

Better support for state care leavers

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The study based on interviews with practitioners in the sector made a number of recommendations for law reforms that ensure the provision of safe, secure, affordable and supported accommodation. Image: Getty

A Victorian study examining the experiences of young people with a disability as they transition out of state care has detailed the lack of post-care accommodation and support.

The study, led by Associate Professor Philip Mendes, Director of the [Social Inclusion](#) and Social Policy Research Unit in the Department of Social Work at Monash University with colleagues Associate Professor Pamela Snow and Karen Broadley, detailed the major issues associated with youth leaving state care.

It found young [people with disabilities](#) were poorly transitioned from children's to [adult services](#) and were rarely provided with adequate post-

care accommodation and support. These people can end up in exploitative situations or relationships, committing crime or [homeless](#) when they turn 18 and enter the community.

Associate Professor Mendes said young people leaving state out-of-home care (OoHC) were arguably one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society.

"Most young people leaving statutory care are still not receiving the support and services they need," Associate Professor Mendes said.

"The heart of the problem is the lack of safe, secure, affordable and supported housing for young people with [disabilities](#) leaving OoHC.

"Consequently you end up with many young people transitioning from state OoHC who become homeless, live in unsafe and insecure housing, become involved in crime, and suffer multiple on-going forms of disadvantage."

The study, based on interviews with practitioners in the sector, made a number of recommendations for law reforms that ensure the provision of safe, secure, affordable and supported accommodation.

"Funding for housing and supported accommodation services must reflect the real ongoing needs of care leavers with disabilities," Associate Professor Mendes said.

"The state, which has taken on the role of 'parent', must continue to be accountable for the post care accommodation and support that is provided to these young people.

"As a starting point, we recommended yearly reviews of care leavers with disabilities until they are 21 years old."

The study also found young people who move into adult disability services often experience greatly reduced levels of support and that young people with disabilities are at times placed into aged care facilities.

Leaving care is formally defined as the cessation of legal responsibility by the state for [young people](#) living in out-of-home care.

Provided by Monash University

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