

MEDIA RELEASE

August 2022

creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

NO YOUNG PERSON SHOULD BE WITHOUT A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE – HOMELESSNESS WEEK 2022

During National Homelessness Week (August 1-7) you are invited to amplify the conversation around the urgent need to ensure young people with a care experience have access to safe housing and supports.

With no shortage of evidence on the need for young care leavers to have the option to access safe and suitable housing, data from CREATE Foundation's direct consultations with young people indicates that over 1/3* of young people leaving care (i.e. foster, kinship or residential care) end up experiencing homelessness within the first year.

Young people leaving care need safe, secure, appropriate, and affordable housing in order to maintain a sense of security, good physical and mental health, take part in education and employment opportunities, and enjoy social and community connection.

**Leaving home isn't what you think it is –
unlike leaving the home of your family of origin,
when leaving care, you are likely to be without a support network
and the option to return home if things don't work out.**

"The risk of homelessness is a conversation for everyone and since you can find adults who had a care experience growing up peppered throughout all areas of our community - from CEO's, to government leaders, to community sector professionals – it's important to recognise that a care experience doesn't define any person's future as long as they have appropriate supports. Today's young people in care need to have safe, stable and suitable accommodation – every day," said Ms Jacqui Reed, CREATE Foundation Chief Executive Officer.

In NSW, where young people are still waiting to receive support, including accommodation support to age 21, Ms Reed added, *"Many Australians are facing a housing crisis and 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. Now is time for action."*

Young people in care have often experienced neglect or abuse and this can lead to a person not being developmentally ready to live independently at leaving care age. In addition, moving around a lot in care to many different homes means they are without

the same family and community support network that other young people have, increases the risk of slipping through the cracks.

What do young people say?

“My carer is like my mum. She looks after me. I need looking after. I missed being looked after when I was little. I need to be able to have a safe place like my friends will, indefinitely.” (Male, 15)

“...no one wanted to lease accommodation to a teenager that had no parents to sign as a guarantor and especially a child in care that has come into the real estate with a support worker. It was always assumed that I would be wild and party, and trash the house. Which I never did at any stage.” (Female, 23)

“Please, I need the support to go on after 18, so I can stay with my carer. I need to be looked after like other kids my age. I missed out on being cared for by my parents properly, and need to be cared for now. My life will be better forever if I can stay longer with my carer. I will need direction and boundaries after 18.” (Male, 15)

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.

AMPLIFY THE VOICES – NSW is the only state lagging behind on making care and supports available to all young people until 21. Join the conversation by having your say and adding hashtags #itsyourturnNSW #makeit21 Read more at <https://create.org.au/make-it-21/>

For more information please 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 Communications Advisor, via (m) 0431 932 122 or leigh.white@create.org.au

Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

- 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.

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