

MEDIA RELEASE

9 August 2022

creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

WA'S CARE TO 21 PILOT PROGRAM WORKS!

CREATE APPLAUDS WA GOV SUPPORT IN EXTENDING PILOT

CREATE Foundation applauds Premier McGowan's show of support demonstrated through the West Australian Government's announcement to extend a pilot project which gives young people in care the option to stay in their placement (their home) until the age of 21.

The reality is that old ways won't work and right now, over 1/3* of young people leaving care end up experiencing homelessness within the first year. Western Australia took the first steps and ran a pilot which they have seen is worthwhile continuing.

The Premier's office stated that \$37.2 million funding will be applied towards assistance for young people in the form of help with obtaining safe and stable accommodation, enrolling in further education, connecting to voluntary work opportunities, identifying where to access support in the local community, re-engaging with health services and improving financial skills.

"This investment is vital to galvanising the West Australian care system. It is so much more than delivering on an election promise, as CREATE has seen the West Australian government and Minister for Child Protection Simone McGurk demonstrating their commitment to hearing young people's voices and taking action to support keeping young people safe, in appropriate housing and with access to supports – now to 21 years of age," said Ms Jacqui Reed, CREATE Chief Executive Officer.

New South Wales is the largest care community nationally, and the Perrottet Government continues sitting on the fence regarding committing to provide the NSW care community with the option to access adequate care and support to the age of 21. The reason this is needed is making it 21 is the best step towards reducing the risk of homelessness and keeping young people with a care experience safe after they turn 18.

Young people with a care experience are the true experts and WA's CREATE Young Consultant, Kathleen, shared that the Home Stretch program having a permanent presence will bring so much hope to young people with a care experience.

"Whether they are leaving care, still in care or transitioning to adulthood, people with out of home care experiences can all agree this is a positive step and promises improvement to the system that we've been needing for so long," said Kathleen.

"I am proud of the hard work that staff and young people have put into making this happen. I love that young people are the face, the voice and most valuable asset when creating change to the system and Home Stretch really reflects this."

Kathleen hopes that all young people will be able to access these supports and that Home Stretch will be encouraged to achieve its full potential and keep empowering these young people to be future leaders and symbols of bravery and strength.

In NSW, now is time for action. Get involved in CREATE Foundation's current online campaign to help the voices of young people transitioning from care to adulthood be heard! As a community we do this by coming together to speak up, share the voices and add hashtags #itsyourturnNSW #makeit21. <https://create.org.au/make-it-21/>

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.

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

Read the West Australian Government media release here:
<https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2022/08/McGowan-Government-extends-support-for-young-people-in-care-until-the-age-of-21.aspx>

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.

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