

## Philanthropic collaboration supporting youth empowerment in residential care in the Grampians Region

- A new project will support young people in residential care in regional Victoria to inform themselves and make educated decisions through a rights based and empowerment approach
- In Victoria, there are 9,146 children and young people in out-of-home care, of which 445 are in residential care. Residential care provides homes for children and young people aged 12-17 who are temporarily unable to live with family or foster carers
- Based in the Grampians, *Stand up for our rights: A youth empowerment project* is designed to provide young people in care with greater access to legal information and pathways to external assistance, and seeks to address the systemic issues raised by young people in residential care
- This new project is funded by a collaborative group of philanthropic organisations with a shared interest in improving the outcomes of children and young people who are at risk of entering, or with an experience of, out-of-home care
- The funding collaboration include Barr Family Foundation, Equity Trustees - RM Ansett Trust, Gandel Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund and The Jack Brockhoff Foundation.

Young People's Legal Rights Centre Inc. (Youthlaw) and the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) are pleased to announce a grant of nearly half a million dollars (\$490,000) to co-design a new approach to building the capacity of young people in residential care.

*Stand up for our rights: A youth empowerment project*, based in the Grampians region of Victoria, will be co-designed by young people with a lived experience of out-of-home care and will pilot a new model of support and intervention in residential care to build the capacity of young people to protect and stand up for themselves and make informed decisions. The project will grant young people and staff in residential care access to community lawyers and case managers to provide counsel and legal guidance.

Children and young people who experience out-of-home care are significantly more likely to be subject or victim to crime, and are at far greater risk of experiencing hardship.

The project will:

- collaborate with residential care provider organisations and care team members to problem solve systemic issues raised by young people;
- provide legal services that have a strong focus on systemic change through collaboration;
- test a new model of support and intervention that can be transferable across the State;
- and provide young people in care with easy and time sensitive access to legal information, assistance and pathways to external assistance.

The grant has been awarded by members of the Out-Home-Care Philanthropic Funders Network (the Network), a group facilitated by the Centre, with an interest in improving the outcomes of children and young

people at risk of entering, or with an experience of, out-of-home care. The funding was awarded as part of the Network's Innovation Grants program, which sees network members collaborate to drive innovation and systemic change across the child and family services sector. This project is the third collaborative funding initiative of the Network.

The Central Highlands Care Services Alliance is a group of care service providers and partner agencies that exists to support the local service system, working closely with young people experiencing challenging circumstances. Principal Strategic Advisor from the Alliance, Siobahn Altham, said about the project: "This project will provide much needed direct assistance to the young people we work with whose care experiences intersect with the justice system. What we're seeing is many young people with an experience of care and the justice system lack access to the resources they need to help them maximise their potential.

"We want to see all young people in our services have access to the resources they need. We are committed not only to supporting improved outcomes and reduced criminalisation of individual young people in our services, but to identifying and acting on improvements needed at our local system level, and I think this project will go a long way in helping us to achieve that."

CEO of Youthlaw, Ariel Couchman said Youthlaw is leading the project, which she says puts young people at its core: "Young people with lived experience are an integral part of this project. They will co-design an innovative approach to building the capacity of young people to build their knowledge and resilience and other protective factors."

The three-year project is commencing in March 2022, and will be delivered by Youthlaw, working collaboratively with the Central Highlands Out of Home Care Alliance, Ballarat Community Health and Victoria Legal Aid.

Deb Tsorbaris, CEO at the Centre commented: "Granting young people in residential care with access to legal services empowers them to make informed decisions about their futures. This initiative is the Network's third funding endeavour and is illustrative of the diverse ways in which the Network is committed to supporting children and young people at risk of entering, or with an experience of, out-of-home care".

Emily Cormack, Children and Young People Grant Manager at Equity Trustees, a member of the Network, said she is proud of the way the Network works together to fund innovative approaches to address systemic issues: "This Network is an example of the powerful impact that collaborative philanthropy can have on the out-of-home care sector in Victoria, and is a fantastic illustration of what can be achieved when we work together to address complex social issues."

Network members involved in the funding collaboration include Barr Family Foundation, Equity Trustees RM Ansett Trust, Gandel Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund and The Jack Brockhoff Foundation.

For more information, or for the opportunity to interview representatives from The Central Highlands Care Services Alliance, Youthlaw, the Centre, or the Network, please contact:

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[About Young People's Legal Rights Centre Inc.](#)

The mission of Young People’s Legal Rights Centre Inc (Youthlaw) is to provide an accessible legal service to young people under the age of 25, focusing on areas of unmet legal need. It works to address systematic legal and social justice issues in Victoria through community education, advocacy and law reform both for and with young people and their advocates.

#### About the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) is the peak body for child and family services in Victoria. Representing more than 150 community service organisations, students and individuals, the Centre advocates for the rights of children and young people to be heard and safe, to have access to education, and to remain connected to family, community and culture. The Centre’s vision is of a fair and equitable community that creates opportunities for children and their families to live happy and healthy lives.

#### About the Out-of-home Care Philanthropic Funders Network

The Network is a collaborative group of philanthropic organisations with a shared interest in improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people who are at risk of entering, in, or have an experience of out-of-home care. Members of the Network include Barr Family Foundation, Equity Trustees, Gandel Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund and The Jack Brockhoff Foundation.

The Network meets to share learnings, evidence, and innovation in out-of-home care in Victoria and other jurisdictions. This information sharing forum supports Network members to collaborate and fund innovation grants in community service organisations to improve outcomes for children at risk of entering or with an experience of out-of-home care, focusing on systemic change and collaboration within, and across sectors.

The administration of the Network is conducted by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and is proudly funded through Equity Trustees’ Children and Young People granting program.