Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare Inc.

MEDIA RELEASE

YOUNG PEOPLE DESERVE CARE BEYOND 18 YEARS

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Extending the age that young people leave state care should be an important plank in government and police efforts to keep young people out of the criminal justice system and support them to get a better start in life, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare CEO Deb Tsorbaris said today.

“By law, young people must leave care by the time they turn 18,” she said.

“After that, they are effectively on their own - in terms of finding a job, finding somewhere to live and dealing with the effects of childhood trauma.

“Not surprisingly, many struggle to get on their feet. Within 12 months around one in three are either homeless or jobless. Two in three are struggling with their mental health and almost half of all young men end up in jail.

“Forcing kids to leave care at 18 is like pushing someone out of a plane without a parachute.

“Most young people from stable families wouldn’t stand a chance if they had to fend for themselves from the age of 18, so how can we expect young people whose childhoods have been marred by neglect, abuse and instability to make it on their own?

“We must, as a matter of urgency, ensure young people unable to live at home have the safety net of state care – whether that’s foster care, kinship care or residential care – at least until they turn 21.

“It’s a no brainer. All young Victorians deserve a shot at a decent life.”

Ms Tsorbaris made the comments following the Chief Commissioner’s Youth Summit today.

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