



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 22 November 2013

From Strength to Strength: Improving the care system through participation

Today CREATE Foundation will proudly open its inaugural international child protection conference taking place in the nation's capital, Canberra, from 22-24 November, 2013. The Strength to Strength conference will be attended by children and young people with an out-of-home care experience (i.e. foster, kinship or residential care), carers, government and sector representatives and both local and international child protection experts.

Unlike other conferences, *Strength to Strength* is designed to enable children and young people with a care experience to participate in the sharing of wisdom, when the true experts who have been cared for in the child protection system take part in delivering information sessions. One of the participants, Canberra's Dylan (18), said that *"It feels so good being able to give something back. To help others who are currently in the care system."*

Participation in decisions that affect your future is vital, as revealed in CREATE Foundation's recent and most significant national [Report on out-of-home care](#) in Australia. Over 1/3 of respondents had not been able to have a say in issues that impacted directly on them daily. A person without a voice cannot be heard, cannot share their view, nor have a say in decisions that affect their own life.

The only one of its kind in Australia, the conference provides a national forum for young people with a care experience to learn and grow, to connect with their peers, and those working within the system – and for their voice to be heard by professionals working in the field.

The Strength to Strength conference is the culmination of 12 months' of tireless work from the CREATE team, said Ms Jacqui Reed, the organisation's Chief Executive Officer. *"The conference will see the fruition of a vision that all children and young people in care be entitled to the opportunity to attend CREATE Foundation's first-ever international conference."*

"This atmosphere at the conference will be of inclusiveness, encouragement and respect for the child protection sector, and to listen to and improve the system for the wellbeing of children and young people in care. This conference also provides an opportunity for young people to

participate in personal development activities and join in having a say in an international conversation.”

ACT Children and Young Peoples Commissioner, Alasdair Roy said *“I’m a long term supporter of CREATE due to the quality of their work and their ability to listen to children and young people, which is crucial in all aspects of policy. The conference was designed ‘for’ children and young people, which reflects CREATE’s focus on listening respectfully.”*

“As part of the conference committee, I have encouraged the conference taking place in the ACT and am pleased it is during the centenary year. CREATE, with input from the committee, has carefully planned that during the conference, children and young people with a care experience will be equal and active participants in working together to improve the child protection system.”

Titled **“From Strength to Strength: improving the care system for children and young people through participation”** this conference aims to connect, empower and change the care system by and for children and young people in out of home care. International and Australian expert speakers at the conference include Emily Munro (UK), Professor Judy Cashmore (Sydney University), Dr Joseph McDowall (Executive Director, Research CREATE Foundation), Nicola Atwool (NZ), Adam Diamond (Canada) and many more. Dignitaries and honourable guests include government officials, children and young people in care, carers and practitioners in the sector.

The conference program is now available online [Program - Strength to Strength 2013 | Strength to Strength 2013](#). Examples of topics for discussion and presentation are: Health and Wellbeing; Leaving Care and supporting effective transitions; Education, What makes a successful placement?; international perspectives on young people’s transitions to adulthood; overcoming early stress and trauma directions; building and strengthening connections for kids in care; cultural identity and family and culture; workshops and presentations on participation; art workshops with musician, Ryan, teaching song lyric writing, and Dean (cartoonist for *The Simpsons* and more) with a workshop on sharing your story through cartoons, and more.

The only one of its kind in Australia, the **From Strength to Strength: improving the care system for children and young people through participation** conference provides a national forum for young people with a care experience to learn and grow, to connect with their peers, and those working within the system.

At the conclusion of the conference, **The Power Within** national portrait exhibition will be launched on Monday 25th November, presenting a photographic collaboration of 24 young people with a care experience and high profile Australians.

The exhibition presents a candid and honest insight into the lives of people with a care experience, and overcoming adversity to rise to achieve a satisfying and successful life. High profile Australian's involved in the project include Linda Burney (MP), Richard Hill (CREATE Foundation chairman, businessman, Paul Howes (National Secretary of the Australian Workers Union), Betty Klimenko (Westfield heiress, V8 Supercar boss and businesswoman, David Hill (business leader, advocate, writer and CREATE Patron), Stephen Smith (Lyric Tenor, Opera and CREATE Ambassador), Layne Beachley (multiple female world title winning surfer, motivational speaker), Sam Bui (My Kitchen Rules TV celebrity and entrepreneur), Greg Johnson (businessman and CREATE Board member), Rose Parker (WA singer/song writer and occupational therapist), Lewis Abdulah (WA Young Person of the year 2013) and Fay Alford (Foster Care Association of WA Director), and many more.



The collective aim of the conference and portrait exhibition is to enhance community awareness and to reduce the stigma experienced by children and young people with a care experience, and takes place at the National Convention Centre, coinciding with Canberra's historic centenary in November.

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



To arrange a media interview with Ms Jacqui Reed, CEO CREATE Foundation, a conference speaker or high profile Australian from the portrait exhibition, or a young person with a care experience, please contact Leigh White.

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For more information visit:

www.strengthtostrength2013.com.au

www.create.org.au/the-power-within

In Australia, over 38,000 children and young people live in care (i.e. foster, residential, kinship care) increasing by 9% every year. Through no fault of their own, children and young people may be placed in care due to neglect or abuse.

Young people in care experience social isolation, stigma and chronic low self-esteem. They feel unconnected, disempowered and unable to do anything about it.