



- Providing information and advice about Home Stretch (for more information on Home Stretch refer to Home Stretch Practice Advice)
- Providing advice about opportunities to connect Aboriginal young people to their culture and community and advocating for Cultural Plans to be central to transition planning.

Where support is provided

The Better Futures Program provides support to young people in the following areas:

- Mildura Rural City Council
- Buloke Shire Council
- Gunnawarra Shire Council
- Swan Hill Rural City Council

If the young people relocate to another part of Victoria, they will be provided with information about the nearest Better Futures provider and supported with a referral.

Referral Process

The child protection case manager/contracted case manager/ ACAC case manager determines that a young person is eligible for a referral to Better Futures at 15 years and 9 months.

Enquiries

For any further information or any enquiries please email the team at betterfutures@masp.org.au



118-124 Pine Avenue Mildura
Telephone 03 5021 6500
Email info@masp.org.au
www.masp.org.au

Better Futures Levels of Support (Continued)

When young people are in care and still some time away from transitioning to independence, the primary role of Better Futures is likely to be the provision of secondary consultation to case managers and care teams. Current investment means that Better Futures workers are unable to attend all care team meetings for all young people.

Secondary Consultation

A Better Futures worker provides secondary consultation to care teams, lending expertise to the transition planning process. The level of secondary consultation is determined by the Better Futures provider's capacity and the circumstances of the young person.

Secondary consultation can be offered through varying means including:

- The Better Futures worker attending a care team meeting and identifying opportunities across housing and living skills, education, employment and training, health and wellbeing and community connections. It is important that these discussions occur in accordance with the young person's 15+ Care and Transition plan and the young person's support needs, goals and aspirations
- Introducing the Advantaged Thinking resources and tools in the care team setting to assist planning and encourage the involvement of the young person in voicing their goals and aspirations
- Providing advice about specific opportunities that a young person may be interested in, such as engaging in education, work experience or joining a sporting club
- Supporting access to community connections and mentoring

Better Futures

The Better futures Program provides support to young people aged 15 and 9 months – 21 years who have been subject to certain DHHS Child Protection Orders, and in most cases have resided in Out of Home Care. The aim of the program is to support care teams and carers in preparing young people to transition to independence and then support the young person until the age of 21. The 3 main areas of the program are:

- Secondary Consultation
- Case Support
- Brokerage

Eligibility for Better Futures

In Victoria, the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (section 16) establishes a responsibility for the Secretary to provide or arrange the provision of services to assist in supporting a person under the age of 21 years to gain the capacity to make the transition to independent living where;

- the Secretary has had parental responsibility for the person; and
- on the Secretary's responsibility ending, the person is of an age, or intends, to live independently.

Young people in foster, kinship and residential care are eligible for Better Futures if they are subject to a **family reunification order**, a **care by Secretary order** or a **long-term care order** on or after their sixteenth birthday. Following cessation of their order, young people can receive support up until 21 years of age.

Young people on permanent care orders, interim accommodation orders and family preservation orders are not eligible for Better Futures

Flexible Levels of Case Work Support

Young people who have left care are provided with flexible levels of support depending on their needs, circumstances and existing support systems, which often change over time. Young people may receive Limited Supports, or Active Supports, and this may include:

- Support to engage in education, training and/or employment
- Linkages and referrals to specialist supports if required, such as counselling and drug and alcohol services
- Support to identify suitable and safe housing options
- Connection to community and building networks of support outside of the care system
- Support in times of crisis

A young person who has left care may be placed on Active Hold, where they will receive a quarterly 'check-in' to see how they are going.

Levels of support - whether Limited Supports, Active Supports or Active Hold - will be in accordance with the young person's 15+ Care and Transition Plan, and as the young person transitions from care towards independence, the Better Futures support plan, incorporating regular review and progress points involving the active voice of the young person.

Brokerage

The Better Futures Program can provide brokerage support for young people to engage successfully in aspects of their lives such as education, training, employment and maintaining housing. However, the young persons allocated Case Worker will assess what brokerage requirements the young person may have and facilitate the provision of this.

TILA

The Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA), is provided by the Australian Government to assist young people who are leaving the Out of Home Care System. It is a single \$1500 payment that can be utilised to assist with purchasing goods to facilitate independent living. The Better Futures case workers can assist young people to access this funding.

Skills First Youth Access Initiative

The Skills First Youth Access Initiative is one of a number of programs across Government that aim to provide educational opportunities for young people who may have disengaged or struggled in mainstream education. and it allows the Better Futures case worker to reduce the cost of young people's education and training course fees, for courses deemed eligible.

Better Futures Levels of Support

Flexible levels of support are provided to young people both in care and post care, beginning at 15 years and 9 months and ending when the young person turns 21 years.

Young people may be placed on **Active Hold**, receive **Limited Support** or **Active Supports**. The level of support a young person receives will be determined by the Better Futures worker in consultation with the young person and/or the care team. The level of support provided is likely to change over time, with the changing needs of the young person.

An initial assessment is made based upon receipt of the referral (via CRIS to CRISP) at 15 years and 9 months, drawing on information from the Better Futures Referral Checklist, the 15+ Care and Transition Plan and other accompanying documentation.