

## MEDIA RELEASE

8 July 2022

creating a better life  
for children and young  
people in care

# WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO DEMONSTRATE A NEED?

## NSW - IT'S TIME TO MAKE IT 21!

The largest Australian care community resides in NSW – the only state placing vulnerable young people at risk of homelessness by ending care placements when young people turn 18 years old. With over 1/3\* of young people leaving care being without adequate supports or housing, and experiencing homelessness within the first year, how much is enough before the NSW government will adopt the collective approach of its counterparts and make the leaving care age 21?

If being left out in the cold isn't enough, every news channel is reporting the current housing crisis and it doesn't take a genius to know that young care leavers, without a traditional support network are at greater risk.

While growing up in care, 35% of young people have 5 or more caseworkers, so there is an absence of a stable positive adult influence in their lives, increasing risk amongst a vulnerable cohort.

Recently, the *NSW Department of Communities and Justice (NSWDCJ)* was reported<sup>1</sup> as saying the government was strengthening the quality of support it provided; that “Young people who demonstrate “a need for ongoing support” can receive personalised plans and financial assistance up to age 25.

CREATE Foundation's Chief Executive Officer, Ms Jacqui Reed, responded to NSWDCJ comments by stating: *“Support needs to be more than rhetoric couched in conditional ‘ifs’ and ‘maybes’! Young care leavers are already vulnerable and need stability and certainty – not maybe.”*

Ms Reed said that the mention of “...can receive personalised plans” is gobsmacking and went on to state, *“Surely every young person transitioning to adulthood after being in the care of the state should have access to a post-care plan?”*

*“How does a young care leaver head out into the world without a reliable safety net, often in the middle of finishing their high school education, and in an overcrowded rental market? The odds are against them and they cannot compete if NSW DCJ maintains the young person's ‘need’ is less than self-explanatory.”*

Right now, the NSW government is already well behind schedule in listening to and hearing the voices of children and young people in the NSW out-of-home care system, added Ms Reed. Now is time for action.

*What have young people told CREATE? “It would be better money-saving wise, and also more time to learn life skills and cooking, money-saving, cleaning and etc.”*

(Male, 18)

***“Eighteen is not a good age for young people with leaving school, and it is unreasonable to expect young people to find a job and live by themselves ... Leaving the comfort of a household and roof over your head at 18 takes away young people’s stability when they need it most.”*** (Female, 17)

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.

### **#itsyourturnNSW CAMPAIGN TO AMPLIFY VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

CREATE Foundation just launched a new online campaign to help young people transitioning from care to adulthood have their voices heard by our community coming together to speak up, share the voices and add hashtags #itsyourturnNSW #makeit21.

<https://create.org.au/make-it-21/>

Raising the age of support to 21 in NSW is overdue, so the more every person shares the message online, the more we amplify the voice of young people. Young people in care deserve better and our community’s job is to support them. <https://create.org.au/make-it-21/>

Read CREATE Foundation position papers on support to 21 and other key issues for young people in care <https://create.org.au/position-papers/>

For more information please visit the CREATE website at [www.create.org.au](http://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 Communications Advisor, via (m) 0431 932 122 or [leigh.white@create.org.au](mailto:leigh.white@create.org.au)**

### **Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:**

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- 46,212 children and young people were reported in 2020-21 as living in out-of-home care across Australia (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2022).
- Young people in out-of-home care are 16 times more likely to be under a youth justice order than the general population.
- 30% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care. (McDowall, 2020).
- 38% of young people have been involved with the justice system.
- 30% 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.
- 35% of young people in care have five or more caseworkers during their time in care.
- 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*. CREATE Foundation.

McDowall, J. J. (2020). *Transitioning to adulthood from out-of-home care: Independence or interdependence?* CREATE Foundation.

1 Source <https://www.crikey.com.au/2022/06/28/nsw-teens-leaving-foster-care-homeslessness-risk/>

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