

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGO APPLIES TO 4AM TUESDAY 25 MAY 2021

creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

CREATE'S LATEST REPORT REVEALS URGENT

NATIONAL NEED FOR MORE LEAVING CARE SUPPORTS

CREATE asserts that child protection systems are out of step with modern life and effectively set young people up to fail when they leave care. Its latest research, *Transitioning to adulthood from out-of-home care: Independence or interdependence?* found young care leavers remain at high risk of homelessness (30%) when they turn 18 and are ejected from the care system. They lose support of their workers, their home and network often with no place to go.

More than 44,906 Australian children today are growing up in out-of-home care. The most over-represented group are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and in fact the exact figures are unknown as many of our nation's first people are in informal care (and not recorded in the child protection system). In the latest report CREATE spoke to 325 young people aged 18 to 25 with a care experience across Australia.

Having a stable home and positive adult influence in a young person's life has an enormous impact on their outcomes when transitioning to independence. A 21-year-old female stated in the report *"I had 50 placements over eight years and in no way did that create any stability. And I find it very difficult to accept any form of stability in my adult life today."*

When they move around so much, school is often a safe place for children growing up in care. The report found that 57% of young people completed year 12 being an increase from the 2009 result of 35% however far below the national Year 12 Certification rate (73%).

A 21-year-old male respondent shared that he had experienced homelessness during his schooling and struggled to continue. *"My troubles outweighed my happiness and I became overwhelmed. I had to give up on my education because I could no longer do everything by myself. It was really quite sad, because all I wanted was to complete year 12..."* Every child deserves stable, suitable accommodation and the opportunity to complete their education.

Survey respondents also shared that their mental health is a top priority yet they are often unable to afford continuing supports, even with the increased mental health care plan supports it is not sustainable.

"CREATE calls for increased housing stability and educational supports for young people in care, including increasing the leaving care age to 21 nationally," said Ms Jacqui Reed, CREATE Foundation Chief Executive.

"It is disheartening to know that after over a decade long conversation with these children and young people who are in such great need, we are still hearing them rate their transition experience satisfaction rating of 45 out of 100. It is not acceptable and nobody would do this to their own children."

“Recently we have seen some great policy announcements by governments to extend support to the age of 21 across all care types, like in Victoria. However, access to this support should be consistent across Australia and not depend on what state you live in.”

The national launch event is taking place on the morning of Tuesday, 25th May, 2021. Presenters include CREATE Chief Executive, **Ms Jacqui Reed**; Executive Director of Research and report author, **Dr Joseph McDowall**, sector and government representatives, as well as hearing powerful stories shared by CREATE’s **young people** on their experiences, followed by a lively discussion around how the child protection sector can work together to improve the lives of children and young people in out-of-home care. Register to attend the live virtual event here

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_GOIVqdITSX-aCNVrp_Wszg

CREATE Foundation is the national consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience (including kinship care, foster care and residential care). CREATE provides programs and services to children and young people with a statutory care experience and develops policy and research to advocate for a better care system.

The new report will be available for download following the launch event:

<https://create.org.au/research-and-publications/>

For more information please visit the CREATE website at www.create.org.au

For further comment from CREATE’s Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed, and/or a young person with care experience contact Leigh White, CREATE Communications Advisor, via (m) 0431 932 122 or leigh.white@create.org.au

Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

1. 44,906 children were in out-of-home care across Australia as at June 30, 2019 (AIHW 2020)
2. Young people in out-of-home care are 16 times more likely to be under a youth justice order than the general population
3. 37% had been involved with the justice system while in care and 21% since leaving care.
4. 30% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care
5. 30% of young people who have left care or preparing to leave care are unemployed
6. Almost half (46%) were totally dependent on Centrelink payments
7. Only 36% young people aged 18-25 years had a leaving care plan and 26% not spoken to anyone about leaving care.

Australian Assessment and Curriculum Reporting Authority (ACARA). (n.d) *Year 12 Certification rates 2019* retrieved 28 April, 2021, from <https://acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia-data-portal/year-12-certification-rates#view1>

McDowall, J. J. (2018). *Out-of-home care in Australia: Children and young people’s views after five years of National Standards*. CREATE Foundation

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