



**Australian Government  
Australian Social Inclusion Board**

The Hon Peter Garrett AM, MP  
Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

The Australian Social Inclusion Board (the Board) met in Canberra on 16 June 2011 and received an overview of the *Building Australia's Future Workforce* package from Ms Lisa Paul AO. Following the briefing, the Board discussed the education of young people in or leaving state care or other out-of-home care arrangements.

The Board has a continuing interest in exploring better outcomes for young people in out-of-home care. The Board considers that, like many social inclusion issues, this is not the responsibility of one arm of government but rather requires whole-of-government collaboration. The Board has asked me to write to you to ensure that these young people receive focus in the Review of Funding for Schooling, and any reconfiguration of existing National Partnership Agreements, to support them to remain connected with education.

As background to this issue, in 2010 the Board conducted research into breaking cycles of disadvantage. As a result of this research, a number of cohorts were identified which have a particularly high level of vulnerability and complex needs, and require continuity of care and additional support. One of these cohorts was young people in or leaving state or other out-of-home care arrangements.

A number of submissions were received by the Board during the research process from adults who had previously been in state care, and who had continued to suffer disadvantage and trauma. Research has found that for many young people, state care continues to be an unstable, difficult experience which is associated with a range of negative outcomes including early school leaving, homelessness, poor financial management, contact with the justice system, and difficulty with parenting including contact with child protection services in relation to their own children.

In particular, transition points such as from school to work, or from care to independent living, are times of particular risk for people in state care. The transition to independence for young people in state care can occur between the ages of 16 to 18 years, depending on the state. This young age range is at odds with the broader trend for other young people to remain living at home or supported by their family for longer periods of time. A lower age of independence places additional pressure on state care leavers to assume adult responsibilities at a very young age.

One of the key risks for people in state care is that they disengage from education. They may be early school leavers, and may not be linked in with other education or employment services. The Board's research found that early school leaving is a critical factor in determining a young person's future outcomes, and can have far-reaching implications of disadvantage including longer periods of unemployment, lower incomes and less wealth accumulation over their lifetime.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' continued engagement with the Board in supporting the most disadvantaged Australians is appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Patricia Faulkner AO  
Chair – Australian Social Inclusion Board  
July, 2011

cc The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Social Inclusion  
Senator the Hon Chris Evans, Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations  
Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM, Secretary, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations  
Mr David Gonski AC, Chair, Review of School Funding Panel

## SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUT OF HOME CARE

1. What programs and services are in place within your portfolio to support state care recipients and leavers to remain connected to education?
2. The National Partnership Agreement for Youth Attainment and Transition places obligation on states, territories and the Commonwealth with respect to supporting young people to remain in education and training, and to better transition from learning to employment. What elements of this partnership assist young people in state care?
3. Work has recently been undertaken on disadvantaged youth; one of the results was to reconfigure existing National Partnerships to better support young people. Is there capacity in this process to incorporate better supports for young people in or leaving state care to remain connected with education?
4. The Transition to Independent Living Allowance is currently under review. Is there any evidence to date about the use and efficacy of this payment in supporting young care leavers to remain connected with education?
5. Is it anticipated that the Review of Funding for Schooling, which is due to report to Government by the end of 2011, will incorporate recommendations relating to young people in state care?
6. Are there any other key partnerships or agreements within your portfolio which are of relevance to this issue?
7. Young people in or leaving state care face issues that cross the responsibilities of many agencies, portfolios and levels of government. What steps have been taken to connect or coordinate service from your portfolio with those provided across all levels of government?

The Board understands that a number of these reviews and projects are ongoing, however would appreciate any information available to date.