

## MEDIA RELEASE

12 August 2022

creating a better life  
for children and young  
people in care

# NO NSW YOUNG PERSON IN CARE SHOULD EXIT CARE TO HOMELESSNESS

There are 15,895<sup>1</sup> NSW children and young people in out-of-home care and 3,000 will exit care annually, with **1000 of these care leavers experiencing homelessness within the first year**. CREATE is calling on the Perrottet Government to listen to the voices of young care leavers who say that the current system is failing them. The system is hard to navigate, and entitlements for young people are hard to find and are often discretionary.

More than half of NSW young people leave care without a leaving care plan (67%<sup>3</sup>), and 30%<sup>2</sup> report that they experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care. CREATE asserts this is not ok!

NSW has the largest care community and unfortunately is the last to implement a modern approach to change the construct of leaving care and allow vulnerable young care leavers the right to remain with current carers should they wish to. This simple move is a **game changer** said CREATE's CEO, Jacqui Reed.

Recently, West Australia's McGowan Government demonstrated continued commitment to young people with a care experience by providing the option to access housing and supports to 21.

As they transition to adulthood young people need to have a plan for their future that encompasses – accommodation/housing, health and mental health, education and training. Ms Reed states that *“Young people need to be active participants in the planning process and be aware of the supports that are available to them. In NSW there is a lot of “if’s” and “maybe’s” and not a whole lot of entitlements available to young care leavers which is unacceptable.”*

Care leavers face instability and poorer life outcomes, which can be positively changed for the better when the NSW Government provides the option for young people to remain with current carers, or facilitate access to affordable housing.

**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."*

*"As a parent, we would not expect our children to leave home at 18 and navigate the most highly competitive housing market in the country, would we? The role of a parent (i.e. The Department of Communities and Justice) does not stop when vulnerable young care leavers turn 18, many with trauma and abuse histories. Furthermore, as a society we have a responsibility to young people in care and we need to ensure they exit the care system with support and with access to services that meet their specific needs,"* said Ms Jacqui Reed, CREATE Foundation Chief Executive Officer.

Young people in care have often experienced neglect or abuse and this can lead to not being developmentally ready to live independently at leaving care age. Additionally, while in care, children often move around a lot, leading to being without the same family and community support networks as others, increasing the risk of slipping through the cracks. Whereas, young people who have positive adult mentors and connection to services fare better.

### **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 that has not committed to providing an option for young people to remain with current carers as an entitlement till they reach the age of 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](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)**

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### **Source list:**

<sup>1</sup> 15,895 children and young people in care in NSW (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare 2020–2021).

### **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).<sup>2</sup>
- 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.<sup>3</sup>

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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