continue to receive a reimbursement.
2. Young people in residential care, or young people who do not want to or cannot remain with their carer/s are housed in stable accommodation with appropriate supports to enable this.

All Australian jurisdictions have in principle agreed to extended care supports. These are different to support programs for care leavers which, although these are offered across states and territories, are not the focus of this report. Support programs offer support through different elements such as case management, development of life skills and access to education and employment.

## Purpose of this paper

This paper aims to provide an environmental scan of current stable housing options for young people leaving residential care and those young people who do not, for whatever reason, remain in their foster or kinship placement.

The paper:

- Outlines stable housing options (12 months +) identified through this scan available across Australia (both specific for those leaving care and offered as part of broader youth homelessness programs)
- Gives an overview of identified supports which include financial assistance to obtain stable housing

This paper does not include commentary on Australian jurisdictions approaches to extending care for young people who remain in their foster, kinship or permanent care placement.

## Structure of this paper

This paper documents the findings of the environment scan. It provides stable housing insights for extended care for young people in residential care, or young people who do not remain with their carer/s from 18-21. The report provides an overview of:

- Programs that provide extended care support with housing stock attached to the program specific for young people leaving care
- Programs that support extended care through facilitating access to housing through financial support, but do not include housing stock, specific for young people leaving care
- Programs delivered as part of the broader youth homelessness response that include housing stock and have young people leaving residential care as an identified population to support.

For the purpose of this paper we have defined 'stable' as 12 months or more. We recognise that 12 months is insufficient to provide ongoing stability for many, if not all, of this cohort however this definition has allowed us to draw in more examples.

Broader leaving care supports, such as case management and transition support, are not included as part of this scan.

# Extended care housing options

Currently across all Australian jurisdictions, there are limited stable and longer term housing options specific for young people leaving care aged 18-21 where housing stock is included in the program for the exclusive use of the program participants. There are also limited options which respond to young people who are not in a position to engage in education and employment, or who have more complex needs.

The below table outlines the extended care options specific for young people leaving care which include housing stock identified as part of this scan.

It should be noted that these options do not meet the demand needs across any jurisdictions in Australia.

State	Program	Eligibility	Details	Gaps
NSW	<a href="#">Foyer Central</a>	Young people leaving care who are studying, in training or employment Who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	Up to two years	Must be engaged in education or employment Located in Sydney
NSW	<a href="#">Premier's Youth Initiative</a>	All young people in delivery locations aged between 16 years and 9 months and 17 years and 6 months are screened for eligibility. Available in Hunter Central Coast, Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW, Mid North Coast and Northern NSW, Nepean Blue Mountains, New England, South West Sydney and Western NSW.	Head leased accommodation up to two years where young people can take over lease at the end if appropriate.  Transitional support provided for up to three years.	Not available statewide
VIC	<a href="#">Village 21</a>	Young people age 18 to 21 leaving OOHC engaged in education and/or employment.	Up to three years <i>There is currently another Village 21 site being built in Frankston for Aboriginal young people.</i>	Only 6 spots available. Located in Preston
VIC	<a href="#">COMPASS Leaving Care</a> (Pilot Program)	Age 16.5 to 18.5 years who are living in or have recently left OOHC in the metropolitan west, north east or greater Bendigo regions	Up to two years	No further intake Ends in October 2023
VIC	<a href="#">Leaving Care Housing and Support Initiative</a>	Statewide program with 246 beds. Young person needs to be engaged in Better Futures	Referrals are made through Better Futures programs. For 2 years	There is only 246 beds.
VIC	<a href="#">Young People Continuing Care Program</a>	Aged 17-21, on a child protection order, homeless or at risk of homelessness, eligible for or in receipt of income, willing to participate and engage	For young people leaving care Includes access to transitional housing 28 Head Leasing targets 69 Rental packages	Variable timeframe from 12 months to 2 years. Not statewide
TAS	<a href="#">Moving On</a>	15 years and over who are leaving care Are attending school or have employment and have a level of personal safety knowledge	Units are allocated to the young person until they are ready to move on into independence, usually 6 months to 3 years. Young people can move into a role model unit if suitable for a leadership role.	Limited number of units

# Extended care options without housing stock

Some jurisdictions around Australia have support options which don't include housing stock but facilitate access to longer term housing through financial payments. This section of the report concentrates on programs that support the principles of extended care – that is, they provide financial assistance and access to housing, however do not incorporate identified housing stock. Programs that just support access to housing and do not include financial support are not included.

Options specific for young people leaving care				
State	Program	Eligibility	Details	Gaps
SA	<a href="#">Next Steps Pilot Program</a>	Live in residential care in metropolitan Adelaide, and have complex needs and are at risk of homelessness.	Support for young people with complex needs leaving out of home care up to the age of 21 Support to obtain accommodation and build life skills	For young people with complex needs only No housing stock attached to program Limited number of spots - 20
VIC	<a href="#">Home Stretch</a>	Home Stretch is available to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people on a family reunification order, a care by secretary order or a long-term care order leaving care services from 16 years of age.</li> <li>Young people subject to permanent care orders and residing with their carers immediately prior to their 18th birthday.</li> </ul>	Provides support to transition to adulthood until 21 years of age. Provides young people up to \$16,000 per year which can be used to support access to housing.	No housing stock attached to support
NSW	<a href="#">Your Choice, Your Future package</a>	<b>Independent Living Allowance</b> – up to 21 and moving from their carers home or residential care to independent living.	Includes \$250 per fortnight for a young person to support with living costs	No physical housing option provided, however there are examples of support to identify rental options
WA	<a href="#">Home Stretch Housing Allowance</a>	From 18 until they reach 21 and have been in care after the age of 15. Young person needs to turn 18 on or after 1 July 2022.	Support for young people leaving care at 18 until they turn 21. Includes financial assistance and support, one to one mentoring/coaching, and	As of April 2023, the program is available in metropolitan Perth, South West, Great Southern and the East and West Kimberley.
Broader options not specific for young people leaving care				
State	Program	Eligibility	Details	Gaps
NSW	<a href="#">Rent Choice Youth</a>	Young people 16-24 years who are motivated to work, study, complete training or obtain a job.	The program helps young people find a place to live, get approved for a lease and pay the rent for up to 3 years.	No physical housing stock included in program.



# Housing options not specific for leaving care

Outlined below are the stable housing options available to young people leaving OOHC delivered through broader youth homelessness programs.

State	Program	Eligibility	Details	Gaps
NSW	<a href="#">My Foundations Youth Housing</a>	Young people considered to have the desire, motivation and capacity to live independently that includes keeping safe, managing their wellbeing and engaged in a daily activity that includes education &/or employment.	Housing accommodation for young people Up to 5 years <b>Affordable Housing</b> – 2 years at 75% of the market rent <b>Transitional Housing Plus</b> – up to 5 years of supported housing with rent costs scaling up over time	Metro Sydney only
VIC	<a href="#">Foyer</a>	Young people 16 to 25 who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness Must be studying, in training or employment Age range differs at each location and ranges from 16 to 25	Twelve locations around VIC for up to two years 236 beds	Must be engaged in education and/or employment Not available across the state
TAS	<a href="#">Youth2Independence (Y2I)</a>	Young people age 16-24 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness Are willing and ready to engage in education, training and employment	Accommodation for up to two years Three facilities across Launceston, Devonport and Hobart Eveline House – Devonport Thyne House – Launceston Trinity Hill - Hobart	Not state-wide
WA	<a href="#">Foyer Oxford</a>	16 to 24 years old and have no stable, long-term place to stay Be motivated to connect with employment and training and have an independent income Be able to live independently	Young people can stay up to two years - 98 apartments Set rent for different apartments	Must be engaged in employment or education In one area of Perth
QLD	<a href="#">Youth foyers</a>	<b>All</b> – 16 to 25 <b>Logan</b> – single with no dependants, have an income, have independent living skills and low to medium support needs <b>Gold Coast</b> – willing to achieve education and employment goals <b>Townsville</b> – be in employment, education or training	3 locations – all with 40 units. Young people can stay as they need however average is 18 months. Pay 25% of their income as rent	Limited locations
QLD	<a href="#">Youth Housing and Reintegration Support (YHARS)</a> Housing Support Service	12 to 21 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including young people transitioning from care in Townsville, Mount Isa, Rockhampton, Hervey Bay, Toowoomba and South West Brisbane	Transitions young people into safe and affordable housing, assist them to sustain a tenancy and build life skills. The service has access to brokerage funding to support housing and independence goals.	Not state wide Limited physical housing stock attached to program.



# Opportunities related to housing

The housing options identified in this scan provide some clear insights to governments, policy makers and service providers across Australia. From the information gathered through our desktop review and qualitative interviews, across all jurisdictions **the current housing options available do not meet the need for young people leaving residential care**, with opportunities for all jurisdictions outlined below.



## **Ensuring a more complete spectrum of housing options from shorter term, to longer term in areas where young people want to live**

Stakeholders noted that there are increasing numbers of housing options, however there continue to be challenges across all jurisdictions with creating longer term stable options. Stakeholders noted that providing housing for a young person, that has the appropriate supports is often short to medium term, and sometimes not all young people are ready for completely independent living once their eligibility for these options lapses (often at 21 years). This creates stress for young people, who struggle to move into the private rental market. This is particularly the case in some of the more populous states, where young people are being shut out of the private market due to rising rental costs. Young people want to be close to their community and connections, and often the only options available and affordable are not in places they feel safe and secure to live.



## **Ensuring a more complete spectrum of housing options for diverse and complex needs**

The majority of housing options available for young people require engagement in employment and/or education. Young people with OOHC experiences often face compounding challenges that can make employment and education difficult. Eligibility criteria can therefore further marginalise these young people, and further entrench disadvantage. There is recognition that the National Disability Insurance Scheme provides options for some young people with diagnosed disability, however this is only a small proportion of this cohort. Housing options need to cater for a raft of needs, and include stepped options to mirror a young person's journey to independence.



## **Coordinating responses to ensure young people, and support services, can navigate the system seamlessly**

A number of different areas of government respond to the needs of young people leaving care. A number of jurisdictions have brought child protection and housing responses into the same department, creating better coordination across the broader support and housing functions responding to the needs of this cohort. However, there continues to be a depth of complexity within this policy area, with offerings from out of home care, youth homelessness and housing services that are not always integrated. Recognising the needs of particular cohorts through a coordinated response may support system navigation, enabling young people to better navigate their options, as well as the broader workforce to be able to direct and engage to ensure young people are getting what they need.



## **Embedding culturally responsive options supporting First Nations young people to be connected to their Culture, Community and Kin**

As noted above, a spectrum of responses is required to meet the diversity of need. Having a particular focus on the longer term housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, who are disproportionately represented in our system, is vital to support better outcomes overall. Stakeholders recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people often have different needs, preferring to be with their family on Country rather than in housing on their own. This is particularly relevant for Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia, where responses may need to consider broader supports to family for stable housing.



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