



*Let's finish  
what we started*

## Media Release

**Embargoed until 12am Wednesday 24 October 2018**

### **Extending State care to 21 adds up morally and financially: Deloitte report**

The NSW Home Stretch Campaign is calling on the State Government to improve the lives of thousands of young people in Out-of-Home Care, and save millions of dollars.

New research, launched today (Wednesday 24 October), confirms that extending the leaving age of care to 21 will double the educational engagement, halve homelessness, and considerably reduce mental illness, drug dependence and hospitalisation for some care leavers.

The Deloitte Access Economics report also reveals that the NSW Government will more than triple their return on investment for every dollar spent on keeping young people in care until they are 21, saving NSW taxpayers \$222 million over the next 10 years.

“Evidence of poor outcomes experienced when someone leaves care at 18 has been mounting for decades,” says Jeremy Halcrow, Chair of the NSW Home Stretch Campaign and CEO of Anglicare NSW South, West and ACT.

“A lack of appropriate supports in the crucial post-care years is leading young care leavers to experience high rates of homelessness, financial hardship and contact with the justice system. The Deloitte study shows real improvement in the lives of care leavers simply by extending the leaving age of care by three years.

“The financial benefits for the Government is obvious, but the positive impact these reforms would have on the lives of many individual care leavers is enormous.”

In NSW, there were 17,879 children in Out-of-Home Care as at 30 June 2017. About 865 of them were 17 years old. They come from backgrounds of abuse, trauma and family breakdown. Most are in foster care, kinship care or under guardianship. A small percentage are in residential State care that currently ends at 18 years of age. The development of a leaving care plan commences at age 15, which is too soon for many young people.

“The NSW Home Stretch Campaign supports the State Government’s permanency reforms and their attempts to reduce the number of young people who remain in the care system for extended periods. However, there is a significant number of teenagers who will continue in State care until they are 18 and who will need to be fully supported to become active members of our community,” Mr Halcrow states.

The National Chair of the Home Stretch Campaign, Mr Paul McDonald adds that Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia have already announced they would extend Out-of-Home Care to 21 after evidence from the UK, US and New Zealand revealed that it was an economic and social “no-brainer”.

The NSW Home Stretch Campaign is being funded and supported by Out-of-Home Care providers and advocacy groups Anglicare, Create, Uniting, Barnardos, Mackillop Family Services, Marymead, the Samaritans Foundation and Stepping Stone House.

[END]

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The NSW Home Stretch Campaign Committee is arguing that all Care Leavers must be provided access to extended care arrangements until they are 21 years old. The proposed reform comprises three key strategies:

- Young people in care, in consultation with their foster parents, provided option to voluntarily remain in their care until age 21.
- A personal case worker/mentor to help link them with education, training and job opportunities and to support their health and well-being.
- Safe, secure and supported independent living for young people leaving care, especially those exiting residential care, who cannot or choose not to take the voluntary extension of foster care supports

## **IMPACT OF EXTENDING CARE TO AGE 21**

- Homelessness halved from 39% to 19.5%;
- Rate of teen pregnancy reduced from 16.6% to 10.2%;
- Educational engagement increased from 7.0% to 16.3%, for non-parents;
- Hospitalisation rates reduced from 29.2% to 19.2%.
- Rate of mental illness reduced from 54.4% to 30.1%;
- Rate of smoking reduced from 56.8% to 24.9%;
- Interaction with the criminal justice system reduced from 16.3% to 10.4%;

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

**\$2.10 SAVINGS FOR EVERY \$1 SPENT**

**\$3.40 RETURN FOR EVERY \$ WHEN WELLBEING COSTS COUNTED**

**Source : Deloitte Access Economics, Extending Care to 21 in NSW, 2018**