



Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Children and Young People in Care

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.06 am): There is nothing more important than the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, which is why it was an absolute privilege to stand alongside Create Foundation CEO Jacqui Reed and Create young consultants on Saturday to make an historic announcement for young people in care. From 1 July next year our government has committed to extending support to young people leaving care up to the age of 21.

Over the past 20 months, as minister for children I have heard repeated calls from young people in care to make this change. They said 18 was too young and they needed more and ongoing support. At the heart of the budget delivered earlier this week is the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders, especially those who are vulnerable and at risk. That is why we extended support for young people in family based care to 19 under my predecessor, Minister Farmer. Now our government continues that reform and extends care to all young people, whether in family based or non-family based care, up to the age of 21.

This is a life-changing announcement for the approximately 700 young people who transition from care every year. These are teenagers who have been in foster, kinship or residential care and are now leaving care because they are considered adults. Young people at the age of 18, 19, 20 or even 21 still need support, as it is a crucial and vulnerable time in a young person's life. Create Foundation has long been an advocate for young people in and leaving care around the country. During many meetings their message to me and our government has been clear: they need more support. One young consultant said to me at one of our meetings, 'Minister, when your two young boys turn 18 they will have you. They won't be alone, and I don't want to do this alone either.' My message to that young consultant and to all young people is, 'I heard you, we heard you, and our government listened. This is your reform.'

This announcement means that we will be extending the availability of the foster care allowance by two years for carers of young people who remain living with them up to the age of 21. We will also be funding non-government caseworker support and financial support for young people leaving non-family based or residential care. This is a significant step to ensure that young people leaving care are better equipped to find jobs, suitable accommodation, upskill or take up tertiary education. We want to see young people succeed. We want to see young people get on their feet and thrive when they leave care. There is a lot of work to be done, so the next 12 months will be crucial as we get ready to implement these changes from 1 July 2023. Over the next 12 months my department will consult with young people in care across Queensland to ensure this extended support and transition meets their needs. It will be designed by young people for young people, as my absolute focus as minister for children is to amplify the voices of children and young people in decisions that affect them.

I also want to acknowledge the stakeholders, including Create, PeakCare, QATSICPP, Home Stretch, Queensland Foster and Kinship Care, QCOSS and so many others for their advocacy of these system reforms and for their ongoing commitment to children and young people in care. I am proud to be a member of a government that listens to the voices of Queensland children and young people in care and supports their health and wellbeing as they grow into adulthood. I am proud to be a part of this historic reform.