

MEDIA RELEASE

27 April 2022

creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

INAUGURAL CASEWORKER RECOGNITION AWARDS!

The fifth biennial **Voices in Action Conference** (26-29 April, 2022) features the **inaugural Caseworker Awards** highlighting the appreciation of service and dedication by outstanding professionals in the child protection sector. CREATE Foundation is delighted to share that the award recipient announcement will be delivered by His Excellency General, the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General of Australia.

Behind the scenes, the awards are entirely led and coordinated by a group of passionate young people with a care experience who know what a difference a great Caseworker can make.

Over 45,996¹ Australian children and young people are growing up in out-of-home care and each are to receive many layers of support from a professional Caseworker. Many Caseworkers are dedicated individuals making a difference to the lives of others every day.

Why are awards needed? All too often, the stories of a system under strain dominate the public rhetoric, leaving no space for shining a light on the professionals who dedicate their energy and time to positively influence the lives of arguably the most disadvantaged children and young people in the community.

CREATE Foundation Chief Executive Officer, Ms Jacqui Reed shared: *“Without a strong and supported workforce of Caseworkers, the care system couldn’t exist at all. CREATE is enormously proud to feature the Inaugural Caseworker Awards this year, led and coordinated by the young people themselves.*

“As true experts, young people with a care experience have created the opportunity to acknowledge the dedicated service of Caseworkers who are making a positive difference to the lives of children and young people in care. It is an honour to receive the ongoing support of the Governor-General of Australia, who will deliver the award during our Voices in Action conference.”

CREATE’s Caseworker Awards will acknowledge excellence in casework for children and young people with a care experience.

“During the past seven years while holding two Vice Regal positions my wife, Linda, and I have visited and engaged with many organisations that provide services to young people under pressure, many of whom are in, or have experienced, some form of out-of-home care. I applaud those who work with these young people – they are compassionate, energetic and well intentioned,” shared the Governor-General of Australia.

“In my discussions with those involved in the provision of out-of-home care the topic of how to improve the quality of care of, and outcomes for, young people is a constant. Children need to have sustained experiences of real relationships and Caseworkers are the bedrock of the care system, on the front line, liaising with birth parents, foster carers and children and young people. It is my pleasure to announce the winner of the inaugural National Caseworker Awards in 2022.”

Winners will be announced on Wednesday, 27th April, during the **Voices in Action Conference: Resilient, Resourceful, Remarkable**.

Voices in Action: Resilient, Resourceful, Remarkable.

The ViA conference brings together key decision makers, young people with a lived experience of out-of-home care and experts to find solutions to the toughest problems within the care sector.

In Australia alone, over 45,996¹ children did not sleep in their own home last night and are presently growing up in out-of-home care. Further to this, five percent of Australia's children identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and yet this same cohort disproportionately represent more than a third of children in out-of-home-care (approximately 18,862). The need for appropriate supports and resources for those in care remains urgent.

2022 Conference sponsors include: *DSS Federal Government, SA Government, Life Without Barriers, NT Government, Mackillop Family Services, Proudly supported by the Queensland Government, Key Assets, Anglicare Victoria.* **Young person sponsors:** *WA Commissioner for Children and Young People, Department of Communities.*

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.

Conference schedule is available via: <https://voicesinaction.create.org.au/>

Read about the Caseworker Awards here: <https://create.org.au/creates-caseworker-awards/>

Visit the CREATE website at: www.create.org.au

For further comment from CREATE's Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed, and/or a young person with care experience contact Leigh White, CREATE Media Advisor, via (m) 0431 932 122 or leigh.white@create.org.au

Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

1. 45,996 children and young people were reported in 2019-20 as living in out-of-home care across Australia (*Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2021*).
2. Young people in out-of-home care are 16 times more likely to be under a youth justice order than the general population.
3. 30% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care. (McDowall, J. J. (2020).
4. 46% of males have been involved with the justice system since leaving care.
5. 29% of young people who have left care or preparing to leave care are unemployed.
6. 36% children and young people in care do not live with any of their siblings.
7. 35% of young people in care have five or more caseworkers during their time in care.
8. 67% of young people in care over the age of 15 are not aware of having a leaving care plan.

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.

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