

MEDIA RELEASE

5 September 2017

18 IS TOO YOUNG ADDITIONAL COMMENT AND INSIGHT IN TO 'TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING FOSTER CARE AGE EXTENSION TO 21'

CREATE Foundation is Australia's peak consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience (including kinship care, foster care and residential care).

CREATE would like to respond to issues in the media regarding extending the age at which young people transition out of foster care.

Many young people in out-of-home care have experienced neglect, abuse or trauma during their childhoods. On their 18th birthday, their care arrangements are terminated and they 'exit' care without any mandatory supports in place. It's hardly surprising that they're vulnerable to crises including homelessness, health problems and often struggle to find or keep jobs or continue at school.

In 2015-16, 153 young people were discharged from out-of-home care in Tasmania. While some may have some support of somewhere to go, many others find themselves worried stressed and anxious about what will happen to them.

"Non-care experienced young people are not told to leave their home on their 18th birthday and as many parents will know, they continue to support their children well beyond 18 years" said Jacqui Reed, CREATE's CEO. "Extending care to 21 would be beneficial for young Tasmanians and carers, and would also save the State money according to international experience and the best research".

According to a CREATE Foundation Position Paper released in 2016, "Young people preparing to transition from care are among the most vulnerable groups in our society".

Young people leaving care experience significantly reduced life outcomes compared with their peers who do not have a care history. This can include not knowing how to adequately deal with financial issues or accommodation, and so they face deep uncertainty about what the future would hold for them, as well as increased risk of homelessness.

CREATE has, for many years, actively encouraged governments to make being supported to 21 an entitlement, but not at the discretion of the department. Some states have supported the increase in age but have complex caveats that make any support discretionary and if funds are not allocated for the support, the young people are tied up in red tape trying to access this support.

Any increase in support to age 21 has to be done in the best interests of the young person, and in communication with the young person. What's more, their engagement cannot be compulsory, nor can this be a 'once only offer'.

There are currently more than 46,000 children and young people in care across Australia. For more information on CREATE, please visit our website at www.create.org.au

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Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

- 46,488 children were in out-of-home care across Australia at 30 June, 2016
- 35% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care
- 46% of boys with care experience have had contact with the juvenile justice system
- 29% of young people who have experienced out-of-home are unemployed
- 36% of children and young people are split from their brothers and sisters in care
- 35% of young people in care have 5 or more caseworkers during their time in care
- 67% of young people in care are not aware of leaving care plans

For further comment from CREATE's CEO Jacqui Reed and/or a young person with care experience please call Andrea Doney 0402050418 and andrea@admarcoms.com.au

