

MEDIA RELEASE

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HOME STRETCH CAMPAIGN LAUNCH - EXTENDING SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

Anglicare NT will launch the “Home Stretch” campaign in the Northern Territory on Wednesday 24 May 2017. The key aim of the Home Stretch campaign is to ask government to legislate to allow young people to have the option to stay in supported care until they are 21 years of age.

The Chair of the Home Stretch campaign, Mr Paul McDonald of Anglicare Victoria, said it was time the Northern Territory and other Australian States caught up with the rest of the world and stopped “evicting” children from foster or residential care when they turned 18.

In the Northern Territory, over 1000 young people are in out-of-home care in kinship care, foster care or residential care. They are usually vulnerable children from abusive or neglectful backgrounds.

“Currently, many young people must exit our child protection system when they turn 18. We know this isn’t the best option for most young people and they tell us that leaving care can be like entering a deep chasm, with a sudden loss of supports and often real isolation,” said Anglicare NT CEO Dave Pugh.

“Growing evidence shows that we’re not doing enough to support care leavers successfully transition into independence, with approximately 63% of homeless young people having been in care. Nearly 30% of care leavers are unemployed.”

“What we want for our children and young people exiting care is exactly what most parents and carers want for their own children, and that’s access to the same opportunities and supports that other young Australians have,” said Mr Pugh.

“Most young people get to stay at home with their family for longer for financial reasons, social reasons and the housing affordability crisis. But we stop support and funding at age 18 for those most likely to struggle to cope. It is no wonder these young people end up in trouble.”

“Extending supported care to age 21 can reduce youth crime, drug use and homelessness in the NT – and simultaneously save money,” said Mr Pugh.

“A recent study undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics shows the economic benefits to the Northern Territory of extending care to age 21 is equal to \$1.94 in returned savings for every \$1 invested through reduced costs of homelessness, fewer hospitalisations and fewer arrests,” he said.

“This is the first time these savings have been quantified and it demonstrates there is no longer any excuse for delaying this important policy change which has been accepted by just about all other comparable democracies.”

NOTES FOR EDITOR

The Home Stretch Campaign will be launched in the NT by Associate Professor Philip Mendes and Anglicare NT CEO Dave Pugh on Wednesday 24 May 2017.

The launch will take place at 12.10pm at Barbara James House, 9 Mirambeena St, The Gardens. Media are welcome to attend and take photos and video of the launch.

FOR COMMENTS OR INTERVIEWS

To arrange interviews with Anglicare NT CEO Dave Pugh please contact Anglicare NT Communications.

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