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MEDIA RELEASE

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INQUIRY REPORT RESPONSE: CHILD'S BEST INTERESTS AND INVESTING IN CARE SYSTEM MUST BE PRIORITIES

CREATE Foundation welcomes today's release of the final report of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. This report continues the vital discussion to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in care remains the paramount concern, rather than cost cutting or other priorities.

As the national peak consumer advocate representing the voice of children and young people in out-of-home care, CREATE Foundation played a key role during the inquiry and made submissions to inform the inquiry, identified key issues, and facilitate a series of focus groups with the commissioner around Queensland. This enabled interested young people with a care experience to meet with the commissioner to tell their story and experience in the child protection system

Ms Jacqui Reed, Chief Executive Officer, CREATE Foundation, indicated that CREATE's initial review of the report identifies many positive aspects.

"CREATE is pleased with the recommendation to increase investment in early intervention and prevention programs," stated Ms Reed.

"The early identification of children and families at risk will enable support services to work with families to prevent abuse and neglect and stop a child having to be removed from their family and placed into the child protection system."

However, Ms Reed indicated CREATE is extremely concerned about the recommendation to dismantle the role of Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. CREATE is concerned that the current working system is to be replaced by a child protection system that does not exist, seems to have no evidence of independent oversight and no requirement to report to the Parliament.

CREATE agrees that the current rise in the number of children and young people coming into out-of-home care in Queensland is unsustainable. The number of children and young people in care has risen from 3,787 (in 2003) to almost 8,000 individuals as of 30th June, 2012. This astounding increase is creating enormous pressure on the child protection system, already stretched to breaking point.

CREATE calls on the Queensland Government to remember that protecting Queensland's most vulnerable children and young people is not cost neutral. It is important to remember that children and young people are in care because of serious abuse and neglect, rather than by choice. It is vital that

government recognises and demonstrates that their care and support is more important than the state's fiscal position.

As the national consumer peak advocate for children and young people in care, CREATE Foundation strongly reiterates the importance of hearing the voices of children and young people with a care experience. This is especially relevant if the government were to implement the commission's recommendation to undertake a "*full audit of children in the care system to assess whether, or to what extent, the system is retaining children longer than necessary.*" These decisions will continue to affect the daily lives, along with the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in care. It is essential that they participate in the decisions making process.

CREATE Foundation calls on the Queensland Government to consult with the out-of-home care sector and children and young people in care when determining the implementation of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry recommendations.

CREATE Foundation is the peak body representing the voices of all children and young people in out-of-home care. CREATE Foundation relies on community support for its projects. Learn more at www.create.org.au

To arrange an interview with a young person with a care experience, or Lucas Moore, CREATE Foundation QLD Coordinator, or Ms Jacqui Reed, Chief Executive Officer CREATE Foundation, see below: media enquiries Leigh White | 0431 932 122 | leigh@whitemarketing.com.au