

Extended Care Support Bill 2022

A Bill for an Act to support young people aged 15 – 25 who have an out of home care experience and assist minimising the disadvantages they face. All research regarding life outcomes for this demographic shows substantial deficits in comparison to their peers, with the same research also demonstrating that with assistance in key areas post-care, there is significant improvement in these life outcomes.

This Bill seeks to reduce inter-generational issues leading to the requirement for crisis support later in life and overall improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people with a care experience. It also outlines crucial supports that ensure that these young people can have equitable opportunities to their peers across crucial areas, such as housing, education and health. The implementation of this Bill will allow for young people with an out of home care experience to be holistically supported in their transition to adulthood. Furthermore, the investments required in implementing this Bill seek to limit the long term burden to social assistance programs that would be required to support a susceptible community. The state of Victoria has legal responsibility for this vulnerable population and this Bill shall ensure accountability in one of the most critical stages of a young person's life as they transition to adulthood.

**A Bill for an Act relating to Extended Care Support to be enacted by the YMCA
Victoria Youth Parliament;**

PART I—Preliminary

Clause 1 Purpose

The main purposes of this Act are—

- (a) To extend support for young people with an out of home care experience until the age of 25;
- (b) To provide equitable opportunities for young people with a care experience in the transition to adulthood by assisting in key areas such as housing, health, education and social supports;
- (c) To provide further assistance and guidance to young people with an out of home care experience.

Clause 2 Commencement

This Bill shall commence upon receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

Clause 3 Definitions

In this Bill—

- (a) *Equivalent accommodation* means a suitable dwelling which meets the needs of the individual as required, including but not limited to private rentals;
- (b) *Out of home care* means under a temporary, permanent or voluntary order for residential, kinship or foster care;
- (c) *Care experience* means any time in out-of-home care;
- (d) *Living independently* means living without the main support of any other persons or child support services;
- (e) *Preventative assistance* means steps taken to avoid health risks, crises, and progression of diseases.

Part II—Establishment

Clause 4 Establishment of The Extended Care Support Service

- 4.1 The Extended Care Support Service (TECCS) shall be established to implement and oversee all aspects of this Bill.
- 4.2 TECCS shall be an independent entity under the supervision of the Department for Families, Fairness and Housing Victoria.
- 4.3 TECCS shall comprise of, but not limited to, the following;
 - (a) Qualified case workers;
 - (b) An advisory board with a minimum of 2 young people with care experience;

- (c) A youth committee;
 - (d) A physical office in an accessible location.
- 4.4 All employees of TECCS are required to have completed trauma informed training as specified by TECCS.

Clause 5 Eligibility Criteria

- 5.1 To be considered an eligible person for the support and services outlined below, a person must meet the following criteria;
- (a) Be aged above 15 and no older than 26 at the time of application;
 - (b) Have had a care experience at any stage of their life;
 - (c) Be an Australian citizen or permanent Australian resident who resides in Australia at the time of application.
- 5.2 A person can be at any stage of independence when they submit an application, such as;
- (a) Currently in care;
 - (b) Transitioning to independence; or
 - (c) Are currently living independently.

Clause 6 Types of Support Received

- 6.1 Any eligible persons shall receive guaranteed bulk billed medical services including, but not limited to;
- (a) Dental;
 - (b) General practice;
 - (c) Hospital treatment;
 - (d) Psychology;
 - (e) Psychiatry;
 - (f) Specialist medical care.
- 6.2 Eligible persons shall receive a dedicated support case worker.
- 6.3 Eligible persons shall have access to flexible funding available for preventative assistance as per individual circumstances.

Clause 7 Access

- 7.1 To access the service, eligible young people can;
- (a) Submit the application form online;
 - (b) Call TECCS and complete the application over the phone;
 - (c) Attend TECCS in person to complete the application form with assistance;
 - (d) Obtain a referral from another service or service access point.
- 7.2 Every opportunity shall be afforded to support anyone requiring assistance with the application process and throughout their engagement with TECCS.

- 7.3 Eligible persons can access the service at any point until they turn 26 and can opt out at any time.
- 7.4 If an eligible person chooses to opt out of the program they shall have the opportunity to access the program again;
 - (a) There is no limit as to how many times an individual can opt in and out of the support services.
- 7.5 Eligible persons accessing the service shall not do so at their own financial expense and shall be reimbursed for any cost incurred.
- 7.6 Eligible persons in regional and rural areas are entitled to TECCS travelling to their location, or where there are accessibility issues, to see TECCS in person when there is a requirement to do so.

Clause 8 Case Worker

- 8.1 A case worker shall be assigned to every participant until they choose to leave the program.
- 8.2 The case worker shall;
 - (a) Provide assistance to the eligible person throughout the duration of their time with the support services;
 - (b) Support the eligible person with all reasonable requests.
- 8.3 The case worker and eligible person shall meet at least once every 3 months.
- 8.4 The case worker shall be required to have the capacity to arrange a meeting with all accessibility needs being met.
- 8.5 The meeting shall be conducted in a mutually agreeable format.

Clause 9 Housing Support

- 9.1 Each eligible young person shall be offered housing support, in the form of tiny houses, Government rental or equivalent based on the individual needs of the client.
- 9.2 Eligible young people shall be charged for rent, and lease of land if applicable, at a maximum of 25% of their net income.
- 9.3 Equivalent accommodation shall be subsidised at a maximum of 25% of an eligible person's net income.
- 9.4 Eligible young people shall receive priority access to Government housing with a maximum wait time of 6 weeks from application;
 - (a) If an eligible person does not receive Government housing within 6 weeks of application, they shall receive short term accommodation for a period of one month;
 - (b) Once an eligible person has spent one month in short term accommodation, they shall be placed in a private rental at the expense of TECCS until they are suitably placed in Government housing.

Clause 10 Education Support

- 10.1 Eligible persons shall receive all textbooks and materials required to participate in tertiary education, at the expense of TECCS.
- 10.2 TECCS shall cover 50% of any student fees associated with all appropriate tertiary education, including any extracurricular costs.
- 10.3 Should an eligible person incur any costs outside of supported areas, TECCS shall pay the upfront cost which can be paid back with a payment arrangement.
- 10.4 TECCS shall cover the costs of any short courses that are determined to be relevant to an eligible person.
- 10.5 When accepted into a tertiary degree, all eligible persons' shall be guaranteed a Commonwealth Supported Place.