



Young People Transitioning from State care by Philip Mendes

Queensland Department of
Child Safety Research
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- **Formal definition of leaving care;**
- **Leaving care in practice;**
- **Mike Stein's three categories: moving on group, survivors group, and strugglers group.**



- - **Multiple disadvantages. Firstly, many have experienced and are still recovering from considerable physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect prior to entering care. Secondly, many young people have experienced inadequacies in state care. Thirdly, many care leavers can call on little, if any, direct family support or other community networks to ease their involvement into independent living.**
- - **Abrupt end at 16-18 years of age to the formal support networks of state care.**



- **Poor outcomes for many care leavers include homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, poor mental and physical health, education and employment deficits, poor social support systems, juvenile prostitution, crime, early parenthood. Also particular challenges for indigenous and rural care leavers.**

- **Stein argues for three key reforms to improve outcomes: Improving the quality of care, more gradual and flexible transition from care, and more specialized after care supports.**

Australian Leaving Care Research

- **Judy Cashmore and Marina Paxman longitudinal study in NSW;**
- **Victorian Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare re: economic costs of not supporting care leavers;**
- **Create Foundation national survey;**
- **Cashmore and Mendes national survey of legislation, policy and programs.**

- **Mendes current and proposed research projects:**
- **Improving Housing outcomes for young people leaving state out of home care, Victoria and WA field research, funded by Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute 2008-09.**
- **Examining the support needs and pathways of young people leaving state care in rural Victoria, funded by Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, 2008-09.**
- **A national evaluation of services for young people transitioning from state care”, proposed Australian Research Council study, 2009-2011**

- **To improve outcomes, reforms are needed in the areas of transition period, housing, social supports and relationships, physical and mental health, early parenthood, education and employment, finances and income security, and specific supports for indigenous and rural care leavers.**

- **Conclusion: need to incorporate formal leaving care supports via legislation and policy into the existing care system so that care leavers receive the same assistance as other young people not in state care till at least 21 years of age.**