

MEDIA RELEASE

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for children and young
people in care

NEW INDEPENDENT SURVEY REVEALS A.C.T YOUNG PEOPLE LACK STABILITY & ENTIRELY WITHOUT A LEAVING CARE PLAN!

Canberra, 26th March, 2019, today CREATE Foundation will hold a state briefing on findings revealed in the largest independent survey of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience. The national results indicate that over half of young people surveyed remain unaware of their care plan, experience placement instability and lack the appropriate channels to have input into the plan for their own life.

For young people in the nation's capital, there is a high level of awareness about why they are in care, yet, the lowest comparable levels of stability in their placement (taking into account time in care); less young people feel 'safe and secure' in their placement (85.5% versus 92.7% overall); and caseworkers in the ACT did not score well on feedback received from survey respondents. Carers have a high level of involvement in teaching culture; those in care had a high level of educational support and many knew how to speak up and lodge a complaint if the need arises.

Since 2006, CREATE Foundation has informed government and the child protection sector through independent consultations and research with children and young people with a care experience (i.e., foster, kinship or residential care). Learning about the experiences of children and young people growing up in care is vital as a means of informing the sector about what is working and where improvements are most urgent.

The latest survey is the only one of its kind being via **direct consultation** with children and young people about their care experience under the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020*. The lack of access to those who are currently living in care presents a significant challenge and highlights the need for improvement to assist services reach those who need it most.

Titled: ***Out-of-Home Care in Australia: Children and Young People's Views After 5 Years of National Standards***¹ this highly anticipated report is a follow up from CREATE's 2013 independent Report: *Experiencing Out-of-Home Care in Australia: The Views of Children and Young People*. The study concentrated on placement issues and levels of participation, and dealt with all life domains including education, health, relationships (family and friends), identity, and culture.

In the latest survey, over 1,200 children and young people shared invaluable insights into what is working well and what still needs to be improved in the child protection system. The survey focussed on these key areas: knowledge about care planning, having a say in their plan for their life, if young people feel safe and secure in their placement, and feeling prepared to transition to independence (leave care).

The survey found that children and young people clearly indicated it **was important to them to have a say about decisions affecting their care experience, particularly concerning their daily activities, where they lived, and their contact with family members.**

national new south wales office

CREATE Foundation Limited ABN 69 088 075 058

A 12 Union Street, Parramatta NSW 2150 | T 02 9267 1999

1800 655 105 www.create.org.au facebook.com/CREATEfnd @CREATEfnd

A comprehensive set of local ACT findings will be revealed at the briefing, with key insights shown below:

- 80% of ACT respondents indicated that they knew how to complain about any concerns they may have about their treatment in care.
- 92.7% of respondents overall reported feeling safe and secure; in the ACT only 85.5% agreed with this statement.
- Nationally 44% of respondents reported being aware of having a case plan, but only 43% of these had been involved in its preparation.
- Nationally 81% of respondents in this survey indicated they felt happy in their current placement.
- Children and young people in home-based care tended to have a more stable care experience than in Residential Care or Independent Living; Kinship Care respondents reported the most stable placements, with three quarters of these meeting the Standard.

CREATE's Executive Director of Research and survey author, Dr Joseph McDowall spoke about how the reports, over the past five years, addressing the national standards clearly show where to direct focus to improve the out-of-home care system in Australia.

"It was surprising how difficult trying to find children and young people in a small area as the ACT proved to be, even through the department and agencies. However, our research team and CREATE offices still managed to locate 63 respondents (about 23% of ACT care population in the required age group of 10–18 years)."

"The results indicated that after five years since the National Standards were introduced, there still remains a great deal of work to be done in the ACT on improving the care experiences of children and young people in care," stated Dr McDowall.

Ms Jacqui Reed, CREATE Foundation Chief Executive shared that, in spite of the challenges of accessing records where children and young people can be contacted, the survey revealed key information such as the important role of carers in keeping children safe.

"The new survey found that most children and young people will have 3 to 6 case workers and that foster carers are their greatest support," commented Ms Reed.

"The ACT had the highest level of involvement by carers in teaching young people about their culture and community and birth parents also rated highly. The carers in particular, instil a positive and stable adult influence in a young person's life, so it is vital to see the system establish robust tools and supports for carers to strengthen the likelihood of placement stability and they are adequately equipped to keep doing a great job."

The results have revealed a wide range of domains which require focus and attention to strengthen a system under strain. What remains disheartening for CREATE Foundation is to continually see that not only are young people growing up with the extreme challenges of placement instability, there remains a profound lack of opportunities for young people to have a say in important decisions that affect their lives and to feel they are heard (68%).

INVITATION: Be the first to hear the local discussion by RSVP'ing to join CREATE's ACT briefing event 2pm, Tuesday 26th March, 2019. Presenters include CREATE Executive Director of Research and report author, **Dr Joseph McDowall**, sector and government representatives, as well as hearing powerful stories from CREATE's **young people** on their experiences, followed by a lively discussion around how the child protection sector can work together to improve the lives of children and young people in out-of-home care.

Details: 2pm on Tuesday 26/3/19 at The Youth Coalition of the ACT, 46 Clianthus St, O'Connor, ACT.

CREATE develops policy and research to report on and advocate for a better care system. For more information please visit www.create.org.au or 1800 655 105

Media Enquiries: To discuss a story idea regarding the new report, an interview with Jacqui Reed or a young person, contact Leigh White via 0431 932 122 or hello@leighwhite.com.au ; or Andrea Doney via 0402 050 418 or andrea@admarcoms.com.au

View CREATE's standard and young person's versions of the report are available via this link:
<https://create.org.au/publications/2018-create-report/>

Source: 1. McDowall, J. J. (2018). *Out-of-home care in Australia: Children and young people's views after five years of National Standards*. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

Source 2: *Child protection Australia 2017–18 report*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 8/3/19.

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A 12 Union Street, Parramatta NSW 2150 | **T** 02 9267 1999

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