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MEDIA RELEASE

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RESPONSE TO CARER ABUSE OF NSW CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

CREATE Foundation CEO Jacqui Reed has said that more work must be done to ensure that children and young people taken into care are safe from harm.

CREATE Foundation is the only national organisation advocating for children and young people with a care experience in Australia.

Speaking in response to an ABC News story about three children in NSW allegedly abused by their foster carer. Ms Reed said that CREATE's 2013 Report Card *'Experiencing Out-of-Home Care in Australia: the views of children and young people'* found that 83% of young people interviewed were quite or very happy in their placement. "It's the 17% who aren't happy that we worry about" she said.

In the case reported by the ABC a foster carer has been charged with three counts of assault, as well as possessing a gun and drugs. The mother of the three young children who were allegedly abused said that her children were telling her they were being abused by their foster carer. The mother alleges that although she reported the concerns to child safety officers on several occasions she doubts her complaints were taken seriously.

Ms Reed said that it is imperative that the system is accountable and that there are mechanisms in place to hear the voices of children and young people. CREATE's 2013 Report Card interviewed over 1000 children and young people in out-of-home care, aged 8 to 17, across Australia. Over half claimed they knew how to make a complaint however in NSW only 38% reported knowing how to make a complaint. Ms Reed said that at a time where Australia has a Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and when a number of states are making significant changes to child protection legislation it is imperative that there remains stringent oversight of departmental processes.

Ms Reed said that children and young people of all ages must be given the opportunity to speak freely about their care experience. She went on to say that the National Children's Survey, a key outcome of the Australian Government's National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children must be an independent external process where children are able to provide frank feedback about their experiences without fear of retribution or influence.

While it is understandable that current checks may not predict all instances of possible harm there must be processes in place to ensure that children are safe.

The people of NSW need reassurance that the Government's reforms to child protection will strengthen the child protection system not weaken it Ms Reed said.

CREATE Foundation is the peak consumer body for children and young people in care. We are a not-for-profit organisation connecting and empowering children and young people in care and improving the care system through activities, programs, training and policy advice. Learn more at www.create.org.au

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