



# Transitioning from Care Case Studies

## CASE STUDY

# Supporting the transition process for unaccompanied minors

**The following case study relates to a family of unaccompanied minors who travelled to Australia in 2007 on a protection of woman visa. The case study highlights the different outcomes experienced by family members who engaged with the Burnside Aftercare program compared to those who did not engage with the service.**

### Background

Upon their arrival in Australia the ages of the six family members ranged from 11 to 23. The family are originally from Afghanistan and fled to Iran to escape an abusive and traumatic home life.

After arriving in Australia only four of the six family members came into the care of Burnside. These four members consisted of two older males, with the two younger being female. After a short period of time living in the Burnside residential home, the two males, Aaron\* and Jamal, were moved to a different out-of-home care provider, and the two females, Zahra and Gabriela, were placed in a Burnside foster care placement.

### Intervention and Outcomes

#### **Engagement: Zahra**

Since turning 18 in 2010, Zahra has continued to receive support from the Burnside Aftercare program. At the time of referral she was struggling to deal with the concept of becoming an independent young adult, with little or no support from her siblings. With the help of the Aftercare program, which provided weekly visits, referral to other services, advocacy and financial support, she successfully made the transition into adulthood with minimal interruption. The Aftercare caseworker assisted Zahra to gain access to priority housing with Housing NSW and she subsequently become the foster carer for her younger sister, Gabriela.

With the assistance of the Burnside Aftercare program, Zahra was able to finish her HSC at TAFE and eventually secured a placement at the Australian Catholic University. She received a Burnside education scholarship and tutors were provided at no cost to the young person. Zahra also accessed counselling and other mental health support services with the help of Aftercare.

#### **Engagement: Gabriela**

The Burnside Aftercare program has also provided support to Gabriela, the youngest of the family members who came to Australia. After living with her older sister under the Foster Care program, the Aftercare caseworker assisted her to access permanent housing through Housing NSW (a bedsit). This support included escorting Gabriela to appointments with Housing NSW and medical assessments needed to gain priority entry. She has also been able to secure her own permanent accommodation.

During her HSC years the Aftercare program provided tutoring for a range of subjects, financial support, medical health treatment, and counselling for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety. She has also secured a university placement and is currently in her second year of a Bachelor degree. Gabriela also received a Burnside education scholarship which has provided her with books and other essential materials needed to maintain a non-stressful university life.

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CASE STUDY	continued...
<b>Intervention and Outcomes</b>  <b>Non-Engagement</b>	<p><b>Non-engagement: Aaron and Jamal</b></p> <p>Although the two boys were eligible to receive assistance from the Aftercare program, neither has engaged with the program. After struggling through various unstable placements and living arrangements, the older of the boys, Aaron struggled through TAFE and did eventually obtain a placement at university. However, without adequate support to help him adapt to his study and social life, he quickly spiralled out of control, has dropped out of university and is awaiting trial on a criminal matter.</p> <p>The second of the boys, Jamal, much like his older brother did not engage with the Aftercare program and is now working odd jobs and living in various locations. Both boys are struggling to deal with the trauma they were exposed to living and growing up in a war torn country.</p>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>Both Zahra and Gabriela have made extensive progress in their transition to adulthood, and without the support from the Aftercare program much of this progress would have been slow and overwhelming. Having a case worker to provide the type of support that most young person would receive from their family, they have been able to achieve many of their personal goals and find their place in society.</p> <p>Those family members that did not engage with the Aftercare program have had to struggle through their transition into adulthood alone and have often found themselves overwhelmed with mental health issues. As a result, there are also extra costs to government associated with legal proceedings, mental health treatment, emergency housing and utility assistance.</p> <p>*Names have been changed.</p>

## CASE STUDY

# The role of aftercare services in addressing the needs of young people leaving custody

**The NSW Ombudsman review of leaving care arrangements in 2013 identified major concerns about the adequacy of leaving care planning and, in particular, a failure to work with Juvenile Justice to develop plans for young people leaving custody. This case study highlights the important role played by aftercare services in facilitating better inter-agency coordination in addressing the needs of young people leaving custody.**

**It also highlights the important role played by the Aboriginal State-wide Aftercare Service (working collaboratively with mainstream aftercare services) in ensuring that leaving care plans are culturally appropriate and in linking Aboriginal young people to specialist supports such as an Aboriginal mentoring scheme.**

## Background

Jack\* is an Aboriginal young man, now aged 18. He is the second youngest of nine siblings (5 boys and 4 girls). All of the children are of the same parentage, apart from the eldest who has a different father. All children were placed in out-of-home care in 2004.

He has had numerous placements and at times was self-placed with family, friends and community members. Over this time, there has been inconsistent engagement by Community Services with Jack, which has delayed the development of his leaving care plan. Jack's participation in the development of his leaving care plan prior to turning 18 was minimal. However, following his participation in the Koori Youth Court process in the Children's Court in early 2015, Community Services have been able to re-engage with Jack for future planning. Through collaboration with the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, ARC Aftercare Service, Aboriginal Aftercare State-Wide Service (Jaanimili), Children's Civil Law Service (Legal Aid NSW) and Juvenile Justice, we have now been able to develop his leaving care plan in consultation with Jack.

Jack has a history of drug misuse which has brought him in contact with the criminal justice system from an early age. In 2015, Jack was sentenced to 7 years incarceration, with a non-parole period of approximately 4 years.

A request was made by the Community Services case worker to Jack's Legal Aid solicitor and aftercare services involved to review his leaving care plan. The plan was returned twice to Community Services because there was insufficient information and planning for how his aftercare support needs will be addressed. It also appeared Jack was not included in the process and the plan appeared to be generic. The Community Services case worker's reasoning was "it is not a priority and I need to close the file now he is 18". Given Jack's care history and his long-term prospects, aftercare services saw it as a priority to develop a leaving care plan to support Jack as best as possible while he is in incarcerated and enable a positive and well supported transition back into the community.

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## CASE STUDY

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### Background continued

A request was made by the Community Services case worker to Jack's Legal Aid solicitor and aftercare services involved to review his leaving care plan. The plan was returned twice to Community Services because there was insufficient information and planning for how his aftercare support needs will be addressed. It also appeared Jack was not included in the process and the plan appeared to be generic. The Community Services case worker's reasoning was "it is not a priority and I need to close the file now he is 18". Given Jack's care history and his long-term prospects, aftercare services saw it as a priority to develop a leaving care plan to support Jack as best as possible while he is incarcerated and enable a positive and well supported transition back into the community.

The purpose of the leaving care plan is to clarify the arrangements for Jack's release and transition back into the community from custody in 2019. His leaving care plan must be sufficiently flexible to meet Jack's needs whilst in custody and then support his transition back into the community including future supports until he is 25. The plan should detail his future health, emotional, social, educational and cultural support needs post-18 and whilst incarcerated and how these will be met.

### Intervention and Outcomes

Currently, ARC and the Aboriginal Aftercare State-wide Service are providing consultancy support and advocacy to Community Services to develop a more current and cohesive leaving care and financial plan for Jack now and into the future. We will work with Community Services to ensure that the plan is approved (as without this approval Jack will not be able to access financial support from Community Services). We are working with Jack to ensure that he has a better understanding of his leaving care and aftercare entitlements, including, for example, establishment funds and TILA.

We are also working with Juvenile Justice to develop a practical case plan to support Jack's current needs.

Our involvement with Jack is still in the early stages. He has been very willing to engage with aftercare services providing information to further develop his leaving care plan into a document of value to him in the future. He shows insight into his current circumstances and is forthright in providing us with family information and details of his criminal history. We are providing support for Jack to have regular contact with immediate and extended family members.

If Jack decides to access and view his Community Services file we will provide support with this. We will also assist him to appeal his Victims of Crime audit if he decides to do this.

Recently, Jack has been transferred to another correctional facility. This transfer will hopefully enable the Aboriginal Aftercare State-wide Service to facilitate a mentoring relationship for Jack (as Uniting runs an Aboriginal mentoring program in the area servicing this correctional facility). Development of this mentoring relationship will assist Jack to develop the skills needed to see through his sentence in a positive way, maintain good behaviour and avoid further time in adult prison. ARC and Jaanimili will remain in contact with Jack on a needs basis until his release due in 2019.

\*Names have been changed.

## CASE STUDY

# Supporting young parents transitioning from care to break the cycle of disadvantage

**This case study highlights the role of specialist aftercare services in providing holistic and intensive support for young parents who are transitioning from care.**

### Background

Fiona\* is a young Aboriginal woman aged 24 who self-referred to ACE Aftercare in the last few months and more recently to the Aboriginal Aftercare State-wide Service (AASS).

Fiona's care experience was very traumatic and she does not remember much of this before the age of 14. Fiona was first placed into care at the age of one with her natural father's adopted parents. At 13, she was moved from this FACS placement due to ongoing psychological abuse. By Year 6 she started self-medicating with alcohol and cannabis and subsequently dropped out of school in Year 7. She was then transferred to an NGO Out-of-home care (OOHC) provider, had several foster care placements and stayed in refuges.

A leaving care plan was never developed, nor was she ever made aware of her leaving care/aftercare entitlements until she came across a brochure at work.

Fiona became pregnant at 15 and was living with the father of the baby who was drug affected and 11 years her senior. Eventually, Fiona managed to raise her child on her own and her daughter is now eight.

She is now living with her daughter in public housing. However, her annual income is just above the housing provider's accepted amount to remain in the property. Therefore she may face eviction or need to leave her current employment. They have lived in the property for some time and feel secure and safe there. Moving would cause significant hardships.

Both of Fiona's parents were adopted. Her natural mother is Aboriginal and had been adopted by an Italian family. Ties to all family members were lost as contact was never encouraged by FACS. Fiona met her mother for the first time when she was 14 and her other four siblings who had also been removed. Fiona has had some sporadic contact with her mother who is now very frail but she lost contact with her natural father when she was very young and does not know his whereabouts.

Her adopted paternal grandparents who raised her both passed in 2005 leaving a Will of \$1.2 million to her father who was awarded these funds only 18 months ago (after not being able to be located for some time). Fiona is seeking legal advice to contest the Will as she was also raised by them. Fiona will need support with several other legal issues. There was no previous file audit by FACS or application for Victims of Crime Support. She has \$8000 debt with the State Debt Recovery (SDR) fines.

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## CASE STUDY

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### Background continued

Fiona is insulin resistant and medically diagnosed as pre-diabetic. She would like medical and nutritional supports around this. Her daughter has a diagnosed disability Attention Deficit Disorder and Oppositional Defiance Disorder. Both Fiona and her daughter require dental procedures.

Currently, Fiona has a part-time job in case management and recently completed a Diploma in Management. She has one close friend as support (who has also been in OOHC) but no other community support. She has linked herself into a local Aboriginal Elders group who have been able to connect her with some family on her mother's side. She has since been in contact with some of her cousins.

Some time ago Fiona requested a copy of her OOHC file. She recently received some information from the NGO OOHC provider but much of the FACS information is missing. Fiona feels the Minister has failed to take care of her as a child and is very let down by the state care system. In her own words she states;  
"Where were they when I needed them, how could they let me live with someone 11 years my senior at 16 years old with a new baby, they never came looking for me?"

### Intervention and Outcomes

We are currently working with Fiona to develop her case plan as this is a very recent referral.

Fiona will turn 25 next month. Under the Ministerial Guidelines, generally, eligibility for leaving and aftercare support ceases when the young person turns 25. However, assistance may be provided to young people aged 25 and over where there are special circumstances. Fiona's support needs are complex and aftercare services will require time to pull supports together – extension for aftercare support and financial entitlements will need to go beyond the age of 25.

ACE and AASS are working in partnership to advocate on Fiona's behalf to ensure her leaving care/aftercare plan is completed by FACS and to gain access to all of her entitlements. The plan also needs to be inclusive of her daughter.

FACS has now commenced her leaving care plan which is waiting to be endorsed. The recommendation has been added to extend her entitlements for a further two years. A TILA application has been submitted.

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## CASE STUDY

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### Intervention and Outcomes continued

Casework support will also include:

- brokerage to purchase white goods/bedding etc
- support to re-establish contact with immediate and extended family members
- advocacy for file audit and Victims Of Crime Support application
- legal support regarding the dispute of the Will
- application for Work Development Orders for the SDR fine
- support Fiona to access to her FACS file
- health plans to be developed for both Fiona and her daughter, followed by referrals to relevant services including a diabetic specialist and access to dental support
- respite for Fiona as her daughter's care needs are high
- advocacy to the housing provider to remain in the home
- application for a scholarship for social welfare qualification at University or TAFE

In summary, Fiona has had a care history which has included trauma, placement instability, leaving care at a young age, lack of support and engagement with service providers and pregnancy at a young age. Despite all of this she is a very bright and resilient young woman who has managed to raise a child on her own against substantial odds. The support provided by aftercare services will help to ensure that both Fiona and her daughter have a more secure and stable future and break the cycle of Aboriginal children coming into care.

\*Names have been changed.

<p>CASE STUDY</p>	<p><b>Preventing young people from being caught in an escalating cycle of offending</b></p>
	<p><b>This case study highlights the role of aftercare services in helping to prevent young people who are transitioning from out-of-home care from having further involvement with the juvenile or adult correction system. Without the support of aftercare, the young person would have been incarcerated and it is likely that his involvement with the justice system would have escalated over time. The case study also illustrates the holistic and intensive nature of support provided by aftercare services.</b></p>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<p>Daniel* was the fourth of thirteen children, who was removed and placed into the care of Community Services at approximately 18 months of age. He was placed in 14 placements between the ages of 18 to 30 months and experienced continuing instability until he was 13. From the age of 13 until he turned 18, he resided in one stable placement. He was asked to leave the family home on his 18th birthday when his care order expired.</p> <p>At the time of referral, Daniel’s girlfriend was pregnant with their child. At that time, Daniel was facing incarceration due to driving offences. He also had a Work Development Order (WDO) for \$11,000 debt with the State Debt Recovery Office</p> <p>The young person was referred to ACE by an OOHC provider for support with gaining employment and stable accommodation and parenting support.</p>
<p><b>Intervention and Outcomes</b></p>	<p>Daniel was facing six months incarceration for four driving while disqualified offences; however, due to his history and engagement with ACE the sentence was suspended with a good behaviour bond conditional that he remains engaged with the program. With support from ACE, Daniel has been able to clear his WDO debt.</p> <p>Daniel moved in with the family of his closest childhood friend, which is a stable and loving environment where they make an active effort to engage him as a family member. He states that this is the closest he has felt to “being part of a real family”.</p> <p>Daniel has enrolled in a Certificate III in Community Welfare. He would like to use his own care experiences in a positive manner and eventually work in residential care. He immediately obtained his Working with Children’s Check and gained a work placement through his former OOHC provider on his own initiative.</p> <p>Continued overleaf...</p>

## CASE STUDY

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#### Intervention and Outcomes continued

Unfortunately Daniel was caught driving whilst disqualified and disengaged from his studies. However, due to his engagement with ACE, he was again given a suspended sentence with a good behaviour bond, conditional that he remain engaged with the program.

Daniel has since obtained full-time employment, which he has successfully maintained for the past three months. He was previously wary of counselling, but now attends regular appointments with a psychologist and states that he is finding that they are leading to greater self-awareness and improved decision making. Daniel maintains contact with his young child and his interactions with her and the mother of his child remain positive.

\*Names have been changed.

CASE STUDY	<b>Holistic support</b>
	<p><b>This case study illustrates the role played by aftercare services in supporting young people who are transitioning from out-of-home care to obtain stable accommodation, develop practical life skills, and gain vocational qualifications and employment.</b></p>
<b>Background</b>	<p>At the time of self-referral to ACE, Ben* was 19, was homeless and had been couch surfing and sleeping rough for the last two years. He had a lengthy care history with multiple placements and very limited support networks. He also suffers depression and anxiety and finds it difficult meeting new people.</p>
<b>Intervention and Outcomes</b>	<p>Housing NSW assisted Ben with temporary accommodation in a motel for a month. He then moved into a boarding house for a short period of time before moving into a transitional property with a community housing provider under our Support Agreement.</p> <p>During this time ACE worked with Ben and FACS to develop an aftercare plan; this enabled funds to be approved for establishment items, including furniture and whitegoods for moving into the transitional property.</p> <p>Ben completed a Certificate 11 in Warehouse Logistics and on completion obtained fulltime employment in this field. With support from ACE, Ben has developed independent living skills including budgeting, cooking and maintaining his property.</p> <p>Ben and his partner had their first child and recently moved into a private rental property. Becoming a parent has made him realise the importance of family and he is now working on rebuilding his own relationships with members of his family. He is proud of how he has worked to turn his life around in the past 12 months and is very positive about what his future holds.</p> <p>*Names have been changed.</p>

## CASE STUDY

## Holistic and intensive support

**In 2013, the NSW Ombudsman review of leaving care arrangements highlighted major concerns about inadequate leaving care planning and support. This case study illustrates that there are ongoing issues concerning the adequacy of leaving care plans. It also shows the holistic and intensive nature of support provided by specialist aftercare services.**

### Background

Troy\* entered foster care at the age of two. He was adopted when he was 6, but the adoption broke down and he returned into the Care of the Minister in his early teens. He has no contact with his adoptive family and limited contact with his biological mother. He spent his last year in OOHC in a residential group home and was referred by them to assist him in obtaining accommodation and employment, pending resolution of court matters.

### Intervention and Outcomes

Troy was facing incarceration on charges of Aggravated Break and Enter and Commit Serious Indictable Offence In Company. However, due to his history and engagement with ACE, he received a two-year good behaviour bond on the condition that he remains engaged with the program.

Later, he had these two charges withdrawn at court where it was found that he was wrongfully arrested and incarcerated. His legal service is now lodging Victims Support claims regarding these events and another incident. He is also considering lodging claims for childhood incidents.

Troy's leaving/after care plan (including financials) had to be rewritten due to insufficient information and is now comprehensive and reflective of his needs.

With support from ACE, Troy has engaged with an employment caseworker from White Lion.

Troy has commenced a Work Development Order to address his State Debt Recovery Office debt.

Troy is now in a boarding arrangement with his friend's mother and is working with ACE to find independent accommodation.

Troy has enthusiastically participated in the opportunities offered through ACE including our Dress for Work and Pro Bono Dental Days and now that his legal matter has been resolved is looking forward to obtaining permanent accommodation and gaining employment.

\*Names have been changed.

## CASE STUDY

## Holistic support

**In 2013, the NSW Ombudsman review of leaving care arrangements highlighted major concerns about inadequate leaving care planning and support. This case study illustrates ongoing issues relating to leaving care planning and failure by FACS to endorse leaving care plans in a timely way. It also shows the complex issues impacting on an Aboriginal young person (who is himself the parent of a young child) and the role of specialist aftercare services in addressing his needs in a comprehensive way.**

### Background

Calvin\* is an Aboriginal client who was referred to the Aftercare Resource Centre (ARC) in January 2015 by a FACS case worker. He had an open child protection case plan for his baby son.

When still in care, Calvin had a history of mental health issues, alcohol and drug use and a Juvenile Justice background. Calvin states that from about 14 years of age, “DoCS (now FACS) had nothing to do with him or his carers”. Calvin left school in Year 8 and has very poor reading and comprehension skills. He is currently 23 and has never been in paid employment.

Calvin’s court orders placed him in the parental responsibility of the Minister for Community Services until he reached 16 years of age. At a meeting he attended with his carers to organise his leaving care plan in October 2008, Calvin asked the Department staff to apply for an extension of his court order allocating Parental Responsibility to the Minister until he turned 18 so he would be supported after his 16th birthday that November. The FACS case workers told Calvin that assistance would still be available without an extension and that he was expected to cooperate with them to gain support.

Following this meeting, Calvin self-placed with his homeless, intellectually impaired, alcoholic father from whom he was originally removed. The FACS case workers decided not to apply for an extension to Calvin’s court order stating that letting the order expire was deemed in his best interest because he wanted to live with his father and would not engage with them.

On referral to the ARC, Calvin had an open case plan with FACS for his young son. FACS was concerned because Calvin and his partner Judy were living with Calvin’s natural mother who had a history of alcohol abuse. Unfortunately, Calvin’s leaving care plan is still unendorsed by the Department, and in any case, does not provide any funding options that might have been used to set Calvin and Judy up in their unit. Calvin’s placement objective states he will “live independently in suitable and affordable accommodation and apply for TILA funding to set up independent living”.

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## CASE STUDY

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### Background continued

In addition, Calvin's leaving care plan has no financial support for health issues and instead states "referrals to be made as deemed required to Community Health". It included \$600 for 6 sessions with a private psychologist "only if necessary" and if not covered by Medicare. It also stated that Calvin "will know how to make an appointment and will attend a Health Clinic when appropriate. Cost nil". This level of provision for an Aboriginal young man with known mental health, alcohol and drug issues is inadequate.

On referral to ARC, no application had been made by FACS for Victim's Support or file audit completed. Calvin's wish for contact with his half-sister Tabitha stalled because of Tabitha's transition to the non-government sector for out-of-home care (OOHC) case management.

### Intervention and Outcomes

As part of the initial case work support, the ARC referred Calvin and Judy to various supported housing organisations. The child protection case plan for Calvin's son closed shortly after Calvin and Judy relocated to a new property with family case work support attached to the tenancy. Calvin's unit was furnished using Transition to Independent Living (TILA) funds, ARC brokerage and charitable donations.

With support of ARC, Calvin has re-established contact with his sister Tabitha on a monthly basis. It is planned that the frequency of this contact will increase to fortnightly.

Calvin has commenced a Work Development Order commenced to cover State debts from train fines. Calvin has started a TAFE trade skills training program through a Job Active provider.

ARC is also supporting Calvin with therapeutic reading of his FACS file.

\*Names have been changed.