

MEDIA RELEASE

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creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

RECORDS AND STORY LINES: THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

The issue of access to information has received traction in the media recently. Young people with a care experience often experience significant barriers when trying to access important details about their own lives, including birth records, details about siblings, medical records and contact information for extended family members.

CREATE Foundation is the national 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 develops policy and research to report on and advocate for a better care system.

Both the current media cycle, and the voices of CREATE's Young Consultants, are protesting a bureaucratic culture that is frustrating to those affected. Significant obstacles often present hurdles to young people accessing records, unnecessarily and when records are finally secured, they are sometimes incomplete, heavily redacted or erroneous.

"This is often a distressing process for adults who are trying to consolidate their stories and records, as part of the process of knowing who you are, just like most Australians do," says Jacqui Reed, CEO of CREATE Foundation. "It often has a negative flow-on effect for people who are unable to piece their stories together."

CREATE Foundation believes that access to records is a basic need for all Australians, but especially for anyone who has been in care, in order to better know who they are, and learn the fundamentals about their health, education, and family. These details are critical building blocks that assist people in their journeys of life-building and wellness. Connection to culture and community is also important, and we need to work harder at making the process of accessing records easier

CREATE Foundation's conference 'Voices in Action: Nothing About Us, Without Us 2019' takes place in Melbourne in November. One of the themes identified as important to young people in care, by young people in care, is the issue of Complaints and Records Keeping. This will be examined in depth at the conference.

"This is not just an historic issue – this still impacts young people today" said Jacqui Reed. "I hear from young people who express powerful stories around the loss of their own history. Its time we removed some of these obstacles, and reconnected young to their own lives."

For more information please visit the CREATE website at www.create.org.au

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Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

- 45,800 children were in out-of-home care across Australia at 30 June 2018
- Young people in out-of-home care are 16 times more likely to be under a youth justice order than the general population
- 35% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care
- 46% of males have been involved with the justice system since leaving care
- 29% of young people who have left care or preparing to leave care are unemployed
- 36% children and young people in care do not live with any of their siblings who are also in care
- Most young people will have between 3 and 6 caseworkers
- 76% of young people in care over the age of 15 don't have or are unsure if they have a leaving care plan

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