




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Next Step After Care

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.00 am): I recently had the pleasure of launching an excellent program which provides support for young people who are leaving the child protection system in Queensland. Next Step After Care is a collaborative project delivered by Life Without Barriers, UnitingCare Community and the Create Foundation. About 500 young people transition from the child protection system in Queensland every year.

Leaving care and becoming independent can be an exciting time for young people, but it can also be challenging. Signing a lease, preparing for a job interview or managing money can be daunting for anyone when they turn 18, but most of us have the strong support of family or friendship networks to help along the way. I want young people leaving care to have similar support. Sometimes it really helps them to get advice from others who have taken a similar path. That is what the Next Step After Care services are all about.

I was pleased to launch these statewide services recently at Beenleigh. The government has provided \$11.8 million over four years so that, for the first time, support will be offered from age 18 through to 21. Young people with firsthand experience of out-of-home care provided excellent ideas to help develop this project. Prior to this fantastic launch event, I had already met with some of Create Foundation's young consultants going through this journey—Julia, Tiffany, Codie and Angela. I loved hearing their stories and ideas. Some of them have already left the care system and have gone on to mentor young people who still are in care. They told me how helpful it was to have someone who had similar experiences to them giving them advice and guidance. And now they have decided to help others. So it is absolutely fantastic to hear that Create has collaborated on this program. Leading into Volunteer Week next week, I would like to give particular thanks to these young volunteers who dedicate their time and efforts to others in need. They are Queensland's true heroes.

The Next Step program recognises that young people need information and support to develop into confident, happy adults. The services provide a 24/7 statewide information and crisis support telephone service, social media forums and a new app and, on top of this, on-the-ground services throughout Queensland to provide vital face-to-face support for young people, particularly those with complex needs who require face-to-face support. I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Next Step teams in various regions across Queensland. Next Step will certainly go a long way in supporting young people across Queensland as they start a new chapter in their lives.