

## MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 3 September 2015

# CONTACT WITH SIBLINGS IN CARE MATTERS NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION WEEK 2015

Less than one in three<sup>1</sup> children and young people in out-of-home care live with all of their siblings. Not being placed in care with your siblings can have a profound impact on the life of a child in care (i.e. foster, residential or kinship care). CREATE's theme for National Child Protection Week (NCPW) is to raise awareness of the importance of sibling contact and placements in the lives of children and young people.

CREATE's research<sup>1</sup> earlier this year revealed that over 35% of children and young people in out-of-home care (i.e. foster, kinship or residential care) were not living with brothers or sisters who also were in care, and in only 29% of care placements did children and young people live with all of their siblings (McDowall, 2015).

It is vital that children and young people are involved in discussions about their family, and their voice is heard. Mary arrived in Australia from Sudan, aged 5. Mary was placed in foster care and separated from her sister. *"I was really angry, really, really, angry because she was my sister. Why would you not tell me where she is? I just wanted a relationship with my sister and I feel I was denied that opportunity,"* said Mary.

*"Now, I have no idea where my sister is, we have no relationship - and that's not fair."*

CREATE Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed, says *"What we've heard from children and young people in care confirmed what we'd observed, as they say that living with their brothers and sisters is very important, and that siblings are the people they most want to contact when they are not living together."*

To strengthen the community's understanding of the needs of children and young people in care, CREATE has developed a video resource titled *Siblings Are Forever*. The video illustrates the importance of placing brothers and sisters together in care and where this is not possible, facilitating regular contact between siblings. CREATE have also developed resources for carers, children, and caseworkers.



Report & Video

<http://create.org.au/resources/sibling-contact/>

NCPW (6-12<sup>th</sup> September) is an annual awareness campaign reaching out to the community to keep children and young people safe. CREATE Foundation will have events and activities in each state and territory during NCPW. For more information contact CREATE by calling 1800 655 105.

In Australia, over 40,000 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.

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

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](http://www.create.org.au)

National Child Protection Week (NCPW) The National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) campaign aims to provide communities and individuals with practical information on how to 'Play Your Part' and to embed primary prevention messages into social discourse.

[www.napcan.org.au](http://www.napcan.org.au)



2-4 October, 2015, CREATE will proudly host the second international conference for the child protection sector to have a voice and be heard. The **Youth for Change: creating a better future** conference is an international platform for young people with a care experience to learn and grow, build self-confidence, and to connect with their peers and those working within the system. To register your attendance or view the program visit [www.youthforchange.create.org.au](http://www.youthforchange.create.org.au)

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<sup>1</sup> McDowall, J. J. (2014). *Sibling Placement and Contact in Out-of-Home Care*. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

#### BACKGROUND STATISTICS

CREATE Foundation regularly consults with young people and through this consultation in 2009 revealed a truthful yet somewhat bleak portrait of the reduced life outcomes experienced by children and young people growing up in the care system. The [Report Card](#) revealed that if you've been in out of home care, you are more likely to be undereducated, unemployed, to earn less, become a parent at a younger age, be involved in the juvenile justice system, become homeless and be dependent on social assistance.

- 35% are homeless in the first year of leaving care; 46% of boys are involved in the juvenile justice system; 35% completed Year 12 (compared to that of the general population); 29% are unemployed (compared to the national average which is 9.7%); 28% were already parents themselves. Source: McDowall, J. J. (2009). *Transitioning from care (CREATE Report Card 2009)*. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

CREATE's 2013 Report Card revealed: 36% of children and young people are split from their brothers and sisters in care; 31% attend 3 or more primary schools and have greater rates of suspension; 35% have 5 or more caseworkers during their time in care; 67% are not aware of any official leaving care plan. Source: McDowall, J. J. (2013). *Experiencing out-of-home care in Australia: The views of children and young people (CREATE Report Card 2013)*. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

Click [here](#) to visit our website to download the full reports.

