

## Child Protection and Out of Home Care

There are multiple reasons why a child or young person may be placed into out of home care. Young people in out of home care may be considered one of the most vulnerable cohorts of young people in Tasmania as many of them have experienced abuse or neglect resulting in them being removed from family. Indeed there are cases in which children and young people who are placed into out of home care thrive; growing up with safe and secure housing, food, getting involved in education or employment and being part of a stable home environment. However, young people in care are at a higher risk of experiencing poor education, poor health and developmental outcomes, with Aboriginal young people being considered much more likely to be placed into out of home care than any other cohort of young people. It is vital that young people in out of home care are individually supported and aided in their transition and most importantly, that they are involved and consulted with about decisions affecting them.

Being placed into out of home care can be a distressing time for a young person; this can be made increasingly difficult if there are feelings of isolation and disempowerment for the young person. The issues of child protection and out of home care are important to address as the numbers of young people in out of home care continue to increase. As of 30 June 2012 there were 1009 young people in Tasmania living in out of home care and the number of children and young people in care in Tasmania has gradually risen over the past five years.

Young people leaving out of home care may be confronted with many challenges. Case plans for leaving care are mandatory in every state and territory. The National Standards for out of home care and policy within the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services make it clear that all young people aged 15 and above should have a case plan; however, as of June 2012 only 20% of 15-18 year olds leaving care had plans. Young people leaving care are often not as involved with a leaving care plan as they should be and many are not aware such plans exist, meaning that many did not have any input into their own leaving care plan. It can be challenging for young people to remain engaged in education, training and employment after leaving care. As a result, young people who have



exited care have higher rates of homelessness, unemployment and increased involvement with the criminal justice system. Collaborative partnerships across governments and service providers are needed to ensure the rights of children and young people in child protection and out of home care are met.

#### *YNOT is committed to:*

- Ensuring that young people in care have the same opportunities and resources available to them as other young people may have.
- Ensuring that young people have the opportunity to develop their own identity, regardless of care and family situations.
- Advocating for young people to have increased input into the decision making processes that are impacting upon on.
- Ensuring that children and young people in state care are monitored so their individual needs can be accommodated and supported.
- Advocating for increased funding to be allocated for the employment and training of addition child protection workers.

#### *Future Vision*

A Tasmania where individual needs of children and young people in out of home care are met through evaluation, assessment, monitoring and additional support systems. Young people will be at the centre of the decision making process in regards to their lives in out of home care as the empowerment of young people should be a priority for the Tasmanian youth sector.

#### *References*

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