



## MEDIA RELEASE

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# NEW INDEPENDENT REPORT REVEALS VOICE OF KIDS IN CARE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

Friday, March 1, 2013, CREATE Foundation will launch the latest and most significant national Report on out-of-home care in Australia. The report card surveyed over 1000 children and young people with a care experience across Australia, revealing key themes around participation, planning and having a voice.

The Report, titled *"Experiencing Out-of-Home Care in Australia: The Views of Children and Young People, CREATE Report Card 2013"* focusses on seven life domains and provides a benchmark for the National Out-of-Home Care Standards (2011), a Priority Project under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020. The life domains include: health; emotional and behavioural development; education; family and social relationships; identity; social presentation; and self-care skills.

With the largest sample group to date, *CREATE's 2013 Report Card* documents the experiences and insights of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience (i.e. foster, kinship and residential care) and provides an overview of how states are responding to their needs.

*"As a researcher, I particularly value the methodological rigour of CREATE's Report Card and the confidence this gives me that it provides a reliable snapshot of the views and perceptions of children in care,"* observed Associate Professor Leah Bromfield, Deputy Director, Australian Centre for Child Protection.

*"The report card revealed three main themes - participation, planning and the importance of having a say,"* said Ms Jacqui Reed, Chief Executive Officer, CREATE Foundation.

*"The report card presents questions for our community and its leaders to consider, whether working directly with kids in care or developing policies and legislation to support their care."*

The strength of a community is measured by how it cares for its children. Young people in care are burdened with trauma on entering care, experience stigma and a wide range of complex issues. *"When you are in out-of-home care it's as if everyone around you never wants to listen to what you have to say,"* says Kindra, from Western Australia.

*"It feels everyone around you is ignoring you and looking down on you, as if you're not important enough to be around."*

Children and young people's care experiences, the case workers, carers and community around them all play a part in shaping tomorrow's adults with a care experience. The most encouraging finding in the new report card was that 83% of respondents were feeling 'quite' or 'very' happy in their current placement. Yet the longer the period a person is in care, the less satisfied they were.

Participation was revealed as a highly important consideration, and over 1/3 of respondents had not been able to have a say in issues that impacted directly on them daily.

*"This evidence regarding a lack of opportunity to have a say in one's own future is concerning,"* said report card author, Dr Joseph McDowall.

*"Whatever type of plan, be it a care plan, education, leaving care or cultural support plans, enabling children and young people to be more involved in the planning process has the potential to strengthen relationships with carers and caseworkers and be a more positive experience for those in care."*

Respondents said that they wanted more meaningful participation in decision making affecting their lives. University of Melbourne's Alfred Felton Chair of Child and Family Social Work, Professor Cathy Humphreys, said that the 'child's right to participate' in decisions which affect them is outlined in The Convention on the Rights of the Child Section 12.

*"The CREATE Report Card represents the voices of children and young people gleaned through research with an organisation they trust,"* added Professor Humphreys.

When asked who they look to for support, only 9% of report card survey respondents indicated that their caseworker would be that best person, with the majority stating their Carer is the preferred choice. One third of children surveyed had five or more case workers. Unfortunately one third of respondents felt they couldn't contact their case worker as often as required.

Cathy Humphreys' added *"This Report Card again sheds welcome light on the issues they [children and young people in care] face. Its importance lies in its independence from the state government departments which resource and make many of the decisions about the young people."*

CREATE works towards supporting the child protection system being a culture of openness and transparency, through enabling children and young people to have an independent voice. As an organisation, CREATE is encouraged by the report card survey being supported across all jurisdictions with the only exception being Western Australia, which did not take the opportunity to participate in the 2013 survey.

CREATE urges the community to challenge existing beliefs and adopt the philosophy that *“protecting children is everyone’s business”* (also the title of the National Standards of Out-of-Home Care 2010-2011 Annual Report).

*“Upon the launch of the new report card, we express our sincere gratitude to Dr Joseph McDowall for his commitment to child protection through publishing the report cards, along with the broader child protection community of academics and experts with whom we’ve consulted in order to publish this important work,”* said Ms Reed.

The recipients of out-of-home care services are the most qualified experts and are often without a voice, said report card author, Dr Joseph McDowall. *“CREATE and I feel privileged to hear these insights of CYPIC care experiences.”*

*“It is recognised that the current child protection system has its flaws, yet the most important road to improvement is to analyse the experiences of today’s kids in care to bring about positive change for tomorrow.”*

The CREATE 2013 Report Card is the barometer for the wellbeing of Australian children and young people. The Report Card is available Friday, 1 March, 2013, via [www.create.org.au](http://www.create.org.au)

In Australia, over 37,000 children and young people live in care (i.e., foster, residential, kinship care), increasing by 7% every year. Through no fault of their own, children and young people may be placed in care due to neglect or abuse. Young people in care experience social isolation, stigma and chronic low self-esteem. They feel unconnected, disempowered and unable to do anything about it.

CREATE Foundation is the peak consumer body for children and young people in care. Our objectives are to ensure that all children and young people in care are respected and listened to and are active participants in decisions which affect their lives. A national not-for-profit organisation, CREATE connects and empowers children and young people in care and works to improve the care system through activities, programs, training and policy advice. Read more at [www.create.org.au](http://www.create.org.au)

Media information:

The official launch of the report card: "*Experiencing Out-of-Home Care in Australia: The View of Children and Young People, CREATE Report Card 2013*" will take place in Sydney on Friday morning. For information and to arrange media interviews, see media contact details below.

Download Ms Jacqui Reed's commentary as audio files for news bulletins via [www.create.org.au](http://www.create.org.au)

Media interviews can be arranged with CREATE Report Card author, Dr Joseph McDowall; CREATE Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed, who has over two decades experience in the child protection sector; and young people with an out-of-home care experience.

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