**MEDIA RELEASE**

13 May 2024

**‘Family Diversity’ in the spolighton National families week**

National Families Week (13 – 19 May) is an annual celebration of Australian families. This year’s theme, *Celebrating family diversity and connection*, is an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate all types of families in Australia.

As an organisation that amplifies the voices of children and young people who have grown up in kinship care, foster care, residential care and other out-of-home care placements, CREATE knows that family means lots of different things to different people.

Here’s what young people with a care experience have told us about what family means to them:

* *“Family is not necessarily blood, it’s anyone that you feel you can trust… you have a connection with them and you know they have your back when times are tough*.”
* *“I consider a lot of people family – a lot of cultures merged into one. They’re still my family and I would do anything for them.”*
* *“Family to me also means a place of belonging and a place to feel safe.”*
* *“Be respectful of who we identify as siblings, not always blood-related but can be the chosen family through shared experiences, emotional connections and culture.”*

CREATE Acting Deputy CEO, Imogen Edeson says respect for family diversity is critical for supporting children and young people with a care experience.

*“Young people with a shared experience in care may call each other siblings, or identify others in their community as part of their family.*

*We should all respect how children and young people define their family. Safe, meaningful and enduring connections are what family is all about.”*

In honour of National Families Week, CREATE is inviting children and young people with a care experience across the country to [draw who makes up their family, including pets](https://create.org.au/national-families-week/).

CREATE is also encouraging parents, carers, teachers and other adults to celebrate family diversity and respect young people’s own sense of family, as defined by them.

*“Family is about shared meaning, experiences and deeply felt relationships. Family should be where we feel safe, seen and heard – among people who seek to understand us and want the best for us. I think those connections – in their multiplicity of forms – are definitely worth celebrating over National Families Week,”* said CREATE Acting Deputy CEO, Imogen Edeson.

CREATE Foundation is the national consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience. We provide programs to children and young people with a statutory care experience. We listen to what those with a lived experience of the care system tell us, and advocate with and for them to achieve systemic change.

**About National Families Week**

National Families Week is an initiative of [Families Australia](https://nfw.org.au/) to celebrate the vital role of families in Australian society. The theme of the Week 2024 is Celebrating Family Diversity & Connections and it will run from 13 to 19 May 2024.

**\*ENDS\***

For more information, please visit the CREATE website at [**http://www.create.org.au/national-families-week**](http://www.create.org.au/national-families-week)

For further comment from CREATE’s Acting Deputy CEO, Imogen Edeson, contact Taylor Toovey, Communications and Media Specialist via (m) 0478 814 752 or taylor.toovey@create.org.au

**Key statistics on out-of-home care in Australia**

* There are currently around 45,400 children and young people in out-of-home care nationally.
* Nationwide, only 67.5% of children and young people in care feel they could have a say ‘reasonably often’ and 15.7% reported that they rarely or never had a say.
* 36% children and young people in care do not live with any of their siblings.
* 35% of young people in care have five or more caseworkers during their time in care.
* 67% of young people in care over the age of 15 are not aware of having a leaving care plan.
* 30% of young people who have left care or preparing to leave care are unemployed.
* About one fifth (21%) of young people with youth justice experience have been in out-of-home care in the last five years.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2023). Child protection Australia 2021–22. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2021-22

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

McDowall, J. J. (2020). *Transitioning to adulthood from out-of-home care: Independence or interdependence?* CREATE Foundation.