

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 31st October 2014



My Future, My Dreams, My Team

QLD TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE MONTH

Queensland has the second highest out-of-home care population³ in the country and every year around 400 young people in QLD leave care (i.e. foster, kinship or residential care). Care leavers can experience multiple placements in different types of care and a number can approach adulthood without the stable presence or influence of a positive, significant adult in their lives.

November is *Transition to Independence Month* (T2I) profiling the importance of **enabling** young people leaving care to live independently.

This year's theme is "*My future, My dreams, My team*" promoting the idea that every young person plays a central role in planning their transition to independence, or their "leaving care plan" as it is also known. CREATE's research² indicates that around half need to leave their placement upon turning 18. Sadly, two thirds of respondents¹ said they did not have a leaving care plan.

Young people need to have a say regarding their aspirations, their dreams and their goals which set the path of their journey towards adulthood. CREATE Foundation vigilantly advocates on their behalf, as part of a panel of other child protection organisations working towards improved transition to independence supports for care leavers. CREATE's research has shown that for some young people leaving care can be a traumatic and troubled time:

- 64% of survey respondents being without a leaving care plan (leaving care plans are a strategy for life after being in the state care system);
- 35% experienced homelessness in the first year after leaving care; and
- 29% were unemployed (compared to the national average which is 9.7%).

Young people said that they feel more secure and confident about facing the challenges of growing up when they have the support of their transition team. This team should be led by the young person and is comprised of people who the young person identifies as able to assist them in planning or through leaving care (it could include carers, Child Safety Officers and other supportive adults in the broader community).

Early 2015 a range of new support services will be available for QLD care leavers up until the age of 21. This is new support and CREATE is encouraged by this dedication to the needs of care leavers.

"CREATE wholeheartedly applauds the Newman government for its dedication of focus and funding for young people leaving care," says Lucas Moore, CREATE QLD Coordinator.

“When a person is leaving care they are more likely to be appropriately equipped to become independent if they have access to adequate supports to set up their own home, maintain work or study and to feel supported and empowered,” continued Mr Moore.

“This new funding for transitioning is very encouraging and sends a positive message to young people transitioning from care that they are not alone on this journey.”

Government and non-government service providers can access a specially created T2I information kit which has video content on the best means of supporting young people to transitions, advice and encouragement.

A USB is available which includes a copy of a series of clips featuring young people, carers and workers on best practice for supporting young people to transition, and advice and encouragement from young people who have made the journey to independence. The clips can be used to support and motivate other young people in care to be involved in their transition planning.

It needs to be understood by the community at large, not just people working in the child protection sector, that supporting young people with a care experience is a shared responsibility. Legislation enshrines young people’s right to access government assistance with housing, access to income support, training and education.

“Transitioning to Independence... My future, My dreams, My team!”

My Future. Young people need to be in the driving seat of their transition.

“Everyone is an individual; there are as many paths as there are young people.” (Cassie, 17)

My Dreams. Young people need encouragement to set ambitious goals for their future.

“Shoot for the moon, even if you miss you will land amongst the stars!” (Julia, 16)

My Team. A critical part of supporting young people transitioning is the fostering of a network of supportive people. This team is ideally made up of those adults whom the young person identifies as able to assist them either prior and/or after to turning 18.

“You can’t have a future without a team of people to help!” (Ben , 20)

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

Information about T2I month can be found via this link:

<http://www.create.org.au/transition-to-independence-month-2014>

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*1**Data source: McDowall, J. J. (2009) “Transitioning from care - Tracking progress,(CREATE Report Card 2009)” Sydney: CREATE Foundation.*

*2**Data Source: McDowall, J. J. (2013) “Experiencing Out-of-Home Care in Australia: The View of Children and Young People, (CREATE Report Card 2013)” Sydney: CREATE Foundation.*

*3*** As at 31/12/13 there were 8556 Queensland children and young people in out-of-home care (from the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services website - <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/about-us/our-performance/summary-statistics>)*

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