



4.10.2012

The Honourable Mr Tim Carmody,

Queensland Youth Services participated in the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry in Townsville.

Please accept this submission recommending The Transition to Independence from out of home care to be outsourced to a local community organisation. After examining the strengths and limitations of the preparation for leaving care, Queensland Youth Services have detailed a proposed program which highlights a budget for 12 months. It is our recommendation that it would be a 3 year pilot program with a review at the end of the second year of implementation to determine the effectiveness.

Looking forward to the final recommendations,

Kind Regards

Lisa Kerr



Transition to Independence Program

Prepared by
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Townsville Youth Housing and Reintegration Service
(YHARS) Program
AND
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3rd October 2012



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TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE FROM OUT OF HOME CARE

In response to the Commissioners Child Protection Inquiry session held in Townsville on the 24th and 25th of September please find attached a proposal from Queensland Youth Services (QYS), regarding the Transition to Independence from Out of Home Care.

Objective:

To improve the transition to independence from out of home care, through the establishment of the Transition to Independence Program.

Background

The investment of Government and Non Government sector into the Child Protection System is significant, yet the process of young people transitioning to independence is fragmented. Young people are still experiencing negative outcomes at higher rates than their peers. For example they are more likely to be under educated, unemployed, impacted by teenage pregnancy, involved in the justice system, homeless, passive welfare dependent, affected by mental health, and substance users.

The CREATE report card (McDowell 2009) findings indicated that although the child protection system had legislation and policies in place to support the identified needs of young people, the young people were not receiving the assistance they required. Case plans developed by child safety appeared to address the supports needed; however in practice it was inadequate. This can be attributed to the Child Safety Officer (CSO) having to prioritise their case loads (too many per CSO) and are often required to respond to crisis interventions. There are approximately 150 young people between the ages of 15 to 18 transitioning from care in the Townsville Region. Reports indicate that CSO have only completed 60% to 70% of the case plans

Proposal

The purpose of this submission is to recommend to the Queensland Government a proposal to outsource the implementation and monitoring of case plans via a Transition to Independence Program to QYS in Townsville. QYS sees this as an opportunity to drive improvements in the transition phase of child protection and to assist in the Department to unify its approach to the transition to independence through a systematic process of collaboration with NGO's.

Strategic Direction

"Transitioning to Independence is a priority identified in the National Frameworks implementation Plan 2009-2012"

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- Increasing support through Non Government organisations to assist young people leaving care to better establish their independence; and
- Providing better support for young people as they leave care through Government initiatives.

(Commonwealth Of Australia 2009b:18)

Recommended Service Standards

- A “Transition to Independence Framework” be developed in collaboration with relevant Government and Non Government organisations. Identifying roles and responsibilities of CSO’s and the Case Managers from NGO organisations.
- Establishment of a specialist team (a skilled workforce) who would be responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring case plans. This element of the Child Protection System to be outsourced to local community organisation. CSO’s would implement and monitor the legislative responsibilities.
- Establishment of effective communication systems between the Department and Outsourced organisation (NGO) regarding the release and maintenance of all care leavers records, including current contact details and status.
- Case Mangers regard the case plan as a living document, conducting comprehensive reviews of the young person’s progress; identifying support needs in conjunction with the young person, and carers and modifying existing plans and proposals.
- Young person has consistent and regular contact with their case manager (include benchmark for frequency of reviews)
- All 15 year old persons who are in the child protection system have a case plan for leaving care.
- The transition period to be over 6 years (15 – 21yrs). **Townsville Youth Housing and Reintegration Service Model and After Care Service and brokerage funding** *auspiced by Qld Youth Services is one example of models dealing with the essential layers of support needed by those transitioning from care.*

The Outsourced activities for all care leavers would include:

- The development of case plans for all 15 year olds leaving care from the child protection system.
- Conduct interviews with young person, carers and support people.
- Mentor and support the young person to play an active role in the case plan preparation process
- Provide access to independent living skills training, supports to be tailored to reflect individual needs, additional support for those with behavioural and substance misuse issues
- Develop a detailed leaving care plan that includes well defined accommodation arrangements and an ongoing process of assessment and monitoring

CSO activities

- Monitoring and implementing all legislative responsibilities under child protection
- Ensuing the safe placement of all young people in care.
- Investigating concerns around child protection.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- All 15 year old persons who are transitioning from care have a flexible and meaningful case plan.

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- All young people transitioning into independence from home care have a consistent point of contact.
- The transition to independence results in youth obtaining life skills to maintain tenancy agreements.
- Increase number of young person's exiting care obtaining a senior certificate of education.
- Increase number of young person's exiting care obtaining a certificate II or higher qualification.
- Increase number of young person's exiting care who obtain part-time or full-time employment.
- Reduction in the number of young person exiting care transitioning into the justice system.

Cost Benefit Analysis

The impact of young person's having an unsuccessful transition to independence is significant. If the system can effectively help them to transition to self-efficiency and to become a productive member of our society then the long term burden on Government resources is reduced.

Impact of an unsuccessful transition to independence	Impact on government resources	Estimated Costs
Young person disengages from school at age 15.	Lower education outcomes, reduces opportunities for meaningful employment outcomes. And increases the risk of long term unemployment.	Approx 150 (15 year olds exiting care in the Townsville regions) x \$402.70 x 26 fortnights. \$1 567 800 per year.
Increase in juvenile crime activity. In Townsville four youth a week are arrested for stealing or for attempting to steal cars.	Juvenile crime, increases the strain on Police resources (investigation, interviewing, arrest procedures and court hearings)	Estimate 5% of those exiting care may be involved in juvenile crime. Costs of Police resources and courts. 8 x \$110 per hour X 36 hours \$31 680
Young girls exiting care have a higher rate of teenage pregnancy than their peers.	Hospital resources, post natal assistance	Estimate 10% of those existing care. (15) Hospital care at \$3000 per night x 2 nights \$90 000
Youth who have low educational outcomes, and unacceptable social behaviours are at a higher risk of becoming substance users (aerosol sprays, drugs, etc)	Increase in emergency calls, and ongoing mental health problems and would have repeated call outs	Estimate 5% of those exiting care with a minimum of 4 occasions. 8 x \$3000 x 4 \$96 000
CSO in balance of time allocations to functions. High level of crisis management. Loss of productivity and turn- around time for processing new cases.		?
Net First year savings		\$1 785 480

Conclusion:

Not acting on the provision of initial support for care leavers will result in significant ongoing costs to the Government and the community.

McDowell 2008, observed that making programs available at the time of transition “would minimise the need for later interventions and would result in considerable economic savings and generate better outcomes for young people”. These programs should be tailored to ensure that the young person has the capacity to sustain a meaningful and independent lifestyle.

Long term, sustainable services tend to be community based and locally driven. The responses to vulnerable young people need to be developed locally and to be tailored to meet the needs of young people. Long term support has been highlighted in National and International literature as a key element in supporting vulnerable young people. (Lemmon 2008). Lemmon reports that ‘achieved adulthood’ is due to multi-layered, long term support provided until the young person reaches their early to mid 20’s. Therefore the recommendation is to continue monitoring the case plan of those exiting care until age 21. The program would progressively move from high support to minimal support, nurturing good decision making and self-empowerment.

QYS Capacity

Queensland Youth Services are able to develop and implement a well planned, strategically driven Transition to Independence Program within the Townsville Region. The principles underpinning the service would be:

- A systematic coordination of services
- Involvement of services
- Collaboration and cooperation between Government and Non Government organisations
- Voluntary partnerships across services in Townsville
- Comprehensive protocols for data collection to inform service delivery and practice
- Identification of preferred outcomes for young people based on research
- Inclusive participation, (but not prescriptive) of young people, carers, Child Safety officers and relevant people in the planning and decision making
- The investment of a skilled workforce and development and retention of staff

Queensland Youth Services have successfully implemented the Youth Housing and Reintegration services (YHARS) Program for the past two years. Other programs administered by QYS are the, Youth Support Coordinators in the Schools, and the Young Parents Program, and Reconnect (early intervention). QYS has sound financial management practices, and skilled staff. For a further analysis of our capacity you can view our annual report on our website www.qys.org.au

Thank you for the opportunity to present this proposal. Please make contact with me if you have any further questions or require further information.

Kind Regards

Lisa Kerr
Coordinator
Townsville Youth Housing and Reintegration Services

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PROPOSED PROGRAM BUDGET (12 MONTHS)

Salaries		\$361 305
x 5 Case Managers <i>(based on approximately 30 cases each)</i>		
Brokerage funds		\$ 75 000
\$500 x 150 participants <i>(training, education expenses, rental bonds)</i>		
Lease of Vehicles		\$ 15 000
x 2 <i>(car pool for 5 staff to access)</i>		
Travel & Incidentals		\$ 25 000
<i>(regional visits - includes Palm Island, Mt Isa)</i>		
Operational Costs		\$109 000
<i>(insurance, electricity, stationary, IT, workers comp Superannuation etc)</i>		
Management Fee	15%	\$ 87 795

<i>Total cost of Program</i>		\$673 100
<i>Total cost per Participant</i>		\$4 488

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Townsville Youth Housing and Re Integration Service

Youth housing and Re Integration Service is the Government's initiative to respond to the needs of young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. YHARS will target 12-21years olds who:

- Are transitioning from care from the Department of Child Safety
- Transitioning to the community after sentence or remand in a Youth detention Centre
- Have recently exited from care after being subject to statutory interventions
- Been sleeping rough or living in unstable or temporary arrangements
- Disengaged from the Child Protection Centre and are self placing

The YHARS program is funded by the Department of Communities. The goals of the service are to assist young people transition to greater stability and independence through flexible service delivery. TYHARS focuses on empowering young people through casework and intensive support.

Assistance provided includes:

- Outreach service
- Supporting young people to apply for and access transitional accommodation
- Reconnecting young people with family/carers where appropriate
- Engaging young people in education, employment and training
- Supporting young people to maintain their tenancies

- **live independently and successfully** **Supporting young people to**
- **services, support and long term housing** **Linking young people into**

For more information about the TYHARS service please call the team. The contacts: Townsville – 07 47234213

- **referral form www.qldyouthservices.org.au** **Visit the website to obtain a**

After Care Service for young people exiting care

The After Care Service will assist young people aged 18 to 20 years who have left the care of Child Safety Services and who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The service provides limited case management support and funding to help young people to establish and maintain independent accommodation.

The service is a new initiative of the Queensland Government Implementation Plan for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

Referrals

Referrals to the After Care Service can be facilitated by:

- Child Safety Services
- Youth Justice Services
- Youth Detention Centres
- Housing Service Centres
- Centrelink and other government and non-government organisations.

A young person can also self refer to the service.

With the consent of the young person, the following information is required for a referral to the After Care Service:

- the young person's full name, date of birth, address and phone number
- relevant details about the young person's case management plan
- details of the Child Safety Service Centre that managed the young person's child protection order and consent to speak with this centre to verify information provided
- name and contact details of the person from the referring agency.

The Youth Housing and Reintegration Service (YHARS) will undertake an initial screening process to ensure the young person meets the referral criteria. YHARS then decides whether to accept the referral and provide confirmation to the referring agency and young person within two business days.

How the After Care Service works

The After Care Service is part of the Youth Housing and Reintegration Service in Townsville, Rockhampton, Inala, Toowoomba and Hervey Bay/Maryborough.

YHARS assists young people aged 12 to 20 years who are experiencing or are at-risk of homelessness by providing support and access to a range of accommodation options. After Care Service funds of up to \$3,500 per individual are available to support eligible young people across the state.

YHARS and the After Care Service can also assist young people to access education, training and employment and specialist services, including mental health services. Young people can also receive goods and services to establish and maintain tenancies, including household goods and furniture, connection to utilities and short-term contributions to rent.

The funding is administered by the following YHARS service providers:

- Inala Keys Inc in Brisbane
- Australian Red Cross Society in Toowoomba
- Capricornia Training Company in Rockhampton
- Queensland Youth Services in Townsville.

When a young person does not live close to one of these services, YHARS will negotiate with an appropriate local service to provide support to the young person.

Contact details

Toowoomba

Australian Red Cross Society
Phone: 4614 1600

Townsville

Queensland Youth Services
Phone: 4723 4213

Rockhampton

Capricornia Training Company
Phone: 4922 2008

Inala

Inala Keys
Phone: 3372 3410

Hervey Bay/Maryborough

Australian Red Cross Society
Phone: To be advised

More information

For more information about the **After Care Service**, please contact the Department of Communities' Office for Youth on 1300 555 954 or visit

www.communityservices.qld.gov.au/youth/support-services/