



MEDIA RELEASE

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CREATE Supports Royal Commission of Inquiry into Sexual Abuse

CREATE Foundation applauds Prime Minister Julia Gillard's landmark announcement of the Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse.

If communities are measured by how they care for their most vulnerable, the sexual abuse perpetrated upon Australian children is a sad indictment on the Australian community's landscape.

As a result of abuse or neglect, over 37,000 Australian children and young people live in care (i.e. foster, residential, kinship care) increasing by 7% every year. For too long those with the least power and opportunity to speak out have been overlooked and ignored, their voices not being heard.

Reported as the most comprehensive Inquiry ever conducted, this Royal Commission into child sexual abuse in the institutional context will enable those affected by sexual abuse to have their stories heard on an unprecedented scale.

The Royal Commission needs to interrogate the reasons for the lack of robust protection of children and young people by authorities, says Ms Jacqui Reed, CREATE Foundation Chief Executive Officer.

"There is a distinct need to explore the ways in which systemic bureaucracies inhibit collaboration and good practice and promulgate collusion and poor practice."

A clear message must be sent to the community that child protection is everybody's responsibility.

"Through this Inquiry, reflecting on the past and casting our collective view forward to improve the way our community protects the most disadvantaged children in our community must be the penultimate outcome," added Ms Reed.

CREATE asserts that the importance of an "open and transparent" child protection system cannot be underestimated.

"Governments should ensure that children and young people have access to independent organisations to be able to voice their concerns and be heard. In fact, since 2008 CREATE Foundation has published independent Report Cards on children and young people's care experiences. CREATE's consultations such as these enable people with a care experience to have a voice and be heard," said Ms Reed.

CREATE Foundation welcomes the Royal Commission's approach of establishing separate investigation units that will work alongside the Commission to enable police to investigate allegations of abuse and prosecute as appropriate.

CREATE Foundation is the peak consumer body for children and young people in care. CREATE is a not-for-profit organisation connecting and empowering children and young people in care and improving the care system through activities, programs, training and policy advice. Learn more at www.create.org.au

Ms Jacqui Reed, CREATE Foundation Chief Executive has over two decades experience in the child protection sector and is available for media comment.

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Background information: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CARE LEAVERS:

- § 64% of care leavers did not have a leaving care plan - that is, no plan for their future
- § 50% had to leave their placement upon reaching 18 years of age, with 40% of these young people having no idea of where they would be living
- § 35% were homeless in the first year of leaving care
- § 65% had not completed Year 12, with one-fifth leaving school due to expulsion
- § 29% were unemployed compared to the national average of 9.7%
- § 70% received Centrelink payments, with 50% being totally dependent on these payments
- § 28% were already parents themselves
- § 13% still found looking after themselves difficult
- § 46% of boys were involved in the juvenile justice system.

Data source: McDowall, J.J. (2009). CREATE Report Card 2009 – Transitioning from Care: Tracking Progress. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.