

# Response to the Nyland Report An AnglicareSA Oration & Research to Practice Seminar

Australian Centre for Community  
Services Research

Speech by Peter Sandeman, AnglicareSA CEO  
Monday, 24 October  
1.10pm – 2pm

**ANGLICARESA**

## **Introduction**

*AnglicareSA recognises that we meet on the traditional lands of the Kurna people.*

*We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land;*

*Our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing;*

*And our hope that we may walk together in harmony in the spirit of Reconciliation.*

I would like to acknowledge all of you who have taken the time in your busy lives to consider these important issues this afternoon and especially:

- Steven Marshall the leader of the Opposition and
- Rachael Sanderson the shadow Minister for Families and Child Protection.

And I thank The Australian Centre for Community Services Research at Flinders University especially Associate Professor Ian Goodwin-Smith, for organising today; and, for the invitation to give AnglicareSA's inaugural Oration regarding our response to the South Australian Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report, also known as the Nyland Report.

The Nyland Report provides a once in a generation opportunity, and roadmap for change in South Australia's Child Protection system. We, as non-government organisations, Government, foster and kinship carers, family members and community alike, are custodians of that change. It is our responsibility to bring the Report's intent and Recommendations to life, to ensure every child, no matter their experience, can flourish, reach their potential and become positive, contributing adults, building a better South Australia.

We have a great responsibility in promoting and ensuring the safety of children in a way that reflects the values and diversity of the broader community. To achieve this, a formal, well-governed collaborative approach involving key stakeholders should oversee the prioritisation and implementation of the Report's Recommendations. The approach taken will shape the future, so we need one which changes the current understandings and culture, and encourages transparency and cooperation.

AnglicareSA's vision for the Child Protection system, therefore, is that each contributor can work together, to promote a child safe and child friendly South Australia, supported by child centred and connected services, enabling children, no matter their experiences, to enjoy fullness of life.

Nigel Richardson's recent visit to South Australia shows what is achievable with political will and drive. Under Nigel's leadership, the Leeds child protection system turned around within five years by establishing "Child Friendly Leeds", to become the highest rated local Child Protection authority in the UK. The City of Leeds motto of "bringing everyone together to make Leeds a compassionate, child friendly city" is an inspiration for all of us. It also begs the question – 'what do we need to do to become child friendly South Australia?'

Child Protection systems interface with and rely on multiple service systems, including disability, health, education, justice and community services. We need to respect and understand how these systems interrelate, their dependencies, and how they can work closer together in a respectful, supportive and connected way, to create an ecosystem of support and protection for us to raise children and keep them safe.

Ultimately Child Protection depends on child safe families and child friendly communities, working across the whole population and targeting families in difficulty with extra support. Better prevention and early intervention are the only ways to avoid overloaded reactive systems sliding from crisis to crisis.

## **Collective responsibility and cross-system responses**

The Report tells us what we have known for some time – that the system has been operating in crisis. As Justice Nyland says, *“by the time children’s circumstances are dire enough to attract a response, issues in the family often require the child’s removal to attend to entrenched safety concerns”*.

This statement infers that currently, our Child Protection system kicks in when families are at serious risk; and, involvement with vulnerable families largely starts when removal of a child is being considered.

This isn’t good enough, we need to support families and children earlier and not wait until removal becomes the only option. Supporting families prior to the crisis point of a child being removed should be a key priority of any changes and future developments in the Child Protection System.

When decisions about removal are made, they need to be well informed, based on evidence and best practice; otherwise, the integrity of the decision to remove a child is compromised, as are subsequent reunification and permanency planning efforts. However, what happens before removal is actively considered, the resources to better support families and thereby prevent the need for removal, must be considered equally important.

Sometimes, because of the assessed risk to the child and the entrenchment of risk factors and behaviours, removal has to happen. However, research and evidence has shown that if some families had been supported sooner, family strengthening and capacity building may have built sufficient protective factors to prevent entry into the formal statutory system.

What this means is that Child Protection in the broadest sense, really is everyone's business. This commonly used term means that all families need support, some more than others on their journey of raising children; and, along the way, services and people they encounter, can and should help.

We need to prioritise, as the South Australian community, the enabling of families to function well. This is the key factor in raising strong, healthy children who can maximise life's opportunities, and in turn help build a better community.

To achieve this, Child Protection must be on the Agendas of all mainstream services; strategically and operationally, they should align to, reinforce and support the broader child protection and wellbeing agenda. This is because families and children most at risk and most in need, usually engage voluntarily in services such as Early Childhood, Education, Community Services and Health.

The child protection system, as a statutory response, is unable to connect with these families and children early enough. When it does connect, the nature of engagement is, most often, not voluntary, nor is it likely to be seen as supportive.

We need to build on the strengths, the social capital and resources of our communities. People live in communities with varying degrees of engagement and participation. We can improve this; we know the value and benefits of community mobilisation and support, including family to family, and peer to peer services that work in strengthening vulnerable families. Let's make communities aware of their strengths and capacities, and how members of communities can support each other. Child Friendly Leeds shows that this can be done and the consequent reduction in the need for statutory interventions.

When we expand our thinking and understanding of what a continuum of the Child Protection system encompasses, and how and why it is everyone's business, we can start to understand why the system has failed our families and children. Ending the cycle of blame, entrenched by the media and political chorus, we need to rebuild the system on a foundation of a strong and courageous culture, and a firm determination to understand and continually improve.

Our discourse needs to focus on what needs to be done rather than wallow in the gory details of the worst of our society and the drama when the overloaded statutory system fails to cope.

### **Service Continuum: Prevention and Early Intervention**

As identified by Justice Nyland, to rebuild a robust Child Protection system we need to develop a range of early intervention/prevention strategies and approaches, so services are layered to meet the differing and diverse needs of families.

At the primary prevention level this is a population approach to strengthen the capacity and resilience of all families. Other situations will require a range of supports where agencies and services work together to help strengthen families, right through to intensive services that support families who are at immediate risk of having children removed and placed into State Care.

All of these strategies and approaches need to be designed so that they are available before the family situation is so much in crisis that removal is the only safe option. At this point, children and parents are usually so distressed that successful interventions and supports are compromised and ineffective.

Justice Nyland proposes a Child and Family Assessment and Referral network, regionally located and based on identified



community need, trends and patterns. The view is that lower level notifications, those that don't require an immediate response, would be managed and responded to by this network, overseen by one NGO, as an alternative to a response from a statutory agency.

The thinking behind this position is sound, but warrants more discussion and thinking around the initial referrals process. Who manages the assessment and decision about what level of risk a situation presents? If implemented as proposed, the burden of deciding whether it goes to the network or the statutory Agency would be left with the notifier.

Our view is that these are professional and expert decisions, and the level of risk should be determined by the Statutory Agency in accordance with an assessment framework co-designed with the network. This is key to ensuring all notifications are treated with the same level of consistency and integrity of assessment.

Following assessment, a dual referral system makes sense. This will fail however, if an adequate range of supports and services are not funded to be part of the network response. They need to be strongly supported, respected by and connected to the statutory child protection agency and government services. Partnerships must be real, respectful and mutually supportive.

Priority service access for the involved families is also a must. To achieve this, investment must be made to build system capacity as waiting periods are often the reason why responses fail, not necessarily the service.

Again Child Friendly Leeds offers a model with the 25 local partnership networks of government and non-government agencies, working jointly with the ten families considered to most require support within their neighbourhood.

Justice Nyland's proposed Early Intervention Research Directorate is an important recommendation. We need to have services that are built on the knowledge and evidence of what works. This Directorate with its capacity to collate such critical information will significantly assist in building a continuum of early intervention and prevention services. To develop a system of services without a research and evidence base is false economy of time and money. Those in service provision know all too well that the effects of poorly informed and designed services can compound the very problems and issues that are targeted. The Research into Practice Seminar, of which this forum is a part, is a demonstration of the importance of research and its linkage to the academy, government and community services sectors.

In the meantime, we can focus on filling immediate gaps and target the most pressing problems. Knee jerk reactions are often triggered by political pressure to challenging situations, which are often exacerbated by the media. For example, the Report highlights the likely impact of commercial care on children. These are children who are being looked after in a range of facilities with rotational carers who have limited knowledge or training to manage and support children experiencing significant and cumulative trauma.

This has led to an urgent call to remove the 200 or so children in such arrangements. This should be a priority, but we have to accept that the solutions or alternatives will not come quickly. To react without thought and planning will not result in better longer term outcomes. Whilst we build more capacity and diversity in our family based services, we need to embed intensive supports in 'last resort' services like commercial care, so children can have their trauma addressed and, ensure their stability wherever possible across their life domains.

Reducing commercial care in the medium term will require both effective prevention and early intervention and also a greater supply of foster and kinship carers. Family based solutions are so much better than rotating shifts of paid workers. All children require attachment to a significant other. I was fortunate to be

placed in an orphanage with my twin, otherwise my capacity to build and maintain relationships would be seriously impaired.

In addition to recruiting more foster carers and supporting carers and children better, the Government should engage the not for profit sector now, to start developing and delivering intensive supports to families at high risk of a child being removed.

Current Protective (Early) Intervention practices have struggled to keep up with demand and practice. Families at immediate risk that may have the opportunity to benefit from support, cannot wait months for services. Immediacy of service engagement and intervention is critical. Otherwise, the window where parents and families are motivated to change, often during crisis such as the early stages of a child's removal are lost, further hindering the probability of a successful long term outcome.

The NGO sector is experienced and willing to work together to develop a robust Early Intervention suite of services. The government must commit to this if it wants to stem the flow of children into care and reduce the trauma that our children experience.

It is time to look at what intensive interventions can be developed and implemented based on national and international evidence.

We need to tailor them to suit our own community's needs, and start trialling small scale pilots to curb the number of children entering care, encourage earlier and more accurate risk assessments, and better apply evidence across our practice.

### **Service Continuum: Removal, Permanency and Post-care**

When a decision is made to remove a child from their family home, the response to both the child and family must immediately prioritise stability as both an outcome and a platform for change.

Following a child's removal, the biological family also needs ongoing support to prevent further escalation, and the deterioration of both their parenting capacities and their relationship with the child.

We know the majority of children in care want to maintain relationships with both their biological and foster families, yet we leave families to languish following a child's removal, creating barriers to constructive engagement with the child, foster families and the broader system.

Recommendation 70 calls for more accurate assessment of reunification or 'best placement' for a child at their point of removal. Specifically, it calls for the Agency to assess and

determine the possibility of reunification within six months for a child under two years; and, within 12 months for a child over two years. If reunification is not possible, the Agency is to immediately apply for a GOM under 18 Order.”

The ability to establish a reliable triage so short term orders are applied only to children and their families clearly able to be safely reunified has, until now, proven difficult to achieve.

How we implement this Recommendation will, I believe strongly influence the long-term impact and success of this Reform. Effectively implementing this would address one of the great harms of the current system - the numerous placements that children in out of home care experience, and the system’s failure to achieve stability for those children. In South Australia in 2012, over one-third of children had more than 6 placements; 13% had more than 10. The challenge of this level of movement is not only the insecurity felt by the child, but the reduced capacity to achieve outcomes for the child and family through either reunification or ‘best connection’.

This issue is not unique to South Australia - successful long term outcomes for children and families continues to be a significant challenge for the child protection system nationally.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare identified that 67% of children in Australia's child protection system were 'repeat' clients, meaning they had previously been the subject of an investigation and/or child protection court order<sup>1</sup>.

We now have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership on this issue. For example, a study by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (2007) identified that 60% of reunifications with birth families can be predicted based on three factors: ethnicity, neglect and parental incapacity. We need to build on this evidence and bring the right skills and experience together for more accurate assessment, determinations and responses.

We also believe longer term outcomes would be more achievable if case management for children on long-term orders was provided by the NGO sector. It is important to recognise the overlap, confusion and potential conflict that arises from one party being the legal case manager and another providing day to day care. For children on long-term orders, alignment of case management responsibilities with the same body that oversees the day to day support of the family would bring clarity for all stakeholders, support the child's place in the family and strengthen the carer's role in daily decision-making. Such an

---

<sup>1</sup> Child Protection Australia 2012-13 Report

approach would also enhance carer bonding and commitment and placement stability. Further, it would be considerably more resource efficient than the current duplication of roles.

We believe the Statutory Agency is best placed to concentrate on informed, accurate assessment, safeguarding and monitoring. Building the capacity of the new department to undertake timely, authoritative assessments is absolutely critical. Comparatively, the not-for-profit sector is better positioned to achieve outcomes for children and families by providing case management for children on long term orders.

This is a position held by peak bodies such as CAFWA and practiced in other jurisdictions. Justice Nyland's decision to leave case management as a function of the Agency, will require extra diligence on the Agency's part as to how it is structured to avoid conflict of interest, duplication, ensure practice integrity, and most importantly deliver outcomes for children and families. A close reading of the text of the report suggests that while Justice Nyland recommended the statutory functions of case management remained with Families SA, many of the functions of working with the families which are traditionally considered to be case management, are best placed with the non-government workers.



## **Permanency, Adoption and OPG**

Nyland consistently points to the importance of children being provided with stable and nurturing family relationships to support their wellbeing and future development.

As a former foster child and adoptee, my twin brother and I were extremely fortunate in that our foster-parents adopted us; we had only one placement. The sense of security and wellbeing, of being loved and part of a family no matter how much they test and challenge us, is something many foster children just don't experience.

We need to be fully concerned about the evidence cited regarding Families SA's reluctance to prioritise Other Person Guardianship, or transfer children's guardianship from the Minister. These attitudes need to be challenged, for they assume the State has, in itself, the ability to be a better parent than the families in which the children are residing.

A concurrent planning and permanency planning strategy that aims to avoid delay and drift in care and optimise the timely placement of children into a family for life, whether that be a return home or to live with another family, is a fundamental requirement.

This means embracing concurrent planning as standard practice, when children first enter the care system, rather than being considered as a separate, unrelated category when reunification is assessed as not being viable. The sense of security, stability, certainty and consistency for children cannot be underestimated. They need to know where they will be living, how long for, and what the options and considerations are. As part of this process, the child's therapeutic health and educational needs should be fully assessed, and the necessary supports put in place.

I reiterate a quote by Patricia Rayment and Claire Simmons, experienced clinical psychologists employed by Families SA who argue that the neglect of (open, not closed) adoption as a permanency option in South Australia for many years has “effectively robbed children under the guardianship of the Minister of an option which would see them exit state care and be given the opportunity to belong to families throughout their life spans”.

They estimated that “if open adoption were supported in South Australia at a rate equivalent to that observed internationally, some 200 non-Aboriginal children in care might be able to leave the system”.

This is a very important insight, and one which all of us, as advocates for vulnerable children need to reflect on.

Justice Nyland explicitly states that both OPG and Adoption have been seriously neglected in South Australia, and should be engaged in a more systematic way to meet the needs of children for stability and certainty.

The Report implies barriers to OPG and Adoption are largely cultural and practice based, noting that there are currently very few legal restrictions limiting their uptake.

OPG allows families to operate more closely as a family in making day to day decisions without having to constantly refer back to the Agency, creating a sense of normality and stability in day to day affairs. I welcome the move to eliminate unnecessary barriers to OPG through recommendations such as placing the onus on biological parents to demonstrate why an OPG order should not be made.

Regarding adoption, I agree it should not be pursued with the primary objective of fulfilling family building purposes, and only considered when in the best interests of the child. We do, however, need to be realistic and accept that for a very small group of children, where families have been assessed as not

being in a position to care for them throughout their lifetime, that adoption may be the most appropriate option for the child.

As practiced in other States, open adoption can be the best option to give children the chance of a secure future, by meeting their attachment needs and giving them the opportunity to understand their past.

Open adoption means when it is safe, children have regular on-going contact with their birth family, dependent on the age of the child and their relationship with their birth family, and other forms of contact including letters, photos and cards etc.

Adoption needs to be considered alongside permanency planning, and in light of the evidence which shows successful outcomes are more likely when decisions are made earlier in a child's life. Doing so, provides the child with the opportunity to develop a secure attachment relationship, which we know affects a child's cognitive development and can impact their life outcomes.

Open adoption would have considerably helped my own teenage years and sense of self.

## **Foster Care and Kinship Care**

Without a cultural shift and a commitment to embrace stability and permanency at every stage of the care continuum, these measures alone will have little impact.

Foster Care and Kinship families are the lifeline of the out-of-home care sector. Justice Nyland further reinforces the developmental and financial importance of a strong foster and kinship care system, noting that “rotational styles of care often deliver poor quality care, at a higher cost, and do not satisfy a child’s emotional and relational needs”.

The evidence is clear - the level of support provided to carers has a direct impact on placement stability and carer retention.

National and international research elicits common and long standing themes: that carers do not feel their parenting role is sufficiently acknowledged or empowered; they are not provided with sufficient information and often not included in decision-making; the level of reimbursement provided does not match the real cost of caring; and, they are provided with insufficient practical and therapeutic support to meet the needs of children with increasingly complex needs.

We now have a chance to make some major in roads to these challenges. The Report’s commitment to improving Foster Carer

rights and parental decision making parameters, establishing a dedicated advocacy service and reviewing remuneration is a step in the right direction.

The demographic that we have always relied on to be foster carers is an ageing one, and we need to find ways of encouraging younger people to take up the role. Research indicates that younger carers are more inclined to provide short-term or respite care options, and whilst this is important and needed to maintain and strengthen the backbone of the Out of Home Care system, we must continually strive to improve how we can make foster caring more accessible to modern and diverse families.

The option of trialling a professional foster care model and analysing foster care in other jurisdictions will help ensure we are delivering the best possible care options at all times.

We welcome the Report's Recommendation to outsource assessment and support of kinship carers to non-government organisations. This is particularly important for Aboriginal children in care, as it will provide an opportunity to learn from history, and empower Aboriginal controlled entities to protect Aboriginal children in care.

Kinship Care and Foster Care represent options within a family-based placement. There should be a determined level of acceptable risk that spans both groups, with support based on the child's need and level of risk. Currently, Kinship Care processes are subject to different standards of assessment than foster carers. This is compounded by too much demand, and a longstanding departmental culture where we accept a greater level of risk in family and kinship carers than Foster Carers.

The decision to provide the equivalent support (both financial and other) to kinship carers as foster carers is key to achieving a successful and stronger carer network. To build a holistic, culturally appropriate system of care for Aboriginal children in particular, we need to acknowledge the value of the role of grandparents (and other key others), in an extended family network and the lack of respite support available. We know of experiences where Aboriginal children in care grow up knowing their biological parent, but without connection to culture and country, which then inhibits them to really understand their identity. Kinship carers are often accepting greater responsibilities within a large extended family, without the needed level of support, such as culturally appropriate respite.

As Foster and Kinship Care is reviewed, we also encourage consideration of alternative support and recognition options for

Kinship and Foster carers such as benefit cards, nationally accredited certificate qualifications for Care Provision, acknowledgement as formal volunteers through Volunteering SA for all Centrelink and taxation purposes, and/or superannuation/retirement benefits for families who dedicate their adult employment years to caring for children.

### **Aboriginal Children in Care**

Strengthening the Foster Care and Kinship Care systems will have clear linkages to how we better support Aboriginal children in care.

Disturbingly, Aboriginal children in care represent nearly 50% of children in care nationally, and accounted for nearly 30% of South Australian children entering care in 2014/15.

AnglicareSA is a signatory to and funder of the national Family Matters campaign to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care by 2040, and ensure Aboriginal children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture.

AnglicareSA is a firm advocate of Aboriginal or community controlled organisations being fully empowered to inform policy and provide service delivery.



This is more than simply funding Aboriginal services; a cultural shift is needed, where our politicians, bureaucracies and services are willing to transfer and/or share power, in the form of decision making, policy setting and service delivery, to Aboriginal communities.

We know poverty and untreated intergenerational trauma are causal factors for Aboriginal children being removed from their families. This needs a whole of government response spanning economic development, health, education etc. How do we achieve this when our Aboriginal staff and clients tell us that they feel our current system locks them out of participation, and gives only tokenistic heed to their voices and views. We have to be aware of this, and find opportunities to redress this imbalance. Transferring kinship care for example, to Aboriginal controlled entities; and, resourcing Aboriginal entities more effectively is a positive step to empowering the Aboriginal community to better support and strengthen Aboriginal families and culture.

Professor Michael Lavarch's recent observations that the system's "environment is leading to child separation" is a sobering one. When an Aboriginal child is separated from their environment, we need to ensure cultural connection and

programs are much more holistic and respond to the cultural identity of the child.

It is time to review and modify our systems to fit the problem, and use respected avenues which exist in Aboriginal communities and reflect their values and systems to drive change. For example, we could support community identified Aboriginal leaders (elders, grandparents, uncles and trusted significant others, commonly the Aunties), to provide timely early intervention responses to families that address the issues that often lead to Aboriginal children being removed.

We believe select Aboriginal leaders, aunties and grandparents, should be granted some form of exemption from some of the requirements of the mandatory reporting legislation. We are not suggesting that Aboriginal families be exempt from the current or any future reporting system, or that the severity of some situations would not justify immediate reporting. However, past policies, practices and wrongs have created fear and distrust amongst Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal community and Aboriginal families experiencing difficulty simply do not trust “the welfare”. The primary prevention of child abuse and neglect requires an environment in which Aboriginal families are more likely to access assistance and guidance from respected elders

and aunts, where they know they are going to be supported, and not reported.

Importantly, these Aboriginal leaders would be able to broker key conversations in relation to the longstanding tensions between Aboriginal and dominant culture child rearing practices, especially as it relates to child safety and wellbeing. The lack of clarity as to culturally appropriate and safe child rearing practices has caused unnecessary fear and uncertainty within the Aboriginal community, has led to confused practice by child protection professionals, and also has resulted in significant numbers of unnecessary notifications.

The Nyland Report commits to developing more strategic responses that consider the needs of Aboriginal communities as a whole, and that build on Aboriginal Communities' inherent capacities to support extended families and wider kinship groupings through consultation, culturally appropriate practice, resourcing, and locally developed and owned responses. Aboriginal Family Support Services (AFSS) are well placed to coordinate efforts around building community capacity to support families and deliver culturally appropriate and sensitive foster and kinship care recruitment and support strategies.

Further, following the recent resolution of the legislation to enable the appointment of the Children's Commissioner, it is also important to invest in an Aboriginal Children's Co-commissioner. This will help amplify the voice of Aboriginal children and communities, and enable a targeted response to the specific cultural, systemic and geographical challenges facing Aboriginal children in care. I welcome the recent decision to appoint the Aboriginal Community Leadership Reference Group to provide crucial cultural advice regarding the Government response to the Nyland Report.

Similarly, in working with emerging new Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities, we need to minimise the mistakes we have already made, by working with CALD communities to understand culturally diverse child rearing practices, and with respect, work within a framework of keeping children safe, build on established mechanisms that support diverse communities to strengthen families and keep children safe.

## **Post Care**

It is promising to see the momentum building across Australia, to support care leavers until the age of 25.

Nationally and internationally, research shows that care leavers are at great risk of experiencing negative life outcomes. Anglicare Victoria is leading a national Home Stretch campaign that is backed by credible child and Out of Home Care specialists such as Berry Street, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Australian Childhood Foundation and CREATE Foundation. The Campaign calls for for Out of Home support to be available as an option nationally, for young people until the age of 21.

The statistics for care leavers tell us that we are not doing enough to support their transition into adulthood and independence. The Home Stretch campaign cites that approximately 63% of homeless young people exited from care; 46% of young men and 22% of young women with a care experience are involved in the juvenile justice system; 65% of young care leavers do not complete year 12; and nearly 30% are unemployed, compared to the national average of 9,75%.

What are the barriers to doing more? Until now, our child protection system has only worked with children and young people aged 0 up to the age of 18. We need to mirror what happens in the general community, where largely, we continue to support our children well into their early adult life.

From our perspective, Justice Nyland addresses these barriers by recommending legislating the Minister's responsibility to support care leavers until the age of 25; and, by calling for additional funding to provide flexible and tailored supports to young people.

We know that while the needs, goals and interests of young people significantly change when entering adulthood; the need for support continues, even when the legal Care and Protection orders cease. To support this transition, flexible supports and a commitment to a continuum of care into adulthood is critical. Further, the guardianship or parenting responsibilities for young people who have been under extended care and protection orders must be extended by the government and not-for-profit sector past the notional marker of adulthood.

Encouragingly, Nyland calls for a fundamental cultural shift to “move away from the concept that post-care services are an ‘add-on’ to the core work of the child protection system, and we welcome the Recommendation to legislate the Minister's responsibility to provide ongoing support to care leavers, aged 18-25.

The financial benefits and life outcomes of supporting care leavers beyond the age of 18 are demonstrated in a piece of

work commissioned by Anglicare Victoria and undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics, which showed a financial return to Government of between \$1.40 and \$2.69 for every dollar spent in the continuation of care, until the age of 21.

Forecasts also included a reduction in arrests from 16.3% to 10.4%; reduced homelessness from 39% to 19.5%; demand of emergency services through hospitalisations would reduce from 29.2% to 19.2%. Savings associated with housing costs had the highest overall benefit, accounting for 42% of the total savings.

This approach aligns with the position of The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children and Out of Home Care Standards. We need to look to and adopt best practice approaches such as the Transition from out-of-home care to independence framework, which aims to embed a nationally consistent approach to exit planning.

When there are children in the child protection system who we know will be exiting at the age of 18, we need to have a flexible and individual approach to providing the needed care and support for these young people until the age of 25, which is also in line with how we support young people in families.

We now have an opportunity to explore and implement a better continuum of support, including post-care, which aims to build a community and network around each child in care.

Knowing that the number of adults a child is connected to is a key protective factor against abuse and negative life outcomes, I encourage us to think outside the box in how we do this, and to move beyond the concept of formal supports by mobilising broader social capital.

As already referred to, last week we have greatly benefited from the visit by Nigel Richardson from Child Friendly Leeds.

Mobilising a whole community to become child safe and child friendly is the wider vision that we in South Australia could adopt. The failings that Justice Nyland has highlighted are not just the province of the Child Protection Department, they are whole of government, whole of community challenges, and require all of us to work together.

Working together in mature partnerships we can adopt the primary health approach enabling all families to be safer while providing targeted assistance through local partnerships to families in difficulty



## Summary

In closing, we now have a once in a generation opportunity to lay the foundation for a stronger, more collaborative and effective Child Protection system. This is only achievable through a bi-partisan commitment that reaches beyond political agendas, beyond policy agendas and into the lives of the children, families and communities that this reform will serve.

Together, I encourage us all to hold ourselves accountable to the lives which were lost and the children who were let down on the path that led to this Reform. We know that today's actions are tomorrow's legacy, and to quote Barack Obama, "change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time".

AnglicareSA is committed to working with the government and with the sector and stakeholders as partners, to implement the Recommendations of the Nyland Report. Together, we can and must do better for the future children and families who will find themselves in the vulnerable position of relying on South Australia's future Child Protection system.