

In this submission, re contemporary care issues for young people, I wish to identify & parallel the generational overlap between the current lack of ward rights, in determining their own positive life outcomes, and my own negative wardship experience 34yrs ago.

Little has changed for wardship clients, and I draw on 3 generations as case studies, to focus on the need for reform, for the rights of State Wards, and all children living in out of home care.

I base this further submission, on the previous submissions:

- . Submission 369: Wardship Issues: 1965-1971
- . Submission 433: Wardship Issues: 1971-1982
- . Submission 69: Wardship Issues: 1982-2004

INTER-GENERATIONAL WARDSHIP HARSHIP - 1965-1971

Reference: Submission 369: Part B. Pages 1-7: A ruined life.
Part 2: Issues Raised: Pages 1-3.

IN SUMMARY, from Sub. 369

As a young ward, aged 12-18 I was made powerless in my own life(s management, functioning and outcomes, despite being a bright, articulate and mature young person. I was rendered 'mute' by lack of any mechanism with which to assert action by virtue of welfares policy of excluding wardship participation, at all levels of decision making and daily functioning.

Critical information was withheld from me, and I was consequentially unable to avail opportunities that should have been my god given right. I had no means to raise these concerns with my guardian, the State, nor the immediate carer, a non-government organisation. I did not have an advocate or representative, or alternative mechanism. My social worker was shared between hundreds of others, and had an unattainable caseload. No-one knew what she really did.

I was socially isolated in a cottage group home, and lived/existed/survived, at the behest of cruel and sadistic workers who delighted in menacing and taunting me, because they chose to deem me a societal reject, by virtue of wardship status, and that being a powerless positior. They were bullies, and their position and attitude was endorsed by any lack of intervention.

My file notes went un-reviewed, eventually petering out, due to lack of sustenance, and interest.

I therefore had no protection from these abusers, who made it their mission to destroy any self-esteem that I tried to sustain and defend. I would not submit to their domination, or be co-erced to their own value system. I tolerated this abuse, building a sense of resentment and consternation, in the face of repeated assertions that :

- .I personally was a failure to society, that I would amount to nothing, that I didn't belong anywhere, and basically that I offered, nor had, any currency in life, despite being an A grade student, and withstanding this regime.

This was a typical scenario of the era, and Create, cites current examples within the juvenile justice system today.

I was not told of any basic rights, afforded by current prevailing legislation, that, for example at 16; I could have left welfare, and lived independantly if I had provided the means to do so.

I had wanted to do this, and had repeatedly asked, what the policy was for this? I was told at 15, that 'I was thinking too far ahead of my time'. This was incorrect, and used to fobb me off.

At that time, I held a holiday job, and with reasonable guidance and minimal support, I feel that I could have successfully boarded and attended a training course - and I truly believe that my life outcomes would have been quite different.

Instead in the remaining 2.5 yrs. of sustained and escalating bullying, and the cruelty of keeping me in a dependant capacity, by withholding opportunity and information, I exited wardship with a broken persona. I was crushed, before life's real race had begun. It was really like emerging into the light from a long dark sentance. Unfortunately, I emerged as a welfare adaptation of the authentic self that has to date been lost to me. Welfare's influence in my life was insidious and the damage far reaching.

I would have to question the whole point of the exercise, and many young wards feel the same, running away to seek refuge amongst street peers, this instant.

In my case, my core flame had gone out. My needs and wants had been buried, as I fought a losing battle of control vs conflict, just to exist. I was utterly powerless and became emotionally and psychologically crippled to act, and that is what I ultimately learned; Deafeatism, and what psychologists call, 'Learned Helplessness'.

Before welfare, at 12yrs, I was well-adjusted, reasonably cheerful, ambitious, hardworking and a very conscientious young person, with a social conscience, who wanted to succeed in life. I believed that the 'work ethic' rewarded those that applied themselves. Yet, I ended up on life's scrapheap, ultimately welfare dependant: 'another one hits the dust'. I did not do drugs and alcohol, like many young today, to cope. Instead, anxiety, depression and ill-health met me around the other corner.

I believe that we were programmed and conditioned by our wardship culture of inferiority to assume negative life outcomes, and take our designed places in the lowest levels of the hierarchial class system, uneducated and assured to 'not go beyond our station'.

ie.

- . I had had no information about the the terms and conditions of my wardship tenure
- . I had no mechanism to ask or receive any information about my placement. I could not voice any concerns. I had no knowledge of my own situation. This has not changed.
- . I had no case worker after the age of 13.
- . I had no other representative, advocate, and interested family members were excluded in this capacity, as they were 'out of the equation'.
- . In the absence of any information, misinformation was bandied about, and formed the basis for ill-conceived and sometimes terrible actions
- . Vital information, re cross-services such as schooling was actively withheld from me, and any family member
- . Previous guardians were disenfranchised from any contribution, and treated the same way as myself. They were told that 'everything was being taken care of', when the opposite reality prevailed.

- . enquiries by myself were dismissed. I had to 'shut up and put up'. I had no rights of access, no power or influence, or anyone to defend my interests and position.
- . I did not have access to my file. I did not know that I even had a file.
Things that I had said conversationally, in daily living, in a 'home-care' environment were reported as verbage on my file.
- . the file was written like a police report
- . negatively value-laden and offensive comments were made about my poor family members. They were portrayed as 'freaks'. The reporting was prejudicial and defamatory, and highly subjective. Yet, this was used as the basis for decision making solely.
- . I could not witness these notes, to refute or assert an alternative perspective. Nor did anyone else.
- . Recommended actions were not acted on, due to lack of staffing or interest.
- . letters of concern from my father, on the file, were never shown to me. I thought that his silence, had been due to lack of any care. For years, until 45, I held that misbelief.
- . When I asked to leave at 16, I was told I couldn't. This was incorrect.

At 17yrs.10 months, I was told to fast track it out the door, or I'd be headed for Winlaten, with a wardship extension to 21.

To this day, I cannot understand this reasoning.

Many of these situations I now regard as grossly abusive.

Mine is a typical story of this era, and one of Hundreds that testify to systemic 'care' failings, as evidenced during this Senate Inquiry.

CURRENT RELEVANCE. 2004

I, and many senior 'ward graduates' who made Submissions to this Inquiry are ACUTELY AGGRIEVED to witness these same wardship scenarios and dominant issues for current young wards, 40 years later, i.e. approx. 13 complete terms of parliament later.

TODAY: 2004: Create, states, that as at 2000,
Wardship outcomes are:

- . 50% of young people leaving care are unemployed
- . 75% with care backgrounds do not complete secondary school
- . 35% with care backgrounds enter juvenile justice institutions
- . 50% of homeless 14-17 yr olds have been 'in care'.

There are no EXPECTATIONS that young people can reverse their misfortune, and there are no provision of the means to do so.

.../4

These unfortunate young people are burdened with many of the same issues, and when reading their stories, I experience a sickening sense of DEJA VU, as though bizarrely I could have written those stories myself from my own life: 'Groundhog Day' ref. Create:Sub. 69. It is like standing in their shoes, whilst looking back at myself longitudinally.

Their stories mostly relate to young people feeling overwhelmed and completely helpless by the enormity of the bureaucratic frame under which their lives are lived and governed. They are unable to be key players in their own lives as I was.

They are lost in the care system, orbiting in some-one else's volition, disenfranchised from themselves as I was. They will learn the same things that I did: despondancy, anger, rejection, worthlessness, inferiority, despair, abandonment, rejection, fear, anxiety, depression etc. The tragedy being, that this is preventable.

They are prevented from translating their needs and wants into personal effectiveness on a daily, functioning level, and to plan positive life outcomes post wardship exit. They are therefore prevented from normal maturation, at age appropriate development, and this is also a distinct disadvantage.

They emerge from wardship with a psychological background of 'learned helplessness', lost and alone, very vulnerable and emotionally fragile and at risk of further abuse in a fiercely competitive and rationally driven world.

They are ill-equipped to survive, and many don't - eg. they are over-represented in youth suicide figures. Their vulnerability and reduced circumstances position them to be obvious to those looking for gain, and young girls and boys are particularly preyed upon, whilst trying to survive. I argue the case for after-care funding and services in Sub. 369.

Wardship, per se, still, fails children to construct positive life outcomes. I cannot draw any other conclusion from these alarming statistics, and I can identify the problems, often insurmountable that confront them from system inadequacy.

STATUS QUO: 2004

Ref: Sub.81; Youth Off the Streets.

Father Riley, of Youth Off The Streets..Sbu.81 picks up these children when they literally live on/off the streets. His organisation receives no government funding, as they refuse to psycho-pathologise children and this is a funding criteria that they morally refuse to comply with.

Yet, Father Riley has success with these young people, because they are treated as key participants in their own lives, and are treated with respect, regard and compassion.

How can he get it so right, and the 'system' get it so wrong?
Therein lies the answers.

Youth Off the Streets, needs funding. Saving lives from the scrapheap is a fiscal saving from welfare dependancy.
i.e. funding, in an investment.

.../5

SPECIFIC PARALLELS OF SYSTEMIC DEFICIENCY: 1982-2004

Reference: Submission 69: Create.

WHAT YOUNG WARDS ARE SAYING THEMSELVES

Young people, year 2004, say that they are not key players in their own lives. They have little say, and if so, they are treated in a token way. They are not given information, and their input is of a discretionary status. They have no inherent rights. They are not given critical information affecting their lives, nor information with which to make decisions.

eg. Create Report Card, 2002 (Pages 16-17). Submission 69:

'Despite policies and legislation that seek the participation of children & young people in care in the major decisions affecting their life, many children & young people in care not participating in these decisions. Decisions are being made around them with little explanation and with no avenues to provide feedback or complaint about a decision.

. some children and young people indicated that they felt that their views were not taken seriously:

.'because they laugh at me' Anja, 17yrs

'When we say something they forget about it' Tamika, 17yrs

'Caseworkers need to stop making decisions for other people. I never had a say in anything'..Zoe 15yrs.

Some of the children & young people surveyed by Create, identified that whilst their views were taken into account, action was not always followed through.

eg. 'I think they took the views seriously when they made my plan but when they actually had to do the work, they didn't anymore. I don't think they respect us very much.... Aron 17.

'The plan is relevant for my needs but for what I want no. I can't get what I want. They don't answer your questions... Dan 17 yrs.

Create refers to the need to 'ensure the ongoing and meaningful participation of children & young people in care decisions affecting their lives.

Create makes recommendation 1:

'That children & young people are involved in all stages of the care & protection process and that all stake holders provide opportunities for their views to be heard and acted upon' via several mechanisms(P18)

.i.e. engaging children & young people in identifying issues, needs and responses

. the provision of knowledge about what assistance is available to them

. referral to appropriate services where necessary and agreed to by the child or young person

- . the provision of reasons if a request is denied
- . the provision of complaints mechanisms and support to use them
- . informing children & young people of the involvement of others in the child protection process.

'Revolving ' Caseworkers

Young people say that caseworkers are not stable consistent figures, but change all the time. Young people cannot build any emotional security because of this, and they cannot build trust or bonds with these transitory figures. This is reciprocal, as caseworkers are understaffed and overextended with caseloads they cannot fulfil. (No change in 40yrs). These workers are not significant other figures, nor are they successful advocates, as the system works against their effectiveness. Planning fails as a result, and results fail. Caseworkers are not impartial and are employed by organisations that deliver an agenda. In some cases, 14% of 143 children & young people surveyed by Create in 2002, did not have a departmental caseworker at all. They therefore had no representation either.

P19: Create:

'The concept of caseworkers being allocated to every child & young person is to give one person the responsibility for BEING THE ADVOCATE for that child, to support and care for the child as they grow & plan with them for their future.

'The majority of caseworkers across Australia are overworked, stressed and insufficiently supported. They carry very high caseload ratios, often with a complex mix of child protection and out of home care cases, and they are required to act in the best interests of the child, in a system that is grossly inadequate'.

CASE PLANS (Ref. P26)

Although Statutory Care Departments across Australia are responsible for ensuring that every child and young person in out of home care has a current case plan, which addresses their individual needs, surveys and consultations by Create, indicate that this is not the case for all children. i.e. Of 143 children surveyed, 64% were aware that they had a case plan, 36% were not aware that they had a case plan

There is also evidence to show that case plans are not child/young person focussed:

eg. P27: 'I have only had 2 case conferences in my whole life in the last 2 yrs, before that I wasn't allowed to have anything to do with them. They (Docs) controlled my life.
Tanya, 18.

'The Department don't listen, they never let me go to case conferences. They do things they think are right but aren't. I never got the opportunity, not even to hear what they were saying about me.

Belinda, 17yrs.

'It (the case conference) was a total disaster. They didn't listen and made me go out half way through. Psychologist was saying things that was supposed to be confidential". Jake 14.

Young people want Independent and regular monitoring of all children & young people in care.

.Create argues that it is critical for young people to have time alone with their case worker (& advocate) to ensure that they can raise concerns and issues they may have, and Create suggests that the government employ INDEPENDANT advocates in this role.

Create would like to see abuse in care protocols to ensure that mechanisms to report and act on abuse are furthered and are more responsive and that children are aware that these exist, and that they can access these measures.

I can really relate to these assertions. It was the same for me 36yrs. ago. I was the only NOT CONSULTED in MY OWN LIFE. I was just given directives, from diminished options of mostly, what I could not do, and mostly, I was given no information, and incorrect misinformation, that led to very poor outcomes.

This evidence presented here by me personally, and by these young people, via Create, forms the basis for the reforms that I would like to see, via the mechanism of Legal Advocacy, and specific Ward rights.

The construct of these young people's wardship lives, forms the basis of their very survival as adults. Our 450 testimonies, of historical reference, are proof of the shortcomings and failings of the past, and the basis of this submission to highlight ongoing generational systems dysfunction.

I support Create's summary of recommendations: Pages 39-42 and most importantly:

' that our collective role is to nurture, reignite and restore each child & young person's capacity to take control of their lives & destiny's.'

SENATE REPORT: FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS. August. 2004
TIME EXTENSION: SUBMISSIONS RE CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Para. 1.19, P7 of this report stated that a second report would be made, with its main focus on contemporary foster issues, children in care with disabilities, and the contemporary government and legal framework in which child welfare and protection issues operate.

This did not state specifically that new submissions would be received, i.e. it was ambiguous, and could easily have been overlooked, or conversely, observed. However, this would have been unknown to those who had not participated in the first report, or had access to a copy of the first report.

This could compromise further submissions from a wider range of applicants therefore.

i.e. it could be argued one way, that many could not avail this facility, and for this reason I would like to ask for the Committee to extend this time frame, within the guidelines

of its own final time date.

This would enable those that hurriedly made an initial submission, re historical issues to focus on contemporary issues, those who did not make an original submission to now do so, and applicants previously precluded from commenting on contemporary issues to do so now.

That is to be much valued.

DESIRED SPECIFIC OUTCOMES:

From the Senate Inquiry, re Contemporary Issues, I would like to see:

- . Legislation for specific, detailed Ward Rights to:
 - . inform, empower, and provide status to an unrepresented and presently mostly disadvantaged group of people in society to achieve societal parity and opportunity
- . Legal Advocate positions to accompany this legislation to:
 - . represent and effect wardship rights and to give authority to and for people who are often not represented in the welfare system independantly

ARGUMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF ABOVE.

As Wardship is a legal status, I believe that Wards are entitled to the information that defines and accompanies this definition. It needs to be in plain language, understandable/intelligible to young people, and contain all the FACTS and legalities that govern their wardship tenure and standing.

Every Ward needs a written copy of these Terms & Conditions so that they know and are educated with the guidelines that manage their position.

This would cover such things as educational provisions, access to cross services, access to their file, to be given copies of information such as schooling and medical information.

Wards need to know their legal entry and exit means, and what provisions after wardship will exist for them, i.e. counselling, housing, educational opportunities, medical resources. I talk about post-wardship service provision in Submission 369.

Wards themselves could be canvassed directly, via Create, Father Riley, The Exodus Foundation, who are out there at the Coalface with these Young People, to input these needs.

Government wardship disclosure would talke about and explain all information for Wards, which has previously been omitted from their own governance.

The State would be legally required to provide this information as an entry package, and this information would be inherent at placement inception.

By definition then, and status, Wards would become automatically active participants in their own lives, because they have determinations which can be entered by a legal advocate, as an independent representative of their ward client.

Legal advocates would be employed solely as a young person's representative, and they would/could perform the following duties.

LEGAL ADVOCATE ROLE

- . L.A. to have specific legal training and to be able to conduct mediation resolution if required
- . L.A. empowers youth to enable active participation and a clear understanding of their own participation for positive outcomes
- . L.A. to provide legal information re ward terms and conditions, to act in an unbiased informative capacity
- . L.A. is easily accessible by young person, and can attend case plan meetings with ward
- . LA position ensures that there is a case plan, and best practices for ward whilst in wardship
- . L.A. is a stable, longer-term and less transitory figure that can build a trusting and truthful relationship with young person, because they have a justice background, and act independantly of welfare
- . L.A. acts with surety for young people, as this position is accompanied by legal powers of accountability, and representation via court review
- . .A. role models negotiation, mediation and assertive skills, as a learning example for emerging youth into adulthood, thus developing life skills
- . L.A. can advise and add voice for young people's concerns when dealing with an impersonal bureaucracy
- . L.A. is a sole function job, and not a hybrid of amalgamated roles such as present caseworkers are confronted with. Perhaps L.A. could incorporate some of the caseworkers workload that overlaps thus freeing caseworkers for more grassroots specific work
- . L.A. works in partnership with ward client. It is a supportive, pro-active and advocacy position.
- . L.A. to be available at all times to Wards. Their role is to solely represent and provide for Ward client
- . L.A. has redress measures available

I believe that the creation of Legal Advocate positions are a more assured option for ward advocacy than the creation of community visitor roles.

LEGAL ADVOCACY as Preferred Position, cfd. Community Visitor Scheme

1. Community visitor is a vague term that is reminiscent of some kind of 'do-gooder' role, without legal status and safeguard, power or accountability legislation
2. Community visitor positions existing presently within other government fields, such as the mental health field are often of a minimalist nature. They are largely poorly trained positions, with minimal requirements, and are often seen as a token measure to essentially be 'seen to be doing something' about the problem.
3. They are a more expedient measure, a cheaper option, and I do not believe that they demonstrate a serious provision.
Any call for these to be voluntary positions, without a professional status, would be reprehensible to us as a group.
5. Community visitors in other fields have not been effective. Clients of organisations, saw their presence as a token gesture and are suspicious of their effectiveness. This is also a reflection of their lack of real status, and lack of authority and real power.
6. Community visitors would not be acceptable to ex-wards.
Many older ex-wards, who were institutionalised as children, mentioned in their submissions to this inquiry, having witnessed Inspectors, who would periodically, visit the institutions.
wards were never allowed to be alone with these people, and if they did make some comment/complaint, they would have been intimidated and punished for their actions.
Similarly, in today's era, young ward clients would fear being singled out, with consequential reprisals.
Anonymity cannot be guaranteed, and this is an invidious position to put a ward in, without any protection.
7. This method has been a proven failure in the past.
8. Community visitors do not have a 1:1 relationship with a client, and do not establish a working, significant other role, as a L.A. would.
9. Community visitor is an inferior and suspect method of intervention, that does not have the same qualities as Legal advocate
10. Community visitors are ambivalent roles. They are not exclusively bonded/attached to a ward, but act both for the State, as watchdog, and for the ward, presumably.
Weightings can change in this dynamic, the role is open to interpretation and neutrality, because it does not have the same legal definition as a legal advocate.
11. Many ex-wards would want young wards representatives to be 100% guaranteed advocate roles, with designated powers and representative roles exclusively for wards.

Ex-wards, in their submissions expressed the earnest appeal to this Senate Inquiry for a committed pathway to achieve the best possible conditions for today's young wards.

It is inconceivable for us as a group to fail these people, again.

Short-changing wards in this way would make a mockery of all that we have fought for, and that justice represents.

CONCLUSION

I have demonstrated and documented in this extra submission the systemic deficiencies that young wards lives are governed by.

This Senate Inquiry has the POWER to make unequivocal recommendations to enact justice to both Senior Ex-Wards, and Young Wards.

Many Senators involved in this Inquiry witnessed evidence that compellingly motivated them to fight for full redress and restoration for 'Forgotten Australians', particularly Senator Andrew Murray and Senator Jan McLucas.

These opportunities do not come often, and we have have been given that moment, to enact changes that can really change the quality and opportunities for some of Australia's most disadvantaged people.

In a political career, these are great and lasting moments, and an honour to achieve in a lifetime.

We, as a group, honour you with this role, via our suffering.

Please make that suffering count for restoration of lives with:

1. Real provisions for 'senior ex-wards'
2. Federal legislation for Ward Rights, and the accompanying legal advocacy positions.

I heartfully thank you for your sustained commitment in this challenge, and for the sensibility and genuine regard that you have all undertaken during the duties of the Inquiry.

Sincerely,

'Caron'.

'A GIFTED CHILD'

THE CASE FOR WARD RIGHTS AND LEGAL ADVOCACY

This is the story of a reversal of misfortune, that otherwise would conclude, like many Ward children and young people to welfare recidivism.

Wardship 1984 - 1990

My brother's daughter became a State Ward in the years 1978-1990, when his marriage ended, and he became a single working father. He struggled with dual roles, largely unassisted, until respite care was provided in a group home. The home closed due to financial hardship and his daughter was found a foster home of dubious merit.

The welfare payment seemed to be a motivator for this placement, and the child was deprived of many things. As she grew older she complained to me, as a significant other figure and close relation, and I and friend, voiced our concerns to the case social worker.

After thorough investigation it was decided that the child's claims were justified, and the placement was deemed unsuccessful. Some of the reasons given were severe punishments for small childish misdemeanours, humiliating other ward children, and favouritism to an adopted son. Money that should have been spent for school excursions was often denied. There was a complete mismatch of 'living' standards as well. All the children were removed.

When the child was found an alternative placement she was 11yrs. The couple were nice people, and young, and very keen to start their own family. However this child had had a previous life history and was closer to teenage, than early childhood, and conflicts arose.

The young girl had been identified as a gifted child by her very dedicated primary school teacher, who recommended that she go on to a selective high school, because she would do well.

The new foster parents did not agree to this, and took peculiar and particular offense to this idea. They said 'that a state school had been good enough for themselves, and what had been good enough and anything else would challenge their authority'.

None of us thought that this was fair, and asked the social worker to present the case for the child's advocacy. He declined to do this, and so we had no alternative but to seek further assistance with a senior bureaucrat, and the decision was reversed. The girl was able to go to a prominent selective girls school and excelled. She was motivated by her peers to achieve, and had an expectation from me that she could do well, that she was bright and that she was a valued and worthwhile person. She could see that I valued all of these things in life and that with hard work and application she would be rewarded with opportunity.

During these years the placement broke down. Good social work practices intervened with critical support and consultation, and she was able to live in the community, in a peer group household, with minimal assistance and a support worker who was accessible constantly, if needed.

Her own strength and determination and high functioning ability enabled endurance during a challenging time. Many times with no where to study she would attend a public library.

2.

Her caseworker was available, and a mature and 1:1 working partnership was established, empowering her to keep on going.

There were endangered times as well, and peers, friends and myself helped along the way. She successfully completed HSC and gained very high marks.

She was at a loss of further direction, and identity issues around her natural parents had become emotional trials, and it was a time of emotional risk for her. She 'dropped out' for a while, to look at options, and during this time of 'being out there' gained a closer look at some of lifes more undesirable lifestyles. She was befriended by a male, 35yrs. who had unhealthy designs on her, and fortunately she fairly quickly disengaged from a seedy situation that would have undermined her own strength of will. The situation became dangerous, and that became the wake up call. Some young girls are preyed on by these sordid types, who capitalise on their vulnerability, like modern day 'fagans'. We, as older women, would call them 'sleaze-bags'., latches etc.

She sought help from extended family members, and with input from us all, she went on to University, to do a general Arts degree, specialising in Social Sciences. She maintains that having a high expectation of herself from us, and her peers coaxing her on, made the difference between going up, and not down, when faced with conflicting forces. She also had reasonable self-esteem, and that inner strength gave her determination and an internal guide.

She still had to overcome all the barriers of being self-supportive during her university years, and she had to take out a loan, via a campus scheme. I believe that she was exceptional in this achievement, as a lot of people wouldn't have been able to surmount this obstacle, and I believe that tertiary fees should be abolished for all wards. This is an investment in preventing welfare recidivism, and unemployment statistics.

She completed her degree, and is professionally employed, and is sustaining family life. I am so very proud of her. She is everything that I would have liked to have been.

I tell her story to demonstrate the difference that regard recognition and real material support can make to DETERMINE POSITIVE LIFE OUTCOMES, and turn around disadvantage.

We all believe that defining moments that altered her path for achievement were:

- . her own ability as a young person, to bravely ask for help when she was being abused., and in the knowledge that complaint would be acted upon, by ourselves as significant other figures, and advocates, and for the follow up complaints investigation by a serious minded and dedicated child protection worker
- . for senior director administrative intervention to recognise and assert that CHILDS RIGHT to avail the selective school advantage, based on her own merit.
- . advocacy and intervention was present. This supports my arguments for formal legal advocate positions, and legislated rights for wards, i.e. in this case, her right to take her educational place.

In my own Submission 369, I talked about how this right was denied me, and the untold damage I encountered with negative and cruel obstruction.

- . expectations from ALL people instrumental in her life, that her original misfortune was a temporary and reversible dimension only

- . meeting her needs as they arose with appropriate service provision
- . recognising her as a 'young adult', and treating her with maturity and dignity to make decisions. Giving her information and the means to do so.

Her passage through Wardship from 11-18 had been reasonably successful, and led to a productive outcome.

The years from 18-23 had moments of risk, and there is a strong need for accompanying readily available after-care service provisions for these years, such as:

- . assisted housing programs
- . 1: case worker guidance, information, cross-service provision eg. employment guidance
- . This is still a high risk time for these young people as they do not have parental support or the facility to 'sponge off' mum and Dad, or for the safety-net of mum and dad, when trials surface.
- . this is a particularly vulnerable and fragile group of people, as their backgrounds have been insecure and often anxious times, with repeated separations and dislocations.

They need a sense of security, and emotional support, as parenting, can often still be needed until an arbitrary figure, of say 25. Some parents assert, that are parents for life!

CASE FOR LEGAL ADVOCACY

This story accompanies all the previous arguments I have provided, for formal legal advocate roles.

I believe that if my friend and I had not asserted my niece's educational opportunity, she would not have achieved the outcome she did.

She says herself, that she feels that she would have dropped out, with despondence, and having to earn a living, and in the cultural climate of her placement, of low socio-economic status, she would have been a 'Check-out Chick', with babe on the way. i.e. 2 welfare dependants. Yes, even smart girls, do that, 'looking for love'. I just thank everyone concerned, that that did not happen.

Therefore, in the absence of those presences, I reassert the case for legislation for wardship rights and their assertion, a genuine and mature face to face confidence with young people, working together for best outcomes, and the services needed to fulfil this outcome - see Sub. 369.

Legal advocacy, I believe, provided the means to achieve the above goals.

Conclusion

This is a HEARTENING story, life, and a testament to the provision of good service provision, and an educated approach that has circumvented disadvantage and welfare dependency.

With more examples, funding and services, may we have:

- . high wardship outcomes for education, housing and life performance, happiness.