



QUEENSLAND
**CHILD
PROTECTION
WEEK**

Media Release

1 September 2016

NEXT STEP After Care applauded for child protection achievements

A Queensland initiative that helps young people move out of care and establish independent lives has been awarded a Queensland Child Protection Award for its outstanding contribution to preventing child harm and neglect.

Launched in March 2015, NEXTSTEP After Care service is believed to be Queensland's first targeted service supporting young people aged between 15 and 21 as they move out of care and on to establishing independent lives.

It has since supported more than 700 young people with quick access to practical advice and support with issues such as managing money, sourcing housing and accommodation, support with training, jobs and preparing resumes, as well as advice on health and relationships.

This week, NEXT STEP After Care was awarded the *Queensland Child Protection Award – Youth Participation* category, recognising how it involved young people in the development of the program.

The initiative is a collaboration by Life Without Barriers (LWB), Create Foundation, Uniting Care Community (UCC), South Burnett CTC, Integrated Family and Youth Services (IFYS) and Youth Empowered Towards Independence (YETI).

The service is available 24-hours a day and is provided throughout Queensland with offices in Beenleigh, Brisbane, Ipswich, Toowoomba, the Sunshine Coast, Kingaroy, Maryborough, Mackay, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns.

Life Without Barriers Acting State Director Dean Keep said NEXT STEP had had a positive effect on more than 700 young people who have received practical support through the service.

“The success is largely due to the fact that young people co designed the service from the very beginning and told us clearly what they wanted, how they wanted to receive support, and through what channels they could access the service.”

“Young people told us they wanted practical support, access to the service 24/7, and someone to help them get things done. So we listened, and that means that if someone calls needing a fridge, we don't force them to do counselling.”

“A positive belief in people and an optimistic attitude can lift young people's spirits and motivation to strive to be in control of their own lives, and that's what we aim to do with all care leavers.”

Queensland Child Protection Week Chair Elisabeth Kobierski said the Committee congratulated NEXT STEP After Care on its award win and for providing inspiration to others.



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“The annual Queensland Child Protection Awards provide an opportunity to publicly acknowledge the efforts, commitment and unreserved energy of many people who make a significant contribution to our community to prevent child harm and neglect,” she said.

The Queensland Child Protection Awards comes ahead of Queensland Child Protection Week, which runs from 4 to 10 September, promoting the value of children and focusing attention on issues of child abuse and neglect.

Queensland Child Protection Week is co-ordinated by the Queensland Child Protection Week Committee and funded by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and Queensland Family and Child Commission. The week focuses attention on child protection being everyone’s business and ensuring that all across Queensland communities take responsibility for children being protected and experiencing well-being.

More information on Queensland Child Protection Week is available at:

www.childprotectionweek.org.au

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