



Media Release

The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLC
Minister for Families and Children
Minister for Early Childhood Education
Minister for Youth Affairs



Tuesday, 25 September, 2018

HELPING VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE HOME STRETCH

The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring young people make a successful transition from state care to independent living by extending their supports up to the age of 21.

Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos today announced \$11.6 million over five years to roll out Home Stretch starting in the first half of 2019, which will give young people the option of remaining with their carer until the age of 21.

The program will arm young people with the tools they need to live on their own two feet, as well as extending care allowance support to foster and kinship carers.

In addition, specialised workers will provide tailored support to young people, helping them to get jobs and access education, as well training and life coaching to help young people set goals and aspirations for their future.

Carers will also be eligible to be reimbursed for the costs of caring for the young person. Young people leaving residential care will be eligible for support with housing costs.

Currently, young Victorians formally leave care at 18 years of age, although a range of further supports are available should they need them.

This investment means 250 more young care leavers will receive these supports as a matter of course.

Evidence suggests a more gradual and supported transition to independent living can lead to significantly improved outcomes for young people and lower costs to government in the longer term.

The Home Stretch trial builds on the investments already made by the Labor Government for young people leaving care, including over \$5 million per annum for the Springboard program which links them to employment and training, and \$2.3 million for the continuation of the Better Futures trial which provides

tailored support to young people to help them transition from care to independence.

The \$14.2 million COMPASS initiative will also support a further 200 young people leaving care.

The Labor Government also invests more than \$6 million a year in services for care leavers, including post care support, referral and information services, brokerage, mentoring and specific services for Aboriginal young people leaving care.

Home Stretch aligns with the Labor Government's *Roadmap for Reform*, which aims to shift the children and family services system from crisis response to early intervention and prevention and is backed by a further \$858.6 million through this year's Budget.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos

"For young people who may have spent their whole lives in care, leaving doesn't come easy."

"We know we can do more to support them so that they're empowered and ready to take that step – and implementing Home Stretch will do just that."

"Every dollar we spend on supporting young people as they prepare to leave care, we get repaid in spades – they will do better and contribute more to our community."

Media contact: Crys Ja 0434 367 449
crys.ja@minstaff.vic.gov.au