

TALKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Outcomes of conversations with young people about the
National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children



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The image on the front cover shows two young people who participated in the consultations, Tash and Lily. The image is printed with the informed consent of both people.

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BACKGROUND

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (the National Framework) was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in April 2009. The National Framework is described as:

An ambitious, long-term approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children and aims to deliver a substantial and sustained reduction in levels of child abuse and neglect over time.

The National Framework outlines six supporting outcomes and provides details about how each of these outcomes will be achieved.

The six supporting outcomes are:

- Children live in safe and supportive families and communities.
- Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early.
- Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed
- Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing.
- Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities.
- Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support.

The National Framework represents the highest level of collaboration between Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments and non-government organisations, through the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children, to ensure Australia's children and young people are safe and well. It includes high level and other supporting outcomes and actions which are being delivered through a series of three-year action plans.¹

The Third Three Year Action Plan 2015-2018 (the Third Action Plan), developed under the National Framework, outlines three key strategies to achieve the Framework outcomes:

1. Early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1000 days for a child.
2. Helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive into adulthood.
3. Organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe.²

The Third Action Plan also notes a commitment to consulting with children and young people regarding aspects of the National Framework and the Action Plan.

¹ <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/protecting-children-is-everyones-business>

² https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/12_2015/pdf_third_action_plan_for_protecting_australias_children.pdf

In 2016, the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) jointly engaged the CREATE Foundation (CREATE)³ and the National Children's Commissioner⁴ to undertake a series of consultations with young people across Australia about the three strategies outlined in the Third Action Plan.

CREATE, as project manager, subsequently contracted Alasdair Roy⁵, a Canberra based Consultant Psychologist, to design and facilitate the consultations.

The overall aim of the consultations was to seek the views of Australian young people on the strategies set out in the Third Action Plan, and to ensure that their views were considered in the ongoing review and implementation of the National Framework and Third Action Plan.

It was hoped that the consultations would also:

- Model to young people that their views are important, and that adults listen to these views.
- Model to individuals and agencies that talking with young people about issues that affect them is worthwhile and can lead to better outcomes.

Seeking the views of young people is also consistent with international, national, and State and Territory obligations to listen to young people, including the Commonwealth's National Strategy for Young Australians, that notes:

The Australian Government is determined to give young people a voice and to provide opportunities to influence decisions that affect them.⁶

³ The CREATE Foundation is the national peak consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience.

⁴ Information about the National Children's Commissioner can be found at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/students/get-informed/meet-national-childrens-commissioner>.

⁵ Information about Alasdair Roy can be found at: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/alsadairroy001>

⁶ http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Australia_2010_National_Youth_Strategy.pdf

THE CONSULTATIONS

Consultations involving 323 young people were held across Australia in March and April 2017:

Table 1: Number of young people and location of consultations

Strategy One: Early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1000 days for a child		
State or Territory	Number of young people	Location of consultation
Australian Capital Territory	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCCares, Canberra
New South Wales	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Cross Young Parenting Program, Sydney (Randwick)
	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Cross Young Parenting Program, Sydney (Parramatta)
Victoria	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nobody's Fool Theatre, Geelong
--	Sub-Total = 28 young people	--
Strategy Two: Helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive into adulthood		
State or Territory	Number of young people	Location of consultation
Australian Capital Territory	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club 12/25, Canberra
	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACT Together, Canberra
	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interviews (CREATE)
New South Wales	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CREATE Foundation, Sydney (x2)
	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interviews (CREATE)
	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care2Change, Lismore
Northern Territory	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casuarina Community Centre, Darwin (x2)
	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interviews (CREATE)
Queensland	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CREATE Foundation, Brisbane (x2)
South Australia	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brocas House, Adelaide (x2)
	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interviews (CREATE)
Tasmania	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CREATE Foundation, Hobart
	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interviews (CREATE)
Victoria	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CREATE Foundation, Melbourne
	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brotherhood of St Laurence, Frankston
	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interviews (CREATE)
	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berry Street, Melbourne
	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nobody's Fool Theatre, Geelong
	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for Multicultural Youth, Melbourne
Western Australia	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CREATE Foundation, Perth
	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foyer Oxford Accommodation Service, Perth
	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interviews (CREATE)
--	Sub-Total = 213 young people	--
Strategy Three: Organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe		
State or Territory	Number of young people	Location of consultation
Australian Capital Territory	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Namadgi School, Canberra
New South Wales	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre, Sydney
	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Centre of Indigenous Excellence
Victoria	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nobody's Fool Theatre, Geelong
	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for Multicultural Youth, Melbourne
--	Sub-Total = 82 young people	--
--	Total = 323 young people	--

All consultations for Strategy One (*Early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1000 days for a child*) and Strategy Three (*Organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe*) were group sessions. Consultations for Strategy Two (*Helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive into adulthood*) were groups sessions, or telephone or face-to-face interviews with individuals or two or three young people.

Each group session lasted approximately 1.5 hours, and each telephone and face-to-face interview approximately 30 minutes.

All group sessions, except two, were facilitated by Alasdair Roy or Megan Mitchell, with assistance from staff at each location. Noelle Hudson, National Policy and Advocacy Manager, CREATE, facilitated two sessions under Strategy Two.

Individual telephone and face-to-face interviews for Strategy Two were undertaken by CREATE staff, and/or Alasdair.

Consultations were structured, yet informal, conversations based around pre-prepared handouts and discussion points .

Interactions with the young people, and the people who worked with or knew the young people in each location, indicated that the young people varied substantially with respect to literacy, numeracy, and social vulnerability or disadvantage.

Young people who participated included young people who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse background and also young people with disabilities.

At the conclusion of each consultation session, all young people were asked to provide basic demographic data about themselves. Young people were informed that provision of this information was voluntary.

Of the 323 young people who participated across all of the consultation, 202, or 62% of young people, provided some or all of this data.

Table 2: Demographic data of participating young people

Strategy One: Early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1000 days for a child (n = 26 young people, or 93% of participants)	
Identified as female	24 young people, or 92% of participants
Identified as male	2 young people, or 6% of participants
Identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1 young person, or 4% of participants
Identified as speaking a language other than English at home	0 young people, or 0% of participants
Strategy Two: Helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive into adulthood (n = 153 young people, or 72% of participants)	
Identified as female	78 young people, or 51% of participants
Identified as male	75 young people, or 49% of participants
Identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	37 young people, or 24% of participants
Identified as speaking a language other than English at home	8 young people, or 5% of participants
Strategy Three: Organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe (n = 23 young people, or 28% of participants)	
Identified as female	14 young people, or 61% of participants
Identified as male	9 young people, or 39% of participants
Identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1 young person, or 4% of participants
Identified as speaking a language other than English at home	5 young people, or 22% of participants
Overall (n = 202 young people, or 62% of participants)	
Identified as female	116 young people, or 57% of participants
Identified as male	86 young people, or 43% of participants
Identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	39 young people, or 19% of participants
Identified as speaking a language other than English at home	13 young people, or 6% of participants

OUTCOMES: PRELIMINARY COMMENTS

The facilitators spoke with 323 young people across Australia, and gathered a wealth of information relevant to the National Framework and Third Action Plan.

It is important that the voices of these 323 young people are the focus of this report, and that their views are accurately transcribed without potentially inaccurate (or adult) interpretation.

Accordingly, the consultants have not sought to add layers of commentary or analysis, but have instead identified broad qualitative themes from the data, and then grouped representative comments made by young people to illustrate those themes.

Given the breadth of the consultations it was not possible to include in the report every comment from each young person; however, there was a high degree of consistency in the messages emerging from the consultations, with young people across different States and Territories making very similar observations, albeit expressed slightly differently. Comments included are representative of those common themes.

Additionally, [Appendix A](#) contains over 400 direct messages from young people to the Australian Government, and to other young people. Reading these messages provides an accurate and powerful picture of the views of young people, and are of direct relevance to the National Framework and Third Action Plan. So as to maintain the integrity of the messages, each one has been transcribed verbatim, and no summary or interpretation of the messages was undertaken. The words of the young people should, and do, speak for themselves.

Finally, the terms “most”, “many”, and “some” are used throughout this report (e.g., Most young people said that they were worried about finding a job). The term “most” indicates that roughly 75% of young people raised an issue; the term “many” indicates roughly 50%, and “some” indicates around 25%.

OUTCOMES: STRATEGY ONE

EARLY INTERVENTION WITH A FOCUS ON THE EARLY YEARS, PARTICULARLY THE FIRST 1000 DAYS FOR A CHILD⁷

Consultations with this group centered around the following topics:

- Sources of support as a young parent, or parent to be.
- What would help going into the future.
- Aspirations for the future.
- A message to the Government about how to improve the lives of young parents.
- Advice to other young parents.

SOURCES OF SUPPORT AS A YOUNG PARENT, OR PARENT TO BE

Friends and family

Many young people said that they had received, or were still receiving, support from friends or family members:

- *My fabulous friends who offer to take my baby as often as they can.*
- *I was living with my best friend's mum. At first she was disappointed, but afterwards was really fine and accepting.*
- *After the shock, my mother was supportive.*

Young parents program

Many young people said that they had received, or were still receiving, support from a “young parents” program, or something similar.

- *I feel comfortable, because it's other young people in the same situation. You feel like you are not alone.*
- *Same age, same mindset about things. Older mothers can be more judgmental and don't understand what it is like.*
- *The support I receive every day from this program is fantastic.*

Their school

Some young people said that they had received, or were still receiving support, from their school:

- *I was scared school was going to kick me out because I was pregnant, instead I was able to access the school's Learning Hub, a place for students who were struggling. It was the safest option for me.*
- *I had a really positive experience at my school.*
- *The program at the school for young mum's is brilliant.*

⁷ These consultations were principally conducted by the National Children's Commissioner, Megan Mitchell with assistance from staff at each location.

No support

Some young people said that they did not, or were not, receiving any support:

- *I was homeless at the time, with very little support.*
- *I was homeless and woke up in hospital after taking too many drugs and was told that I was pregnant.*
- *I didn't have anyone.*

Violent partners

Some young people reported being with partners or ex-partners who were violent or abusive while they were pregnant:

- *I was bashed when I was 38 weeks pregnant.*
- *I had to leave him or leave my daughter for good. And I guess it's obvious which one I chose.*
- *My partner was a real dickhead. Did nothing to help, and was stoned all the time.*

WHAT WOULD HELP GOING INTO THE FUTURE

Access to safe accommodation

Most young people said they would welcome access to affordable and safe accommodation:

- *It's ridiculous the amount of support letters you need to get on the priority housing list when you are pregnant. Even with letters from my family saying they couldn't support me or have me living with them I was still told the waiting list was 7 years.*
- *Housing just don't seem to care, they are happy to put you and your baby in a refuge.*
- *It's scary. I got punched taking out the garbage bin once, and there's no protection from police in those areas - they pass you off.*

Affordable day-care

Most young people said they would welcome access to affordable day-care:

- *I can afford two days. Just. And then like the problem is that I want to look for a job but then you need money for more day-care days but then you need day-care to be able to work.*
- *For young mums that are studying part-time, childcare needs to be more affordable. By the time you take out rent and bills, there's nothing left over.*
- *I want to work but even if you get a job all your money goes into childcare. You might as well stay at home and actually spend time with your child*

Having more money

Most young people said that they would welcome having more money:

- *To prepare yourself properly to have the baby you need money up front, not afterwards. They should move the baby bonus forward so that you can buy the things you need once you get to a certain point in the pregnancy (e.g., 28 weeks) but you should only be able to spend it on baby things.*
- *More financial support, like some sort of grant similar to what used to be the first home buyers grant, specifically for young parents to give them an equal opportunity for a better future in comparison to people who had children later in life with a stable income and a dual income household.*
- *They need to help young parents and single parents with day care bond. I'm still saving for it. I had to pay off my last one for like two years.*

Information about services and supports

Many young people said they would welcome access to information about services and supports:

- *We need to be taught stuff, not just told stuff. We need to be supported to learn how to do things, not just be handed a pamphlet.*
- *They expect you to just know about everything and go and do it. I didn't have my mum or anyone around to help with the whole process and didn't know where to start.*
- *Your GP should give you a comprehensive info pack once you know you're pregnant of everything you should know and what you should book in for. And they could give you something at your 12 week scan.*

Less judgment, stigma and stereotypes

Many young people spoke about being judged, and the stigma and stereotypes which surround being a young parent, including from health professionals:

- *We are not all in community housing and on welfare.*
- *When getting an ultrasound, I am sure that the nurse was looking down on me, judging me.*
- *Being young. Being unmarried. Being a mum. That's what I find I get judged on.*

Access to mental health support

Many young people said that they would welcome assistance to safe mental health support.

- *I really want help without judgment.*
- *I can't talk to the doctor about what is really going on because they will talk to Care or Protection or the court and it will go against me.*
- *It's hard to say I'm not coping without it being reported. It's Catch 22 - you are trying to the right thing by getting help, but then it is used against you.*

Flexible education options

Some young people said they would welcome more flexible education options:

- *It would be helpful if things like TAFE were more flexible about bringing your kids to classes, otherwise you're stuck with specifically young parent oriented programs.*
- *Most of us study online, because it is more practical, but it's hard because I don't have access to a laptop.*
- *It is really hard to go to school or study with a young baby. Really hard.*

More feeding and birth choices

Some young people said that they would welcome greater flexibility and understanding regarding feeding and birth choices:

- *They need to stop pushing breastfeeding on everyone and listen to you and support your choice.*
- *It's frowned upon if you have a caesarean or if you can't breastfeed even though it's not your fault.*
- *I was treated like I was stupid and the midwives are so pushy, I had an instinct to do things a certain way and it turned out I was right.*

Assistance to access the NDIS

Some young people said that they would welcome assistance to access the NDIS:

- *There is so much on your plate as a single mum with a child with disability and then you are expected to figure it all out and find the services.*

- *NDIS won't help me pay to get a hearing operation for my child through the private health system and the public wait list is so long.*
- *What is the point of NDIS paying for speech therapy when my child can't hear? It needs to be more flexible.*

More support for young fathers

Some young people said that they would welcome more support for young fathers:

- *Refuges don't allow the fathers to stay with us – they split up the family just when we need that support.*
- *The dads need more support so they can support us. They need something that is different from girls, men are very shut off, they don't open up about these things and don't want to sit around and talk about how they feel. It needs to be based on doing something together where they feel comfortable.*
- *I think there needs to be a group for young fathers, or social workers who are involved one on one with the fathers, for those who can't open up in a group or to their partner.*

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Most (if not all) were looking forward to raising happy children, and for those children to have a better life than they had:

- *I want her to grow up, like, better than what I did. Have an amazing future. Wait to have kids. I didn't make a mistake, but I think that she needs to learn that when you're young it's hard.*
- *I want a lot of things for my child, I want him to be happy, I don't know, just a happy life, consistency. I want him to know the way of life, like being taught the things that I didn't get taught.*
- *I want my kids to be proud of their mum. I want them to be able to set goals and reach them. I want them to get an education.*

A MESSAGE TO THE GOVERNMENT ABOUT HOW TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF YOUNG PARENTS

See [Appendix A](#).

ADVICE TO OTHER YOUNG PARENTS

See [Appendix A](#).

OUTCOMES: STRATEGY TWO

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE TO THRIVE INTO ADULTHOOD⁸

Two separate groups of young people participated in these consultations.

- Group One: Young people under 18, who were about to “leave care”⁹, or moving towards leaving care.
- Group Two: Young people who had already turned 18, and had left care.

The themes and issues raised by the young people were remarkably similar, regardless of age or State or Territory. That is, overwhelmingly young people said the same thing in different ways.

While this is positive in the sense that the views and opinions expressed by the young people can be relied upon to be valid, it is also concerning, as most of the views and opinions are not generally positive about supports and processes of leaving care.

GROUP ONE: YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18, WHO WERE ABOUT TO LEAVE CARE OR MOVING TOWARDS LEAVING CARE

Consultations with this group centered around the following topics:

- What are you most looking forward to about turning 18 and “leaving care”?
- What are you most worried or concerned about?
- Do you have a “leaving care plan”, and, if so, is it helpful?
- What sort of supports or assistance do you think you will want or need when you have left care?
- What would help, but isn’t available?
- A message to the Government about how to improve the lives of young people leaving care.
- Advice to other young people leaving care.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO ABOUT TURNING 18 AND LEAVING CARE?

Independence and freedom

Most¹⁰ young people said that they are looking forward to being independent, and having the freedom and authority to make decisions about their own lives:

- *Being able to make my own decisions and not having to ask permission from [Care and Protection]¹¹ before I can do anything.*
- *Get to do things without asking or telling anyone. Being the boss of my own life.*
- *Doing whatever I want to do without having to ask permission.*

⁸ These consultations were principally conducted by Alasdair Roy with assistance from staff at each location.

⁹ While many people, including many young people, find the term ‘leaving care’ problematic, it is a term that most people are familiar with, so it used throughout this report for the sake of clarity.

¹⁰ As already noted, the terms ‘some’, ‘many’, and ‘most’ are used throughout this report. The term ‘some’ indicates that around 25% (+ or -) of children or young people raised an issue; the term ‘many’ indicates around 50% (+ or -), and ‘most’ indicates around 75% (+ or -). While not statistically rigorous, this methodology is useful in describing trends in qualitative data.

¹¹ The term ‘Care and Protection’ is used throughout this report to refer to the statutory agency within each State and Territory responsible for the safety and care of children at risk of abuse and neglect.

Getting a job and earning an income

Most young people said that they are looking forward to finding a job and earning an income:

- *I need to get a job. I don't know where, but I need money and I can't just sit around all day.*
- *I can't wait to start earning money and being able to buy things.*
- *Finally getting a job of some sort.*

Living where I want to live

Most young people said that they are looking forward to living where they want to live, and not where Care and Protection tell them to:

- *I want to have somewhere stable I can call my own.*
- *I'm going to stay with some with friends, without having to ask anyone.*
- *Getting a flat and staying there. Not having to move around all the time.*

Getting an education

Some young people said that they are looking forward going to university, or undertaking other studies:

- *I'm really hoping to study medicine. I think I will get in.*
- *I want to move to Sydney to go Uni.*
- *I want to become a carpenter - heaps of work and good money.*

Starting a family

Some young people said that they are looking forward to meeting someone and having a family:

- *I want to meet someone and find a real family. There is no way that I will treat my kids the way I was treated. That was bullshit.*
- *It would be nice to meet someone I could be with for ages.*
- *I am going to find a wonderful wife and start a family.*

Nothing

Some young people said that they have nothing at all to look forward to, as they didn't know where they would be living, whether they would have a job, any friends, be physically and mentally healthy, and/or be able support and look after themselves:

- *I'm afraid that I am going to be alone for my whole life, and die young.*
- *I have no idea what is coming next.*
- *Once I leave care I am all by myself, and I am scared shitless.*

WHAT ARE YOU MOST WORRIED OR CONCERNED ABOUT?

Finding somewhere to live

Most young people said that they were worried about finding somewhere suitable to live:

- *How on earth can I afford to rent somewhere, I don't have any money.*
- *People won't rent places to people like me.*
- *I think I will be sleeping at a friend's house, or even homeless.*

Getting a job

Most young people said that they were worried about getting a job that they would enjoy, or a job at all, and earning an income sufficient to cover their costs of living:

- *I have applied for hundreds of jobs, and I don't even get a response.*
- *Who the hell is going to employ a resi-care kid.*
- *My life is going to be poor, poor, and poor.*

Looking after myself

Many young people said that they were worried that they will not have the day-to-day life skills required to manage their life:

- *I have no idea about how to look after myself, no idea at all.*
- *I'm worried that I won't be able to sort out everything that I need to do. Cooking, paying bills, looking for work.*
- *I'm scared that I will have no-one to ask for help.*

Making and keeping appointments by myself

Some young people said that they were worried that, without Care and Protection, or other support, they will not have the skills or discipline required to make and keep appointments or meetings:

- *Without [Care and Protection] around I'll be flying solo, and that freaks me.*
- *My resi-care workers were sometimes useless, but at least you could hassle them to arrange things.*
- *There is no way that I will be able to get to appointments by myself.*

Being alone

Some young people said that they were worried that they will be alone, not have any friends, and not be able to find someone to start a family with:

- *I'm afraid that I am going to be alone for my whole life.*
- *Where am I going to meet anyone? I have no money and I can't go out.*
- *I would love to have kids, but I can't see that happening.*

Nothing

Some young people said that they were not worried about anything, as they were already on track to achieving the life they wanted to achieve:

- *Nothing really, I expect my life will continue as is.*
- *No huge hassles that can't be fixed. I have a part-time job and will be studying.*
- *I'm staying where I am and going to Uni - all good!*

DO YOU HAVE A 'LEAVING CARE PLAN', AND, IF SO, IS IT HELPFUL?

Most young people said that they did not have a leaving care plan, or, if they did, that is not helpful:

- *No, it has never come up at any planning meeting that I have been to.*
- *They mentioned it a few months ago but nothing since.*
- *Yes, apparently so, but it doesn't have all that much in it, just broad statements*

Some young people said that they did have a leaving care plan, and that it was helpful:

- *My social worker has done heaps for me. My leaving care plan has everything I want.*
- *I just kept on asking and eventually I got one.*
- *They are doing one now – it was their idea, but I get to say what's in it.*

Many young people said that someone outside of Care and Protection was helping them to arrange what they needed to leave care:

- *My foster Mum is helping me with everything.*
- *The [local youth support agency].*
- *My brothers and sister - we look out for each other.*

Some young people said that no-one was helping them to find the supports that they needed to leave care:

- *I turn 18 in a few months and it is freaking me out because nothing has really been organised.*
- *I have no idea what is going to happen after I turn 18.*
- *I don't need any help, I've been looking after myself for years.*

WHAT SORT OF SUPPORTS OR ASSISTANCE DO YOU THINK YOU WILL WANT OR NEED AFTER YOU LEAVE CARE?

Finding a job

Most young people said that they would need support to find a job:

- *It is impossible around here. I have no chance of ever finding anything.*
- *I can't even get a job at [name of fast food outlet].*
- *I can't tell you how many places I have asked, and the answer is always no.*

Getting personal documentation

Most young people said that they would need support to access the documentation required to live, and travel, independently:

- *I don't have my birth certificate or my passport.*
- *I need a CV to get a job, but haven't the faintest about how to write one.*
- *Without any ID, I can't open a bank account. Also, how do I get a Tax File Number?*

Finding somewhere to live

Many young people said that they would need support to find somewhere to live:

- *I will definitely need support to find somewhere to stay.*
- *Finding anywhere is hard, somewhere safe almost impossible.*
- *I don't understand the rental market. Bonds, deposits, references, wtf?!*

Getting a driving licence

Many young people said that they would need support to obtain their driving licence:

- *I can't afford to do the test, and even if I could who is going help me with my hours?*
- *[Care and Protection] should pay for this, just like a normal family would.*
- *Even if I could afford it, I couldn't afford a car.*

Looking after myself

Many young people said that they would need support to acquire the day-to-day life skills required to manage their life:

- *Even if I can find somewhere to live, what about cooking and paying bills and stuff?*
- *I feel like I am suddenly going to be alone, and will have to do all the stuff that my carer currently does.*
- *What other 18 year-old is suddenly kicked out and told to do everything themselves?*

Accessing education and training

Some young people said that they would need support to access education and training opportunities:

- *I would love to do a course or something, but I'm not sure how to apply.*
- *I don't have anything that shows what I did at school - will TAFE let me in?*
- *Without further education I am screwed, but how can I possibly study if my life is in chaos?*

WHAT WOULD HELP, BUT ISN'T AVAILABLE?

Information about services and supports

Most young people said they would welcome accurate information about services and supports available to them either before or after leaving care:

- *It would be great to get an info pack of stuff that I can get. Names of places and what they do.*
- *Even talking today, I have heard of things that I never knew existed.*
- *There are heaps of supports out there, they are just impossible to find unless someone tells you.*

Financial assistance

Most young people said they would welcome one-off, and on-going, affordable financial assistance:

- *I would love it if there were cheap loans to buy things I need.*
- *There need to be more grants or really cheap loans to help us get on our feet.*
- *Why does all this support have to stop at 18? Who the hell is independent at 18?*

Many young people said that they were aware of, and had accessed, the Transition to Independent Living Allowance:

- *It was useful, and of course I took it, but \$1500 doesn't go all that far.*
- *How come some of us know about TILA, and others don't? Shouldn't we all get it?*
- *It is going to cost them far more if I am unemployed and homeless. Figure it out guys. Make it work!*

Day-to-day life skills programs

Many young people said that they would need support to acquire the day-to-day life skills required to manage their life:

- *What about cooking and paying bills and applying for jobs and finding housing?*
- *I feel like I am suddenly going to be alone, and will have to do all the stuff that my carer currently does.*
- *I have never had to look after myself before, and I am going to need help. Lots of help!*

Support to obtain a driving licence

Many young people said they would welcome free or subsidised driving lessons, and support to complete the required number of probationary hours:

- *It would be great if [Care and Protection] just paid for this automatically.*
- *I would be happy to pay it back if someone lent me the money for the tests and everything.*
- *Maybe some volunteers to help with the hours? Maybe someone from CREATE?*

Access to free internet

Many young people said they would welcome free or subsidised internet access:

- *Without the internet it is really hard to find a job, or do anything, really.*
- *All the free wi-fi is in the city - miles away.*
- *The world talks over the internet. No internet, no friends.*

A MESSAGE TO THE GOVERNMENT ABOUT HOW TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

See [Appendix A](#).

ADVICE TO OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

See [Appendix A](#).

GROUP TWO: YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAD ALREADY TURNED 18, AND HAD LEFT CARE

Conversations with this group centered around the following topics:

- What was the best thing about turning 18 and leaving care?
- What were you most worried or concerned about?
- Did you have a 'leaving care plan', or, and, if so, was it helpful?
- What would help, but isn't available?
- A message to the Government about how to improve the lives of young people leaving care.
- Advice to another young person who is about to leave care.

WHAT WAS THE BEST THING ABOUT TURNING 18 AND 'LEAVING CARE'?

Independence and freedom

Most¹² (if not almost all) young people said that the best thing about leaving care was becoming independent, and having the freedom and authority to make decisions about their own lives:

- *Finally being my own legal guardian and being able to make my own decisions.*
- *Having rights as an adult and pursuing my life and my interests in the way I want to.*

¹² As already noted, the terms 'some', 'many', and 'most' are used throughout this report. The term 'some' indicates that around 25% (+ or -) of children or young people raised an issue; the term 'many' indicates around 50% (+ or -), and 'most' indicates around 75% (+ or -). While not statistically rigorous, this methodology is useful in describing trends in qualitative data.

- *Using the skills that my foster mum taught me and being able to put them into practice and use them in everyday life.*

Leaving care

Most young people said that the best thing about leaving care was no longer being under the control and authority of Care and Protection:

- *[Care and Protection] were gone. It was scary, because they did sometimes help, but they were finally gone and that meant a lot. My life was now my own.*
- *The breathing down my neck about stupid things was over.*
- *I was excited about getting [Care and Protection] out of my life.*

Being able to go to clubs and drink alcohol

Some young people said that the best thing about leaving care was being able to legally drink alcohol, and to go to clubs and bars:

- *Being able to drink alcohol.*
- *Partying and clubs!*
- *Staying out all night and partying with my friends!*

WHAT WERE YOU MOST WORRIED OR CONCERNED ABOUT?

Having enough money

Most young people said that they were worried about having enough money to pay for day today living expenses:

- *I didn't know where I was going to get the money to be able to pay all my bills and buy food.*
- *It is really hard for most 18 years olds, but it is extra hard for those leaving care.*
- *It took forever to find a job, and it is impossible to live on Centrelink.*

Many young people said that they were aware of, and had accessed, the Transition to Independent Living Allowance:

- *My social worker told me all about it, and arranged everything. She was fantastic!*
- *You have to ask for it. Even then I don't think that all social workers know what it is. Just keep asking, it's worth it.*
- *I just wish that it was more - there are heaps more things that I need, and not things like clothes. I need things that most other people my age have been given, or their parents have bought for them.*

Finding somewhere to live

Most young people said that they were worried about finding somewhere to live:

- *I was in resi-care, and had to leave when I turned 18, but the only place I could go was the dodgy men's shelter on the other side of town.*
- *I was on a Housing waiting list, but didn't know how long that was going to take. I was shit-scared that I was going to be homeless.*
- *I could stay where I was, but I really didn't want to, but there weren't all that many other options.*

What was going to happen next

Many young people said that they were worried that they didn't really know what was going to happen next in their life:

- *Where I was going? What supports I had? Who I had left? I was lost and confused.*
- *I was worried about having to face the unknown by myself.*
- *I felt like because I was 18 I was no-one's problem.*

Not being able to find suitable supports and assistance

Many young people said that they were worried about not being able to find suitable and supports and assistance:

- *I thought I was going to have to do everything by myself. I didn't know that are so many wonderful supports out there, if you know where to look. That's the secret!*
- *Having to look for stuff all by myself was horrible.*
- *I wish people had told me about the services I now know about.*

Nothing

Some young people said that they were not worried about anything, as they were already on track to achieving the life they wanted to achieve:

- *I wasn't that worried about all that much - I kinda knew what was coming next.*
- *I was excited actually, as I was going off to do further study, which I was really looking forward to.*
- *Nothing really.*

DID YOU HAVE A 'LEAVING CARE PLAN', AND, IF SO, WAS IT HELPFUL?

Many young people said that they did not have a leaving care plan, or, if they did, that it was not helpful:

- *Nope, nothing. I knew that I should but nothing ever happened.*
- *I asked about it and they said they would, but by the time we really started to talk about it I was 18 and had sorted most of the stuff myself.*
- *Until recently, I really didn't know what a leaving care was.*

Some young people said that they did have a leaving care plan, and that it was helpful:

- *My caseworker busted it to get me everything I needed. She was brilliant.*
- *I made sure that I had everything on it. Accommodation, mental health, job, everything - even a holiday!*
- *Yes, my worker was really good she would involve me in things. I was pretty lucky though.*

Many young people said that someone outside of Care and Protection helped them to arrange what they needed to leave care:

- *My resi-care workers arranged stuff for me. I don't think I even had a [Care and Protection] worker.*
- *My foster mum was, and still is, the best help I ever got.*
- *CREATE have been fantastic.*

Some young people said that no-one helped them to find the supports that they needed to leave care:

- *I did most things for myself. It really wasn't as hard as some people say it is!*
- *I was lucky to find a job, and I'm still with my carer, so I didn't really need all that much help.*
- *Before I turned 18 I had no idea that there were many services out there that can help. You just need to find them!*

WHAT WOULD HELP, BUT ISN'T AVAILABLE?

Financial support

Most young people said they would welcome one-off, and on-going, affordable financial assistance:

- *I have somewhere to live, but I am lucky to put food on the table.*
- *There should be grants, or cheap loans, for furniture, white goods, suits for job interviews, training, that sort of thing.*
- *Beyond food and rent, I can't afford much at all. It makes it very hard to find a job. I'm stuck.*

Support to obtain a driving licence

Many young people said they would welcome free or subsidised driving lessons, and support to complete the required number of probationary hours:

- *I'm 23 and I don't have my licence. A small thing, but an important thing.*
- *I know that some people in care got theirs paid for, but I didn't. I wish I had, cause it's a pain.*
- *It should be part of leaving care. Everyone should get their birth certificate, their passport, and a licence.*

Dedicated, on-going, and free mental health support

Some young people said that they would welcome a dedicated, on-going, and free mental health support service:

- *I think we need a dedicated mental health service for young people who have left care, or are in care.*
- *It is almost like they think we will be fine simply because we turn 18. It's bullshit.*
- *The service should be independent of Government. Maybe stick it in with CREATE?*

Subsidised training and educational support

Some young people said that they would welcome subsidised training and educational support:

- *More free training options to help with things I want do in the future.*
- *Centrelink only just covers food and rent, I can't possibly afford further education.*
- *They should do what the Scottish govt just did - guarantee all kids leaving care a place at Uni and a scholarship.*

Parenting support

Some young people said that they would welcome support to parent their young children:

- *I have a beautiful little girl, but I am raising her alone and sometime worry that I am not doing things right.*
- *I am so scared that if I mess up they will take him away from me, just like I was.*
- *I know that there are groups out there, but how do you find them*

Information about services and supports

Most young people said they would welcome accurate information about services and supports available to them now that they have left care:

- *Info info info. We need it, and not in some glossy Govt brochure which we never see. Put it in places we go.*
- *Supports are out there, but unless someone tells me, how I am supposed to know.*
- *I have learnt about most services from my friends, not from anyone else.*

Day-to-day life skills programs

Many young people said that they would need support to acquire the day-to-day life skills required to manage their life:

- *What about cooking and paying bills and applying for jobs and finding housing?*
- *I feel like I am suddenly going to be alone, and will have to do all the stuff that my carer currently does.*
- *I have never had to look after myself before, and I am going to need help. Lots of help!*

A MESSAGE TO THE GOVERNMENT ABOUT HOW TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

See [Appendix A](#).

ADVICE TO OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

See [Appendix A](#).

OUTCOMES: STRATEGY THREE

ORGANISATIONS RESPONDING BETTER TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO KEEP THEM SAFE¹³

Three groups of young people participated in these consultations.

- Group One: Young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Group Two: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people.
- Group Three: Young people from an alternative school, and/or in out-of-home care.

Consultations with these groups centered around the following topics:

- Places or spaces young people feel unsafe and/or unwelcome.
- How to make places or spaces more safe and welcoming.
- A message to the Government about how to improve young people's sense of safety and welcome.
- Advice to other young people about feel safe and welcome.

PLACES OR SPACES YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL UNSAFE AND/OR UNWELCOME

Public places

Many young people said that they felt unsafe and/or unwelcome in public places:

- *A lot of the time it's not feeling unsafe, it's feeling unwelcome - it's the way that people look at you.*
- *People look down on me. They don't like my culture or my country. Or, they don't want to understand.*
- *Some people just have a thicker skin than other people, but the reason why most kids don't go to mainstream schools, or don't go to schools, or anywhere really - like hospitals or anything, because there's a sense of judgment and people who feel judged don't feel welcome.*

Other public or private facilities

Many young people said that they felt unsafe and/or unwelcome in other public or private facilities:

- *In shopping centres, people become impatient.*
- *In Centrelink, people speak fast and all at once, which is very confusing.*
- *When we get sick it's too expensive for our family to treat us. My parents don't know or understand which services are free under Medicare and which are very costly, so avoid it all together*

Unfamiliar or run-down places

Many young people said that they felt unsafe and/or unwelcome in unfamiliar places:

- *Places I don't know. If I got into trouble I wouldn't know what to do.*
- *There is dodgy park near-by, with drug paraphernalia and beer cans hidden everywhere.*
- *Houses that are run-down, un-mown lawns, junk everywhere make me uncomfortable.*

Online

Many young people said that they felt unsafe and/or unwelcome while on-line:

- *Many things online that make me uncomfortable.*

¹³ These consultations were principally conducted by Megan Mitchell with assistance from staff at each location.

- *Receiving bad messages, ads, images.*
- *Things I can't block.*

School

Many young people said that they felt unsafe and/or unwelcome while at school:

- *When I first went to mainstream high school I felt lonely and isolated.*
- *I feel like everyone is trying to be so similar, everyone is different in their own way, and I think that people are extremely scared to show how different they are.*
- *School can be really tough for some kids.*

Accessing out-of-home care, or related, services

Many young people said that they felt unsafe and/or unwelcome while accessing out-of-home care, or related, services:

- *When my local youth service amalgamated, it went from better to worse. It sometimes feels that we are only 'clients', and that we were there job and nothing else.*
- *We did a site audit of our centre. It felt like a jail, so we put pictures on the wall and it feels more homely - like a place we could be ourselves and be comfortable in.*
- *I have been stuck with so many horrible aggressive so called foster-carers.*

HOW TO MAKE PLACES OR SPACES MORE SAFE AND WELCOMING

Security

Many young people said that increased security would make places or spaces more safe and welcoming:

- *More security systems, cameras and guards.*
- *Every second night have a patrol a patrol car coming through to stop people taking drugs.*
- *Make sure lights work.*

Maintaining places and spaces

Many young people said maintaining places or spaces would make them feel more safe and welcoming:

- *Try to remove negative influences.*
- *Improve the visual appeal of places.*
- *Keep things clean. Dirty places feel unsafe.*

Mentors in the community

Some young people said that having mentors, or other people that they could talk with, would make them feel more safe and welcome:

- *They provide you with help and support.*
- *Helped me to get stronger.*
- *Just knowing who to go to to talk with helps a lot.*

Sporting or other recreational or cultural activities

Some young people said that participating in events with other young people would make them feel more safe and welcome:

- *It gives everybody a chance to focus on something, it's the reason everyone bonds together. It removes the barriers.*
- *It was pretty much the sporting club involving me, into the games, encourage me while playing and introducing me to the team as well.*
- *I feel welcome in my mosque.*

A MESSAGE TO THE GOVERNMENT

See [Appendix A](#).

ADVICE TO OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE

See [Appendix A](#).

KEY MESSAGES

As noted above, the consultation facilitators spoke with 323 young people across Australia, and gathered a wealth of information relevant to the National Framework and Third Action Plan.

Young people spoke openly and honestly, and shared their hopes, ideas, frustrations and aspirations, about being a young parent, or transitioning from the out-of-home care system to independent living. Young people also spoke about where they feel safe, and what makes a place somewhere that they feel welcome and included.

As also noted above, the primary purpose of this report is to accurately reflect the voices of the young people who participated, and to not interpret what the young people said or add layers of commentary or analysis from an adult perspective.

Regardless, a number of key messages for each of the three strategies are outlined below.

STRATEGY ONE: EARLY INTERVENTION WITH A FOCUS ON THE EARLY YEARS, PARTICULARLY THE FIRST 1000 DAYS FOR A CHILD

KEY MESSAGES - PARENTS-TO-BE

- While many young parents-to-be received support from friends; family members; parenting programs; and/or their school, some young parents-to-be did not receive support from anyone.
- While many young parents-to-be had safe and stable accommodation, some were homeless and/or living in a violent relationship, or with a partner who used drugs and alcohol.
- While some young parents-to-be were confident that they would be OK after the birth of their baby, most were worried that they would not be able to: find somewhere suitable to live; find a job; look after themselves; look after their baby; and/or access other services they need.

KEY MESSAGES - PARENTS

- While most young parents are receiving support from friends; family members; parenting programs; and/or their school, some young parents are not receiving support from anyone.
- While most young parents have safe and stable accommodation, some are living in unstable, unsafe, or unsuitable accommodation.
- Most (if not all) young parents would like additional support to: find somewhere to live; find a job; and to access: affordable day-care; mental health support; NDIS support; flexible education options; and/or programs for young fathers.
- Most (if not all) are looking forward to raising happy children, and for those children to have a better life than they had.

STRATEGY TWO: HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE TO THRIVE INTO ADULTHOOD

KEY MESSAGES - YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18, WHO WERE ABOUT TO LEAVE CARE, OR MOVING TOWARDS LEAVING CARE

- While some young people in care are happy with the support they are receiving from Care and Protection, most are not and are looking forward to being independent from statutory control and oversight.
- While some young people in care are confident that they will be OK after leaving care, most are worried that they will not be able to: find somewhere to live; find a job; make friends; look after themselves; and access other services they need.
- While some young people in care are being supported by Care and Protection to leave care, most are not, and are relying on: their foster family; birth family; friends; and/or community organisations to find the supports that they need.
- While some young people in care are aware of the services and supports available to them, either before or after leaving care, most are not.
- While some young people in care were accessing the services and supports they need, most would welcome additional assistance to: secure financial stability; access a drivers licence; access free internet; and/or information about other services and supports available.

KEY MESSAGES - YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAD ALREADY TURNED 18, AND HAD LEFT CARE

- Most (if not all) young people who had left care welcomed being independent from statutory control and oversight, and being able to make decisions about their life without needing the consent of Care and Protection.
- While some young people who had left care were confident that they will be OK, many are worried that they will not be able to: find somewhere to live; find a job; make friends; look after themselves; and access other services they need.
- While some young people who had left care were accessing the services and supports they need, most would welcome additional assistance to: find somewhere to live; find a job; and to access: a drivers licence; mental health support; subsidised education programs; parenting support; life skills programs; and/or other services supports they need.

STRATEGY THREE: ORGANISATIONS RESPONDING BETTER TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO KEEP THEM SAFE

KEY MESSAGES

- While some young people feel safe and welcome most of the time, many feel unsafe or unwelcome in: public or private spaces; unfamiliar or run-down places; or, when: at school; on-line, and/or accessing out-of-home care services.
- While some young people feel welcome most of the time, many feel unwelcome in public places or private spaces due to their age or culture.

- Many young people suggested that: increased security and better maintenance of places and spaces; having more mentors in the community; and/or the opportunity to participate in sporting or cultural events might make places feel safer and more welcoming.

APPENDIX A: MESSAGES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

Each young person was invited to write message to the Government, and a message to another young person relevant to the topic of their consultation.

STRATEGY ONE: EARLY INTERVENTION WITH A FOCUS ON THE EARLY YEARS, PARTICULARLY THE FIRST 1000 DAYS FOR A CHILD

Table 3: A message to the Government about how to improve the life of young parents

<p>Live in my shoes for one month and I'm sure you will make a lot of changes to your health, social support and education systems. Financially I only just manage to survive on good weeks, on a bad week I find myself eating toast for dinner and walking 5-8kms to the shopping centre. It's about time you try before you buy – that goes for everything!</p> <p><i>23 years</i></p>	<p>Please support mums and mums to be in a respectable manner. We really need some more financial support as with all of the things we buy makes us struggle with life altogether.</p> <p><i>23 years</i></p>
<p>Young parents in housing should be put together and not in the same building as junkies. To help housing with waiting list times, you could offer small grants to young parents looking to move into private rentals. Cutting Centrelink for working parents doesn't encourage people to get off Centrelink, if they are earning under \$500 a fortnight it shouldn't be cut.</p> <p><i>21 years</i></p>	<p>Stop what you are doing.</p> <p><i>21 years</i></p>
<p>Please make more services to help young mums, like info packs on parenting, free classes (parenting, first aid, safe sleeping), and general mental health and other support services.</p> <p><i>21 years</i></p>	<p>How can I be encouraged to work when I would be at a loss. Without high qualifications and job that I have pays a lot less than my single mother's payment. I feel if I worked I would be stuffed and not be able to live.</p> <p><i>20 years</i></p>
<p>All young mum's would appreciate a little more financial help and housing help without being judged.</p> <p><i>22 years</i></p>	<p>Think of the generations to come. Put us before immigrants! We need more money put into our hospitals and less on refugees and sport clubs.</p> <p><i>19 years</i></p>
<p>More government housing. Take more needs into consideration. Live in someone else's shoes for a day!</p> <p><i>18 years</i></p>	<p>It would help me to have more support for my children with disabilities.</p> <p><i>22 years</i></p>
<p>Thank you for all you have tried to put in place. The amount of systems you have put in place are wonderful but never hold a lasting result. The lives at hand would be so much better if there was any love or care implemented. To possibly consider the bible in areas you are in need. Because being basically homeless and going through what we went through (Housing, Centrelink) it was the only thing that produced a result when all was against me. Chaplaincy in Birthing, sweet!</p> <p><i>20 years</i></p>	
<p>Single parents need more money.</p>	<p>The need more places like this [Red Cross Young Parents Program] all over NSW.</p>
<p>We need higher Centrelink payments.</p>	<p>Single parents need more money.</p>
<p>Stats say that young parents are more likely to go to prison compared to young people who are not young parents. I believe that running workshops for young parents, program for young parents and supports for young parents is the best way to help and to help to prevent any form of detrimental outcome. Subsidised or partially subsidised housing and a safe place to stay should be a priority as well as incentives for businesses to take on young parents part-time as a way to get their foot in the door for a start to their career.</p>	<p>Dear Government, I think you should be more aware of the young mums out there who are suffering and struggling. More support is needed financially, support networks, case managers, more needed for housing, not just refuges. I'm in transitional housing, my lease is finishing in 3 months. I have a 9 month old and due in 4 months. I'm escaping DV and after my lease ends I'm expected to rent privately, which I won't be able to afford. More funding is needed for single mums.</p>
<p>More funding to support families (eg: FTB and school kids bonus.</p>	<p>Listen to the children, we don't all make stuff ups. Make sure the children are safe. Just because the parents sound good doesn't mean their kids are. More control with family.</p>
<p>For the police to believe all victims and support them. Make more places like [the Red Cross Young Parents Program] for young parents. Low income people treated like people. Make the world a better place for everyone.</p>	<p>Listen to young people. Stop cutting funding for organisations. Make organisations more accessible and easier to find.</p>

Table 4: Advice to another young person who is pregnant, or a young parent

Wear protection. Do what you think is best for you and your child.	Trust your instincts.
Take it in your stride and trust your instincts.	Listen to the Sids & Kids Rules. Always be kind. Treasure every moment, always.
Don't ever think that you are a bad mother. As long as you are trying your best to put clothes on your child, food in their stomach and they have shelter over their head and love from you. Don't let other people tell you otherwise. Believe your instinct. All parents wants the best for their child.	Do what you feel is best. If you don't feel it's right, don't do it.
Go with your gut feeling. You always know best. If you need help ask for it, don't be shy.	Trust your instincts!
Trust your gut instinct. Believe in yourself. There is no way of 'wrong parenting', as long as you put your child's needs first.	Don't freak out.
Be prepared. Enjoy it while it lasts. Don't be afraid to ask for help.	Only rely on yourself. Don't expect anything from anyone, that way you will be never be let down or hurt. At the end of the day the only person that is there for you is you! Financially it's never going to be easy. Emotionally it's very lonely. Just never give up because anything that's worth it is never easy!
Listen to advice, accept/take help, attend parent groups.	Get access to a casework or parenting organisation in order to get direction and the help you need. Keep calm, children are blessings.
Planned or not, having a baby is terrifying, it's rewarding and incredible. Enjoy your pregnancy. Enjoy your baby. It goes way to quick.	Be prepared. Stay safe. Save money. Don't be afraid to ask for support. Get everything prepared and sorted before baby comes (eg: Salvos and Vinnies help with furniture).
Try and make friends with other young mums because people that aren't parents will be doing things you can't.	Try and attend as much parents groups as possible. Make sure you have a circle you belong to.
Eat healthy. Do not smoke or take drugs. Don't be around negative people. Make sure you get support if you don't already have it. Always think of your unborn child. Try not to stress as your baby feels everything. If you are in a relationship with a drug addict or a violent person get away before your baby is born!	Dear young mum or dad, you are not alone. Don't listen to others. You CAN do this, you're good enough, strong enough and smart enough. Your child is yours, so you do what you think is rights for them.
Try get as much support as possible. If you need help ask! There is help out there, just ask around.	Keep your head up, don't give up. Get help if need it. Don't listen to the negative input and believe in yourself.
Enjoy it and stick around and stay in your baby's life because it's not really that bad to be honest. (<i>Young father</i>)	Take opinions from others. Don't trust parents, some lie. Follow up on complaints.

STRATEGY TWO: HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE TO THRIVE INTO ADULTHOOD

Table 5: A message to the Government about how to improve the life of young people leaving care

Group One: Young people under 18, who were about to leave care, or moving towards leaving care	
Move out of your Sydney townhouses, and move into a Housing Department house, cease your multi-million dollar personality, earn out of your account the same as Centrelink Independent Youth Allowance, and pay the bills with that fortnightly (for a year). You can then make decisions about me and my generation without my objections. <i>16 years</i>	My message to the government would be, try to give kids in out of home care more choices and support all the way throughout their teen, and also when they turn 18 or older because they're still important even if they not in home care. Try to make them feel safe as possible. Really put yourself in their shoes. <i>14 years</i>
We need more support with leaving care and getting jobs, and Centrelink money. <i>15 years</i>	Pull your head out and see the real world. But honestly, this generation has it tough. <i>17 years</i>
That we are more than what you see on a piece of paper and more than just another name/number. We too need all the support to live a fulfilled and accomplished life. We too need better access to resources to mental health and after-care services. We need you to be open and honest with us about our lives. We need you to be 110% dedicated to us, or there is no point working for us. <i>17 years</i>	To change the money for kids in care, when they move out of care to help them with rent, schooling etc. <i>16 years</i>
[Young people in residential care] aren't that bad. We have a bad name, but we aren't that bad. I didn't chose to be here. <i>17 years</i>	I would like money for stuff like a car, some financial help to buy a car. <i>17 years</i>
Thanks for nothing. <i>17 years</i>	I can't look for a job on line because I have no wi-fi. <i>16 years</i>
More caseworkers. <i>16 years</i>	Put the leaving care age to 21 as an option for young people. <i>17 years</i>
I think the care system needs to give more mental health support and freedom. They don't give enough opportunities for young people, and I think they don't care about how low they get treated. Carers just use [young people] as tenants to get money. <i>14 years</i>	More respect and hope. <i>16 years</i>
After kids leave the system they shouldn't be forgotten. If you took them off their parents to fix their childhood, then fix it. Don't just forget about the, they still need support. <i>17 years</i>	The checks before letting volunteers be carers should be improved because there are some pretty dodgy carers out there. <i>17 years</i>
I grew up in a relatively normal family. My parents were university educated, and didn't smoke, drink or use drugs. In high-school I developed mental health issues and could not socialise. I did not get any help from the mental health system so I got violent and had to move into foster care. There was no stability, seldom funding, and it was impossible to attend school due to constant upheaval. People meant well, but seemed to understand so little and it was highly traumatic. It is an absolute necessity for there to be more funding, and, despite, not liking [Care and Protection], the workers get burnt out and do not get paid properly. <i>16 years</i>	Give more people money. Learners and lessons. FTP. <i>17 years</i>
Be faster when doing things for kids in care. <i>15 years</i>	I think children/teenagers should be heard! A child should never ever be left homeless. We should have access to financial support such as food vouchers, clothing vouchers etc, even if the placement is 'deemed' unsuitable. <i>17 years</i>
More support systems. <i>17 years</i>	Spread more love, care and support <i>16 years</i>
I want the government to know that young people who were in care, but are now with their family, not in care or in kinship, may still need leaving care assistance. Why is the worker deciding, at least find out if the young person knows the skills and knowledge they may gain. <i>17 years</i>	
Support and guidance for when you leave care. <i>17 years</i>	Tell us who our case worker is... <i>16 years</i>
Be helpful	Fuck you.

<i>18 years</i>	<i>15 years</i>
I don't like you. Get my name change done. <i>16 years</i>	If the Government wants to keep the young people in care happy, the easiest way is to make them feel like a normal person.
I believe that you should start listening to younger children. It's not just the adults that have a say. The children have a say and should always have an opinion and say. <i>16 years</i>	Listen to us!!! <i>15 years</i>
The shouldn't be called [Care and Protection] because they don't protect children – they take them away and then put them in a house where they will be kicked out of when they turn 18. <i>17 years</i>	Aboriginal rights should be equal to white people's rights. Stand up more for Aboriginal kids rights. They shouldn't have to suffer more to be removed – with the while stolen generation situation. I also believe if it's in the kids best interest for them to go to a private school, they should be allowed without a hassle. <i>16 years</i>
Dear people of the Government. I believe that you are doing well for me. I do not have any problems that I can think of at the moment, but I know some other people have problems like travel and staying over at friend's houses for a limited time and then your friends need a police check. I hope you make wise choices and that young people help you. <i>15 years</i>	If the Government want to keep the young people in care happy, the easiest way is to make them feel like a normal person. With all the guidelines and rules that are currently in place it makes us distinctly different to people living normal lives outside of care. This obviously doesn't make them feel very normal. <i>17 years</i>
I don't like. Get my name change done! <i>16 years</i>	Nothing to say. <i>17 years</i>
Fuck you. <i>15 years</i>	Have a communication group between young people in care, like around table. <i>17 years</i>
Work on carer training sessions so they're not arseholes. Case workers as well need better training – it would be way better for the kids and they wouldn't be running around getting into trouble and there would be less crime on the streets. <i>17 years</i>	Train more carers.
Give fair warning when removing kids.	Let young people get their voices heard.
Give young adults a chance.	Set us up before leaving care.
Support young people as much as they need.	To help young people in care to make the care system better for other young people and help young people better.
Send people to good homes.	Take in what the young people say as they have been in care and or are still in care.
I don't think you listen to young people or treat them as equally as adults. It's unfair and we deserve rights. <i>14 years</i>	Legalise weed. Stop locking up people for smoking drugs. The government is heartless. Charity money doesn't always go to charity, it goes to government. The need to open a hall for homeless people with sleeping bags everywhere and sleeping stretchers. <i>16 years</i>
We aren't that bad, we have a bad name but we aren't that bad. I didn't chose to be here. <i>17 years</i>	I would like money for stuff like a car. Some financial help to buy a car. <i>17 years</i>
I think it's important for them to still connect us with organisations, so they can still support us so we don't feel like we have just been thrown into the world. Provide us with the support we need still. <i>17 years</i>	I don't know one particular one. One thing that I get quite frustrated about, there was a girl that was in my family group home that was from a home that had a bad reputation. When she ran away or destroyed things no one cared. There was no punishment and no cared. They didn't tackle it early on. Some of us aren't associated with this stuff and don't do that kind of thing but every one thinks that's what foster kids are like. The second thing is I haven't had internet access at home in the family group home. I am really academic and this would have really helped. I think the support should be given to people who need it. A lot of time and effort and time goes into supporting those who are struggling but those who are really trying hard need support too. Another message would be I am 18 this year and I am really mature for my age but leaving care is even hard for me. I feel there needs to be legislation for young people whose carers think they aren't ready to leave care. They should be able to extend their orders and stay in care till 21. <i>17 years</i>
Provide more support to get good foster carers. When I left resi care I became more independent and pro-active to get my life sorted. I went back to school and TAFE and did a Barista Course. <i>17 years</i>	They should give a bit more support around leaving care. Extend the age of support, so we have it after we leave care. <i>16 years</i>
Prepare a person more for becoming independent, through better planning with support workers/case workers. <i>16 years</i>	You can't just choose random people to be carers. There are a lot of abusive carers that are still in the system and the government doesn't do anything.

<p>Realise that the speech of young people can have a huge impact and it could be very beneficial. <i>17 years</i></p>	<p><i>15 years</i> Dear Government, when it comes to foster care you would think that adults would know what kids need but case workers at [Care and Protection] are unreliable and untrustworthy. What's the point of going in care if there is no one to trust or rely on. <i>17 years</i></p>
<p>Group Two: Young people who had already turned 18, and had left care</p>	
<p>Listen to young people. <i>22 years</i></p>	<p>Listen, to every voice. Not everything that is wrong is spoken, sometimes you can read it in their eyes, their voice and even their body language. All lives matter - even those that say they're fine. <i>18 years</i></p>
<p>Listen to the person as an individual. A one size fits all doesn't work. Everyone needs a tailored plan to meet their needs. Not on [Care and Protection] but other service providers. Listen and build a custom care plan for young people. <i>24 years</i></p>	<p>Care leavers can have a better life if they have the opportunity to have a stable placement post 18, and to gain employment or education to create a positive future and have the opportunity the same as the opportunity your child has. <i>24 years</i></p>
<p>Young people in care need support with education, medical and general life skills. If we have the basics then we are able to give back to our community. Most young people I know including my little sister do not get this support. <i>22 years</i></p>	<p>Think about how you would have survived in our situation. How would you help your child if they are in our situation. Help us to survive and thrive to better ourselves and to get somewhere in life. <i>24 years</i></p>
<p>At the end of the day you are the adult in our life. You can help us have a better future. All you have to do is listen to those who matter, the young people. This is our life and we need all the guidance we can get. <i>23 years</i></p>	<p>Please, don't let the children be lost running scared rabbits in the unknown forest known as [Care and Protection]. Tell them be truthful of what they actually have access to, let them have access to those things and help them get ready to be independent. Don't just drop them and leave them in the dark. <i>22 years</i></p>
<p>Have more programs, more disciplined programs, to help overcome the criminal side of life. <i>19 years</i></p>	<p>Listen to the young people and work with them to get what they want. Don't just assume what they want. <i>20 years</i></p>
<p>Co-designed micro-finance loans (no or low interest loans). Equip (start-up) loans for young people transitioning or have left care. Loans of up to \$3500. <i>24 years</i></p>	<p>Listen to the voices of the young people that reach out. <i>19 years</i></p>
<p>If we have the life-skills we need it will give us more stability and a safety net to fall back on, as right now we have none. Like cooking, money management, taxes, how to pay a bill, understanding voting. <i>25 years</i></p>	<p>Please listen when we voice our concerns. <i>19 years</i></p>
<p>Get your act together. Help young people who need help, instead of helping yourself. Listen to young people's voices instead of shutting us down! <i>22 years</i></p>	<p>Mentoring programs for people in care</p>
<p>Grow the fuck up and pull your head out of your fucking ass, and look after fundings and services and the young people in care!</p>	<p>Ditch the Libs - outdated and stupid! Need to focus on society and not business. <i>20 years</i></p>
<p>Provide independent living workshops/programs so people are aware of how to look after themselves when they leave care. <i>23 years</i></p>	<p>Communication is key. Actions are bigger than words. <i>20 years</i></p>
<p>Thank you for letting Liberals ruin our great nation of making cut basics when in power. <i>22 years</i></p>	<p>Young people are the best people to tell you what they need so listen to them and ask us. We need more funding towards OOHC so please stop cutting the funding towards OOHC> <i>25 years</i></p>
<p>Make yourself more available for those that are in need of care. Give homeless people a house and support them. Listen to what they say and make sure they get done before they turn 25. <i>19 years</i></p>	<p>Equity. Monitor the system and case workers for inequitable practices. <i>19 years</i></p>
<p>You need to listen to young people. Children in care need to be able to access counselling with minimal cost. <i>19 years</i></p>	<p>Help young people who are being bullied in care. Have the staff kick people out if they hurt others. If people are sick at night get the staff to help them out. <i>23 years</i></p>
<p>Make sure the funding goes. A lot of children in care are smart. <i>18 years</i></p>	<p>Ask the children and young people about how they are going and what they want. <i>25 years</i></p>
<p>Don't leave young people in the dark about their future. They have a right to know every aspect of their lives. <i>21 years</i></p>	<p>Young people in care suicide rate has increased over the years for a reason. Ask yourself why? Give them the opportunity to reach their full potential. <i>19 years</i></p>

Listen to the young children in care. We know how to change the system to make it fair for us. <i>19 years</i>	If you see a problem try to fix it now or lower the outcomes not in a few years time. Provide financial benefits for kids with a care experience and provide free counselling because we turn 18 doesn't mean we still don't have problems. <i>18 years</i>
Please listen to the voices of young people in care, they are human too, not case file numbers. <i>21 years</i>	Turning 18 may mean the end of our relationship, but it is the start of my life. If you want contributing citizens to the Australian society, we need your help to start our life. Don't leave us out in the cold. <i>23 years</i>
Get better carers. <i>18 years</i>	Make it compulsory for children in foster care to have a leaving care plan with: accommodation, education, and health. With the side option to get support for their license, identification and birth certificates. <i>21 years</i>
More assistance in care and after care for leaving care plans. <i>24 years</i>	Have CREATE members attend the children and young people's leaving care plan meeting. The child/person should be in the meeting. We should know all of our entitlements before the meeting. Have a support person in the meeting. <i>19 years</i>
Caseworkers should stop on vacation all the time. <i>19 years</i>	Ensure that young persons know what they're entitled to. Caseworkers need lighter caseloads in order so they are more personalized and less negligent. <i>19 years</i>
I was in resi care and there was no disability support. I am profoundly deaf and there were no attempts to put a deaf alarm in or deaf door bells or staff learning Auslan. This translates to me out of care. I am now finding support for my disability in the deaf community learning to use the National relay service and installing deaf alarms.	Please start planning and doing the transition out of care plan early. So the young person is set up before they leave care. Please broaden the amount and usage of TILA. Please make YHARS, TILA more accessible. Have a social worker or any person to emotionally support a young person to the age of 21. Have more grants and funding for young people wanting to do higher education (TAFE, Uni etc).
Listen to young people.	Take responsibility.
You really need to get your shit together, involve real people's experience and take note as action speaks louder than words. And always think what you would feel if you were in that situation	You take us away from our family but at 18 you say goodbye. Parents don't leave their children at 18 so please support us once we turn 18. We are people, we have feelings, we want support. Key to positive care experience is stability
The transition from care process is the building blocks of the young persons adult life. It is so important to build a list of the needs that they will need and make sure that they are completed. Support needs to continue. The young person needs to feel as though they have someone to continue to ask questions after they turn 18.	We are people, not numbers. Respect our efforts and understand our struggles. We do what we do because it has become our life. You do what you's do because it's your job. Be mindful that every decision effects the young person you work with. Lastly, every decision you make should be in the best interest of the young person.
Stop trying to appear helpful and start trying to help actual people	Mental health is a really big issue and it doesn't just go away past 18. I think there needs to be more support available to young people who have left care including counselling sessions. These kids have been traumatised and trauma doesn't just disappear and fix itself. It takes time and 10 sessions is definitely not enough. Early intervention to prevent the numbers of kids coming in to care and working with the parents/families to keep them out of the system.
It doesn't matter how much you read or know about kids in care because at the end of the day these kids are simply individuals and should be treated as such at all times. These kids are not stupid or broken, they are your everyday kids with a different story. Let them grow, encourage and motivate them to grow. Just because someone asks for help it doesn't mean that they are not able to do things. It just means they need help.	I believe that foster care should be positive experience where we know what is going on with ultimate, unlimited support people around. Know what we can access with the right information. We can change how others see the world and change future generations.
There is always room for improvement. Engage with young people more. Provide extended support. Provide more caseworker training. <i>23 years</i>	Help young people on their feet once they leave care as they don't have any support after 18 years of age.
For the government to get more people on the moving on program as that is like the only help you get after foster care is moving on and they are awesome but the it's only one or two people when the government should invest more in that program to help teenagers that have left care.	People leaving care find it hard to build a successful future, we require help and assistance to teach us how to pay bills and teach us basic cooking skills and maintain a clean living environment, carers are supposed to teach us these things but most of them don't want to. Emergency food and fuel vouchers should be provided for when youth need that additional help.
Change the laws to help people in need and support them. Carers need to be paid more so they don't take it out on the clients. Make it a better place!	Finding work because once you find work your life as an adult becomes a lot easier because then you have a constant amount

<p>19 years</p>	<p>that comes in and you know what to do with the money. Work, it's going to get you a car, a house, whatever you need. 18 years</p>
<p>Let us be heard because we do have a voice and at the end of the day it's not all about them. 23 years</p>	<p>Make supports easily accessible. Advertise and make them known. There are so many things out there but we don't know. We find out along the grapevine. 19 years</p>
<p>What is needed is an age change. Most 18 year olds aren't mature enough to be let out on their own. If you had an 18 year old you wouldn't kick them out if they didn't have the life-skills they need to survive. 21 years</p>	<p>Most other young people often have people to fall back on, who will help with financial struggles and advice. Most young people who have been in care don't have this. I think the government should let people who have been through the system and in care have free access to educational services (Uni/TAFE/Courses etc). 18 years</p>
<p>Think about extending the age for young people in care to 21. Because most of the people who turn 18 are still in college and how are we expected to take on the responsibilities of an adult when you're working full time. 18 years</p>	<p>Once young people turn 16 they should get there own money and learn how to manage money. When I turned 18 I had no idea about what to do with my money. There needs to be more help with budgeting and such a struggle with money when you move. We should have more of a say about things in our life. The department made all the decisions for me, it doesn't help us later on and you feel left out of your life. If young people are saying something is wrong or they need help, listen to them. There should be more supported housing for young people leaving care, if you aren't supported sometimes young people find themselves in not very nice places. There is a lot to think about at 18 and young people who are not supported end up dropping out of school. I think young people in care should have support from the department until they are 21, 18 is too young, it's too hard. 19 years</p>
<p>I think they should make it a part of the jobs of both service providers (such as the link health service) to go into schools and let young people know what is out there and what they can access. Same for case workers, they should be made to take young people around to see these services when they are still in care and getting ready become independent. 19 years</p>	<p>Listen to the voices of young people and implement the things they say need to change, we deserve a system that's not so broken. 22 years</p>
<p>Put themselves in our shoes. Provide more funding for foster carers. Provide more funding for buses and make transport more accessible for people living regionally. 18 years</p>	<p>You fucked me up. 20 years</p>
<p>Our lives aren't a political game. Our lives will change, our lives will end with your decisions. The responsibility you have to us isn't about money. You have a responsibility to create relationship with us, to interact personally with us and to make decisions based on our best interests, not yours. Involve us in the decision making. We have more knowledge than you about our own experiences. 21 years</p>	<p>Children and young people are people. If you glanced over this and thought "of course" you're probably not thinking hard enough. The opinion of a person currently in the system matters more than a "professional" working in it. Listen actively and treat them equitably. 20 years</p>
<p>Get better at doing your job, listen to us (we know more than you think). 19 years</p>	<p>Extending the age of leaving care from 18 to 25. Assign one case worker to the client. 19 years</p>
<p>Wake up and don't be stuck in your old ways, be open. 22 years</p>	<p>Please stop cutting funding from the youth sector. You need to understand that the most vulnerable kids are getting the least help. They are the future of our society too and deserve to be treated as equal members of the growing community. 20 years</p>
<p>Kids are people, not numbers. Uneducated to you I might appear, but I have been a part of the system that you made and it sucks.</p>	<p>The system has somewhat disappointed me with the lack of support. Other than support issues the system has been pretty good. 19 years</p>
<p>Carers shouldn't be carers just for the money. Case workers should know what they are doing before they get the job. Youths should be able to stay where they are for as long as they need. 18 years</p>	<p>If child protection want to stop creating criminals they should keep tabs on young people for a few years after they leave care so they have support. People feel like they have been forgotten by a system that was meant to help. They refill the human connections with alcohol, drugs and crime and it creates more problems. They should extend the leaving care age, just because your 18 doesn't mean your emotionally stable and mature enough to be on your own, it's just setting them up to fail. Why</p>

	take kids into care if they are just going to end up in a worse situation when they leave. <i>22 years</i>
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Table 6: Advice to another young person who is about to leave care

Group One: Young people under 18, who were about to leave care, or moving towards leaving care	
Just have fun and live your life. <i>16 years</i>	Never give up on your dreams. You can do it. You can't have a rainbow without a little rain <i>16 years</i>
Get your license and TFN and Centrelink money as soon as you can. And learn as many skills as you can so that you are more independent. <i>17 years</i>	Take things slow. Also, always remember that you have support. Have three main goals. Sit down with your caseworker, and talk about anything you didn't get or are having trouble with. <i>14 years</i>
Be open about what you actually want/need. Consider all possible outcomes when thinking about your future. Have fun, allow yourself to have fun and not worry yourself too much about your future or your present situation. <i>16 years</i>	Don't let [Care and Protection] control you. <i>17 years</i>
When you turn 18 you should save \$1000, so if you need a doctor it will be good. <i>16 years</i>	Know that you are not alone. <i>16 years</i>
You are only one year older and are not invincible. Do not make wrong choices. <i>16 years</i>	You are in a dark room with no light on and you can see the light, and there is a very positive at the end of the dark room. If you try you can achieve anything if you put your mind to it. If you try you will succeed what you need and want to do. <i>17 years</i>
Take Advantage of the system and try to get as much freedom. Make sure you talk to other people about what is happening and how you feel. <i>14 years</i>	Get the funding you can get. You are eligible for funding for things. <i>17 years</i>
Talk to someone you like and trust which sometimes might be the one and only thing you need to do because nothing can be fixed if nothing is said. <i>17 years</i>	Don't stay in school. <i>17 years</i>
Have a plan about your future. <i>15 years</i>	Get as much support as you can while you are still young. <i>17 years</i>
Don't worry what people say. People suck. <i>17 years</i>	Don't worry, be happy. <i>16 years</i>
Be safe. Make good choices. Have fun. Join life. Make the effort. <i>17 years</i>	Throw a party when you leave [Care and Protection]
Focus your hardest in school, it's what sets you put in life. The effort and amount of work you put in results in what opportunities you will have available to you in the future.	Take advantage of the support that is available to you. Don't let anyone tell you that are different because everyone deserves the right to feel normal.
Hang in there and if something bad happens or you don't like something, then tell someone so then something could be done straight away.	Keep in touch with your family. Also, demand what you are entitled to from [Care and Protection].
Don't get mad at the carers if they tell you to do something. Get a job when your 14 and up. Always respect the carers and their kids (if they have any).	Try to get a job as soon as possible. Use the advantages you gain as you are in care. Do well in school.
Try and get everything paid for before you leave care. Like I am getting my gym membership before I leave. <i>17 years</i>	When you are moving on, think about everything you need and want and put it down on paper because then it's there and that way have options. <i>17 years</i>
I want kids to be able to choose the family because it will make safer families.	Use as much support as needed, use support to set yourself up for life, try to live the life you want to live, not the life others want you to live.
Don't stress.	Get child safety to get you furniture, get more information from the department, to help people get better at life skills in care before they move out of care.
Get prepared (eg housing), get help as soon as you can, seek support from other people.	Save money and be prepared.
Just make sure you have good support.	Get help as soon as possible.
Don't change for other people, it's okay to make your own choice.	Before you turn 18 make sure you have a good stable home.
Have fun and enjoy your freedom, but pull your head in, get a decent job, finish Uni or whatever, and get a house on your own	Try not to grow up to fast. If you have to live with your parents until 24, just do it. Don't drink alcohol.

to experience life only being able to rely on yourself to learn to be independent. <i>14 years</i>	<i>16 years</i>
It might sound bad but get as much out of it as you can, they are here to help you. Like I'm not saying take this take that but if you need something, speak up and tell them. <i>17 years</i>	I just feel like further education is really important, TAFE or university. While you have the support go and get educated. You can go and get a trade at any point in life. Take the opportunities while you have them. <i>17 years</i>
Be prepared. <i>16 years</i>	Get the support before you're 18. Get the support of someone like a mentor or support worker, because when you turn 18, stuff will hit the fan. <i>17 years</i>
Before you are 18 save some money. <i>16 years</i>	Don't worry about, because you'll have plenty of opportunities, you just need to look for them. Learn from your mistakes, so you don't make the same mistakes over and over. <i>16 years</i>
Ask questions and let people know if things aren't ok. <i>15 years</i>	Don't think that your world is over. <i>17 years</i>

Group Two: Young people who had already turned 18, and had left care

Make use of all facilities out there. Getting assistance doesn't make you weak, it makes you smart! Smart thinking, smart future! <i>18 years</i>	Take and use all the help you can get. Once you are out there on your own it is extremely difficult. Don't be afraid to ask, and take whatever you can. <i>24 years</i>
Make sure you have a leaving care plan, and somewhere to live, and a housing application has been made, and knowledge of housing options, places for support, and to be linked into post care support, and brokerage available to you like TILA. <i>24 years</i>	Take advantage of the system in terms of support with medical-dental needs, health needs etc. Educational needs post 18 as well. <i>22 years</i>
Chose the people you surround yourself with wisely. The people around you affect the person that you become. <i>22 years</i>	Speak your mind. <i>21 years</i>
Ask for help. <i>23 years</i>	Push the system to get all the funding that you are eligible for to ensure that you can set yourself up best as possible. Get all the support you can including a leaving care plan, life skills, and push for everything you'll need in life. <i>24 years</i>
Listen to the people who are trying to help you. I didn't because I was stubborn, But I was young. <i>19 years</i>	Make sure you organize yourself and have everybody ready before you turn 18. I didn't because no-one was there to help me. <i>20 years</i>
Take advantage of the system. Try and learn about life skills cause your going to need it. <i>22 years</i>	Please make sure you are involved with all your case meetings. Who know you better than you do. Make sure you have a say and your voice is heard. There are supports out there, just remember to ask for help. This is your life. Take the wheel while you still have help. Speak up! <i>23 years</i>
Know you can speak your mind, you are worthy of everything. <i>22 years</i>	
Housing is the most foundation to a successful transition to independent living. It's extremely important to be assertive and find people who will advocate for you. Make complaints in writing, and don't be afraid to admit you can't do it alone.	Reach out to whoever you can to make sure your voice is heard.
Make sure you know your leaving care plan and what you're entitled to, and organisations outside of 18. Ask for help as much as you need to, and let those help who want to help.	You should use every second of support to grow your independent living skills and knowledge.
Get things done before its too late.	Hang in there.
Make sure your case plan goes to plan. Make sure you've been referred to leaving care services and or housing services. And have a ball when you turn 18.	Talk. Make relationships with people who have experienced life/care.
Don't give up and ask for help you are entitled to. [Care and Protection] are to support until 25.	Your voice counts. Speak what's on your mind.
Seek out to get things.	It can be scary at times, but don't give up keep going. Ask for what you want and need and keep asking, and make sure you are connected to a leaving care service.
Make sure you get everything out of [Care and Protection] while you still can. Make sure you always have a back-up plan just in case things don't work out, and always make sure you have a support group around you.	Seek all the support you can, and learn about living independent.

<p>This is the beginning of your life. There's light at the end of the tunnel, and its not a train.</p> <p>Be safe. 23 years</p>	<p>Make sure you get out of home. 18 years</p>
<p>Ask for the support you need, don't be afraid to. Reach out. Friends, family, etc. 21 years</p>	<p>Have a back-up plan. If you ever feel upset or angry, tell someone. Don't think you will get in trouble if you ask. Continue going to school, I shouldn't have stopped. Everything happens for a reason. 25 years</p>
<p>Brace yourself, you don't know what you are in for. 19 years</p>	<p>You matter and you are amazing! Take every step towards your dream, your time is now. It'll be scary, but it's totally worth it. Get support, nothing is fun when you're doing it alone. 19 years</p>
<p>Please find information about all of the grants and supports that you can use and please use them. They are there to support you and you are not a burden to them. 21 years</p> <p>Good luck! 18 years</p>	<p>Research everything that you are entitled to so that you know its there for future or now. Get help to knowledge yourself on living and financial skills. Education yourself to better your options. 18 years</p>
<p>Make sure you have a good leaving care plan. 18 years</p>	<p>Accept any help that is offered. You may think that you know what you are doing, but there may be times in the future where you wish that you had accepted that help! 23 years</p>
<p>Do your leaving care plan. Access your TILA. Find support agencies. Speak to a CREATE member to find out what your entitled to for your leaving care plan. 19 years</p>	<p>Make sure that you have a casual job, or at least get one. Make sure to keep secure and important documents. Make sure you initiate your leaving care plan if someone (case manager) doesn't. Secure what type of future you want, know where to live after 18 and make sure you have a few networks to fall back on. 21 years</p>
<p>Make a leaving care plan. Access your TILA. Join support agencies. Make sure name is on public housing list. 19 years</p>	<p>Have a leaving care plan. Access TILA. Access all your assistance before you leave care and after you leave care. 24 years</p>
<p>Start planning early. Ask about support networks and how to access them. Learn how to budget, try to learn how to get help with dental applications, insurance, buying things etc.</p>	<p>Get everything before it's over. 19 years</p>
<p>Get support.</p>	<p>Don't put everything on your worker or CSO (take the lead when you need to).</p>
<p>Start planning early, learn how to budget, take control of your health, follow your dreams, create a support network.</p>	<p>Ask as many questions as you need answers to, take your driving lessons very seriously, speak up on anything you don't like because this is your life. Take a break or day off on thinking about moving out if needed. Get a hold of all your important information. Talk about the things that your scared about (eg: being by yourself in a big house).</p>
<p>Ask about other services that can support you when you leave care, plan early and don't rush, ask as many questions as possible until you are satisfied with answers.</p>	<p>Get as much info as possible.</p>
<p>Education is the key. Get all the information that you can. It will make it easier. Always ask questions even if you don't need the information now you may need it later one.</p>	<p>Have a job, have money saved.</p>
<p>Local services. What support networks around. What medical history is available. Where to find housing and fill out forms for housing. Local food vans/street doctors. How/where to do washing/dinner etc. How to survive on your own and be self independent.</p>	<p>Access information about your case before you turn 18. Use up funding when you have it. Speak to next step. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Stand up for yourself.</p>
<p>Plan everything ahead: budget, Uni units/course work, what you want in the long run.</p>	<p>Listen to the people around you. Ask the questions you need answers too. Prepare for the future.</p>
<p>Don't rely on DOCS or the government or other people unless you really have to.</p>	<p>Learn as much as you can, give it your all, go hard or go home. Listen when someone tries teaching you something. Hope for the best, prepare for the worst. Always plan for the future cause there comes a time where you have to be independent and you have to be ready for what the world has to throw at you.</p>
<p>There's no such thing as a stupid question so ask.</p>	<p>You are about to turn 18 and well done. You are so strong. My best advice it to tell you don't give up. Ask for support, there are people who want to support you. Get a job, and save as bills never stop. Keep smiling. Apply for grants, TILA, get next step to help, bond with support workers.</p>
<p>Education is a valuable thing. So ask all the questions now, even though info may not be relevant now, it may in the future.</p> <p>Plan everything ahead.</p>	<p>Access all the funding you can and use it all.</p>
	<p>Don't be afraid to ask for support and develop good relationships with workers.</p>
	<p>Ask for access to your files before you turn 18.</p>
	<p>It's really unfair – but you have to be mature and know what you want and go after it.</p>

Follow your dreams.	Transitioning can be emotional. It's stressful, so be open about your feelings.
Ask where your local supports are.	Ask your GP about a mental health plan.
Be street smart and don't do crime.	Get linked in before you turn 18 to [Care and Protection] if you have to.
There's always support out there for you.	Keep asking questions until you're satisfied with the answers.
Have a house over your head.	Google everything.
Ask what you're eligible for and question everything.	If possible get a job, cos the bills never stop.
This is your life, step up and trust your gut.	Make sure that you and your case manager sit down and discuss your leaving care plan at least 1 year prior to leaving the system itself.
Ensure you receive what you are entitled to. See what services can provide you with assistance. Get all the financial help you can before leaving care. Be prepared! <i>23 years</i>	They got to put everything they can think of on their leaving care plan, passports, furniture, TILA, Uni or education help for the future, get their last holiday flight paid for before a8 and get their file opened after 18. Get put in the moving on program and go housing even if they got a place or not, always good to put their babe on housing list for the future.
It's going to be tough, you will be very confused at first to pay bills but you will eventually get the hang of it. My advice is to maintain a steady income and put your bills as a priority. Entertainment comes later. No one teaches you how to achieve these things, and you will make mistakes along the way. Always put money aside for fuel and food shopping.	Make sure you are a part of the plan. Think about where they want to stay, where they want to go and what they might want to study. What support would you might need with family or culture. Plan ahead and plan what you are going to be doing, so you know where you are starting from and so you aren't just left on your own. Ask for help like with houses. <i>19 years</i>
Think about it before you turn 18 and write a bunch of notes down so when your leaving care meeting comes you know exactly what to say and exactly what you need so you can tell them. <i>18 years</i>	Link in to any supports that they offer, whether you think it will be helpful or not, link in anyway. You never know what the future holds. If none are offered, search for them. Don't just let it slip by. And good luck. <i>19 years</i>
Get the supports you need. Don't be scared and get a worker until you get your own house. Have your worker to fall back on if something doesn't go well. <i>23 years</i>	Study hard.
Take all the support and help you need, use all the support you can get, especially while still in the system. <i>21 years</i>	If you need help, make sure you don't wait, be proactive and make them listen. Speak to someone at school if you need help with talking about mental health stuff, because, your mental health gets challenged when you move into independence. <i>18 years</i>
Make sure they tell their case worker if they are not comfortable with where they are going to live and to check out the place before you move in to make sure it fits with you. Make sure you are comfortable with the decisions that your case worker are making and make sure that your involved with your leaving care plan and that your involved in the decisions that are being made about you. Make sure your organised beforehand with things like money, getting furniture, belongings and changing your address for places like Centrelink and your worker helps you with these things. <i>19 years</i>	I know how your feeling, I have been in your position before, I had to leave my carer at 18 and only knew at 17 and a ½ I was leaving, I don't like change, I was really scared, and confused, but I didn't have a choice I had to move, it was terrifying but with the right supports in place it will turn out ok. Even if you make mistakes you will learn from them. You will be ok, I have come a long way since leaving. <i>19 years</i>
Talk to caseworkers as sometimes they aren't helpful and don't remember to tell you everything thats available. Grants are helpful and make sure you're aware of what is out there and understand that the world is not against them. <i>19 years</i>	Try not to move out of home to early and stay at home where you can be supported by your guardians (extend the age to 21) and if you have move out make sure you are moving out to a place where you have support and be sure to access the support, don't be afraid to access it, because it won't come to you. <i>19 years</i>
You can do what you want, don't ever think you cant do it, just cos you're a care kid. I was lucky, I worked my way around the system but some kids don't know how to. <i>20 years</i>	I'd like to tell people that it's ok and that you can live independently and it's not as scary as people make it out to be, but you just need to be prepared. <i>21 years</i>
Just be prepared for the unexpected. Ask your case worker to help you access your file, I am still trying to access it. <i>22 years</i>	Start planning before 18, don't leave too much up to the case worker. Communicate with them but don't be sneaky. Ask the case worker for help with jobs and housing. At the end of the day they don't do too much, there are good ones but there are really bad ones as well. <i>23 years</i>
Good luck. There's always support there if you ask for it but you have to try and find it first and that's hard. People won't just help you or give you advice, you need to be confident, stand up for	Don't do drugs, no stealing or underage drinking. Keep in contact with support workers for help in being independent. <i>18 years</i>

yourself and ask for what you need or you just won't know what to do. <i>18 years</i>	
Make sure you have support around you and keep involved with your community. I got involved with the Mens Hub and they provided support for me when I really needed it. <i>20 years</i>	Don't stress it's not as hard as it looks. Make sure you have a good circle of friends and supports that are there for you. <i>18 years</i>
Your origins are note your future. You have the ultimate decision on how you live. Keep hope. Hang in there. <i>19 years</i>	Learn from your own mistakes and always follow your gut feeling. <i>20 years</i>
Keep playing the game. <i>22 years</i>	The sector needs your help to get better. If enough young people speak up then change will happen. <i>20 years</i>
Fight on their level because you can use your perceived weaknesses as strength. <i>20 years</i>	Hang in there buppy. <i>19 years</i>
Learn life skills (cooking and cleaning). Remember that there are support workers out there that do care and actually want to help you. Respect everyone. <i>19 years</i>	Hang in there, it will work out. Have faith in who you are and what you mean. <i>19 years</i>
Don't burn your bridges, speak your mind, and if you're not happy tell someone. <i>18 years</i>	Plan ahead, things like finances and who you want to be in your life because who you hang around with when you first become independent will impact on how you go and if you actually are supported and stable. Stand on your own two feet and be strong. <i>22 years</i>
Everything will be alright, stay calm and connect with others . <i>24 years</i>	Do not try to fit in.
Don't be scared to ask and you have rights as a young person. <i>24 years</i>	Explore all your options.
Do what you want to do when it comes to education and career as you are capable of doing it regardless of what others say as you'll always have people putting you down. Work hard to achieve your dreams. <i>24 years</i>	Take risks.
Everything will be alright, don't be scared to ask for help.	Get a mentor at a young age.
Stay connected, you have rights as a young person.	Get a tutor at a young age.
Do what your heart desires when it comes to education and career as you'll be able to achieve it regardless of what others say.	Get out there! Ask as many questions as you can. Use your networks! It will expose you to opportunities you would have never thought of before.
Never ever give up.	Have a positive mindset.
Life is beautiful if we see it as beautiful.	Have some networks.
Take the problems easy, ask for help.	You are strong and capable to tackle any difficult situation that comes your way.
Please don't be shy, if you're shy your problems will not be solved.	Don't be afraid and speak out your heart.
Come out of your shell.	Opportunities will lie in front of you if you find you have a strong mental power.
Get connected.	Volunteer!!
Explore university facilities.	Stay aware of your surroundings.
Be more active: physically, emotionally, spiritually.	Respect your cultural beliefs and parents.

STRATEGY THREE: ORGANISATIONS RESPONDING BETTER TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO KEEP THEM SAFE

Table 7: A message to the Government about how to support young people recently arrived in Australia

<p>My message to the Government is that I'm very happy in Australia, because I feel safe and pace [sic]! The only thing what really hard is to speak English. English is my third language and sometimes it's so hard to speak. I want to study after high school in university but I afraid that my English not enough to make good marks in HSC. One more thing is that sometimes when I feel alone and sad I don't have someone to talk with. Someone who can listen me and give me an advice. Someone to trust. Thank you.</p> <p><i>18 years, Hungarian</i></p>	<p>Financial support for study.</p> <p><i>15 years, Arabic</i></p>
<p>My message to the Government is I feel good in Australia but the only thing make me sad is all my family are in my country and I miss them and I miss my father too. In Australia I feel happy but there are some people are rude.</p> <p><i>13 years, Turkish</i></p>	<p>The government always use modern technology in traffic and public transport. Find new ways to improve the education. Establish more centre to consultant a job or problems in their live.</p> <p><i>17 years</i></p>
<p>Can we get some services to help international students that can tell them the bus and train transport, the map for the suburb. Cuz they just come here, they don't know anything about the country and this city. Can we have some more learning centre for international students to help them learn English. Also if possible we can learn about the country and some important holidays.</p> <p><i>15 years, Chinese</i></p>	<p>My message to the Government is: give money for someone need money for something very urgent; give jobs for any person in need job; provide a decent place; support any positive activity.</p> <p><i>18 years, Indonesian</i></p>
<p>Help other countries that has a lot of refugees. Be fair with all people. More help for education. Centrelink is not enough for uniforms, books and laptops. It's not enough for us to live. My family don't work because they can't speak English.</p> <p><i>18 years, Arabic</i></p>	<p>My message to the government: I'm happy because Australian Government took my family and me and help to learn English. I have a peaceful life here and have money for my study. I am more safe here. But I have small problems include not enough English work and in my country I lived with my grandmother but here I'm lived my family so I'm missed my grandmother in my life.</p> <p><i>18 years, Tamil</i></p>
<p>My message to the Government: Find jobs for young people; more activities for young people during school holidays; more parks.</p> <p><i>14 years, Vietnamese</i></p>	<p>Better representation of the Australian public in Australian parliament.</p> <p><i>22 years</i></p>
<p>Please stop working cash.</p> <p><i>20 years</i></p>	<p>Get more young people into politics.</p> <p><i>22 years</i></p>
<p>Make a limit on having cash.</p> <p><i>20 years</i></p>	<p>Try and support young people arriving in Australia.</p> <p><i>23 years</i></p>
<p>If this is done so, Australia is the best place... now it is good place. Hope it becomes best.</p> <p><i>20 years</i></p>	<p>Support young people in/wanting to go into University.</p> <p><i>23 years</i></p>
<p>Education rights for asylum seekers.</p> <p><i>21 years</i></p>	<p>Provide international students with same benefits and facilities as domestic students in terms of fees and transportation.</p> <p><i>24 years</i></p>
<p>Keep the current health care.</p> <p><i>21 years</i></p>	<p>Remove the barrier of job-finding racism because of names on resume (Female, 24)</p>
<p>Encourage inter-cultural connectivity.</p> <p><i>21 years</i></p>	<p>Live equality, not just say it! Gender, race, age.</p> <p><i>26 years</i></p>
<p>Provide more opportunities for CALD people.</p> <p><i>24 years</i></p>	<p>Stop pretending like you can empathise.</p> <p><i>26 years</i></p>
<p>Provide paper representations for people of colour.</p> <p><i>24 years</i></p>	<p>Amend 18C to the way it was.</p> <p><i>21 years</i></p>
<p>Delete racial profiling in regards to applying for job.</p> <p><i>24 years</i></p>	<p>Provide more job opportunities to people from CALD communities.</p> <p><i>21 years</i></p>
<p>Times are changing, you need to keep up with the issues of people, as we are the future = sustainability.</p> <p><i>21 years</i></p>	<p>Let more young people work in council, as it's the same older people who are not representative to the community.</p> <p><i>21 years</i></p>
<p>Older people in councils, mentor young people so they can take over these roles.</p> <p><i>21 years</i></p>	<p>Australia is made up of people from all around the world. Let's keep that in mind when making decisions that affect them.</p> <p><i>22 years</i></p>

Table 8: Advice to another young person recently arrived in Australia

I hope that every one smile and be good, like me inside I'm very sad, but I like to be good and helpful.	Respect other culture and follow the school rules.
If you just come to here, firstly find the transport from home to school, and find the place to buy stuff. Make sure you know the way clearly and be careful to lost in some suburbs.	Make friends with someone around you. Don't be afraid to talk with other people. You must speak more English in school if you want to improve your English.
To be patient because at first [when] I have arrived Australia was [a] little hard to adapt with Australian community and society so they need to be open minded and patient and respect all people such as their ideas or beliefs.	Study hard to get ready to high school.
Be friendly to other person. If you want to prove you English quick, study hard. Respect everyone. Stay the way you are and improve. <i>16 years, Arabic</i>	More study hard, more successful. Never give up your dreams.
	Dear young person! I arrived just 5 months before. This is a different world with different people. Try to be positive every day! Smile with everyone! It will help you! Find an activity where you can feel comfortable and fun (sport). Sometimes people will be rude and they will not respect you and your culture but you should stay strong! Your home always will be a good place to relax and feel good. If you feel alone just find something what you make you successful.