



Extend Care +18

*We ask Victoria to extend care **from 18 until the age of 21** for young people in care services in this state.*

Our state care system cuts off young people when they turn 18; our foster carers do not.

Many foster carers continue to provide a loving home and support to their young people as they transition into adulthood. They do this using their own limited resources, without any assistance from the government.

The Foster Care Association endorses the call of the Home Stretch Campaign¹, to provide an option to stay in care until 21 years, much like what is happening in any other family setting in Australia.

The data shows that too many care leavers experience poor outcomes when they're evicted from the care system at just 18 years. Without support, many become homeless, involved with the criminal justice system, unemployed or a new parent within the first 12 months alone. Findings from a 2009 survey conducted by the [CREATE foundation](#) on care leavers (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2010) demonstrated that:

- 35% were homeless in the first year of leaving care;
- 46% of boys were involved in the juvenile justice system;
- 29% were unemployed;

Furthermore, a study by the Care Leavers Australia Network (2008) reported that:

- 41% were pregnant during their adolescence;
- 43% – 65% of care leavers have poor mental health outcomes (including depression, Anxiety, PTSD, panic attacks and sleep disorders).

We believe that giving young people in state care the extended care option will provide them with the opportunities afforded to so many other young Australians; study, work, stable housing, and an established support network.

Foster carers are under financial strain, spending their own savings to support their young people into the next phase of their lives. Carers shouldn't have to rely on their own budgets and resources to assist these young people into adulthood.

FCAV supports the Home Stretch push for legislative reform to ensure no young person in foster care is left behind. Furthermore, the Monash University's Department of Econometrics and Business Statistics reported that it cost the state of Victoria \$332 million per year by not extending care in 2006.

Deloitte Access Economics cost and benefit analysis in 2016 found that if we extended care to 21 years in Victoria the government and community would get on average a \$2 return for every dollar invested².

¹ <http://thehomestretch.org.au/>

² http://thehomestretch.org.au/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Raising-Our-Children_Guiding-Young-Victorians-in-Care-into-Adulthood.pdf

