



The Hon. Martin Pakula MP  
Attorney-General  
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Copied to:  
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Minister for Children and Families and Youth Affairs  
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26 April 2017

Dear Attorney-General

### **Home Stretch campaign for out-of-home care until 21**

We write to you as an alliance of legal assistance providers in Victoria: Smart Justice for Young People and Victoria Legal Aid. Together we support the Home Stretch campaign to offer out-of-home care until age 21. Increasing the age would provide significant benefit not only for some of the most vulnerable young people in our community but also to the legal and justice sectors, and we urge you to support the increase.

Victorian youth justice advocacy coalition Smart Justice for Young People (SJ4YP) is the youth-specific arm of Smart Justice, led by the Federation of Community Legal Centres. SJ4YP brings together over 40 legal, youth, health, welfare and community organisations. Members include the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and the Law Institute of Victoria.

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) provides legal help to all Victorians, focusing on Victoria's most disadvantaged. Almost all children and young people who have legal representation for a child protection or youth crime legal matter in Victoria have that legal assistance arranged and/or directly provided by VLA.

Together, VLA and SJ4YP represent the most vulnerable people in our community, including children and young people.

We support the Home Stretch<sup>1</sup> campaign's evidenced-based case for extending young people's access to government-funded out-of-home care from 18 to 21 years because:

1. Housing, social and financial support for young people prevents entry to the justice system;
2. Home Stretch promotes targeted support for the cohort of children and young people who are at greatest risk of entering the justice system; and
3. It is cost effective to spend money on prevention.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://thehomestretch.org.au/>

