



MEDIA RELEASE

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CREATE URGES A FOCUS ON EARLY INTERVENTION TO KEEP FAMILIES SAFE

Following the West Australian Police Commissioner's call to remove children from neglectful parents, CREATE Foundation Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed, urges authorities to focus on early intervention strategies. Prevention and supports are what families need and will reduce the strain on an already over loaded out-of-home care system.

CREATE Foundation is the national consumer advocate for children and young people in out-of-home care (i.e. foster, residential, kinship care). In Australia, over 38,000 children and young people live in care (with 4,000 in WA) increasing by 9% every year.

The Australian newspaper recently reported that *"DCP Chief Executive, Terry Murphy, said 31 children were taken into care last week, and 15 to 20 new carers registered every month."* These figures highlight that the child protection system is already stretched beyond capacity and placements are not always available.

"Families are under many types of pressure for a wide range of reasons. Early intervention strategies can be as simple as connecting a person at risk with the supports they need and this can be effective to get families back on track," commented Ms Reed.

"Parents under pressure without support can become disheartened or isolated. No child can be left at risk in an unsafe environment and sometimes there is no option other than the care system."

CREATE calls for the broader community to play their part and consider fostering a child. The dire need for more carers has been highlighted by a recent wave of shocking violence by youths as young as seven reported in West Australia, and alarming scenes of unsafe domestic conditions leading to the removal of children and young people from families.

"There must be a whole of community approach to the issue of the ever-increasing rate of children and young people in care. At government level, leaders must pause to consider strategies to support families and at community level people need to stop and ask themselves if they can lend a hand to someone in need before things get worse," said Ms Reed.

"The importance of keeping traumatised children and young people safe from harm is everybody's aim. CREATE urges the community to be mindful of listening to young people in their neighbourhood, and respecting that kids must have a voice too."

Following the call from police to remove children from neglectful parents, leaders in child protection and indigenous communities have spoken out about supporting families and we must also listen to the real experts - children and young people with a care experience.

22 year old West Australian, Tash, was in long-term foster care from an early age until about 16, and authorities did not consider her dad as an option for providing care.

“If my dad had had more help, I could have lived with him,” says Tash. “The best thing for kids is to stay with their family and if the parents are supported to be better parents, it is always better for the kids. It’s much better than putting them in a strange house with someone they don’t know.”

“Just taking kids won’t always help - they need to be doing something to help the parents,” said Tash.

CREATE Foundation is the peak body representing the voices of all children and young people in out-of-home care. Learn more at www.create.org.au

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