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MEDIA RELEASE

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CALL FOR ROYAL COMMISSION TO INCLUDE INDEPENDENT PERSPECTIVE

CREATE Foundation is deeply saddened by today's public hearing of the *Royal Commission into Responses to Child Sexual Abuse's* failing to include independent and external views on today's child protection system.

It is understood that the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* face significant challenges when reviewing a system of this scale, currently providing care and protection to over 43,000 children and young people in Australia. Yet, the decision to only hear from the State government departments and organisations that are currently providing care to the exclusion of hearing from the people who are living with the consequences of these systems leaves a gaping hole.

The most important function of the Royal Commission is to provide a safe venue for children and young people's voices to be heard. In 2009, a formal apology was delivered to the Forgotten Australians (2009) and today, rather than repetition of ignoring children's voices - we call for reflection and wisdom from lessons learnt.

"Allowing CREATE to present the information on the current system's practices from the view of the children who are living it, is paramount to achieving the strong systemic reform required," said Ms Jacqui Reed, CREATE Foundation Chief Executive.

CREATE's Report Card 2013 Experiencing Out-of-Home Care in Australia drew upon the voices of 1069 children and young people in care and benchmarked Australia's child protection system against the National Out-of-Home Care Standards. Report findings illustrated the reality of the system implemented, and in some cases showed the stark contrast between the policy intention and what children and young people in out-of-home actually experience.

"CREATE calls for the Royal Commission to hold another hearing that includes the Children's Commissioners, State Ombudsmen and CREATE to present the independent accounts on the current out-of-home care system," said Ms Reed.

"We strongly believe access to independent complaint mechanisms is part of a strong child protection system."

This hearing would allow fuller discussion on complaints made and address systemic challenges that are expressed by children and young people to independent agencies.

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Sources and links:

- Report of Government Services 2015, Chapter 15 Child Protection Services
<http://www.pc.gov.au/research/recurring/report-on-government-services/2015/community-services/child-protection/rogs-2015-volume-f-chapter15.pdf>
- Hearing dates: Tues 10 – Fri 20 Public hearing: Case Study 24 into out-of-home care, Sydney
<http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/about-us/schedule>

Further information | CREATE Foundation regularly consults with young people and through this consultation in 2009 revealed a truthful yet somewhat bleak portrait of the reduced life outcomes experienced by children and young people growing up in the care system. The [Report Card](#) revealed that if you've been in out of home care, you are more likely to be undereducated, unemployed, to earn less, become a parent at a younger age, be involved in the juvenile justice system, become homeless, be dependent on social assistance, have mental health issues, attempt suicide, and be at a higher risk of substance abuse².

- 64% do not have a leaving care plan (leaving care plans are a strategy for life after being in the state care system)
- 35% are homeless in the first year of leaving care
- 46% of boys are involved in the juvenile justice system
- 35% completed Year 12 (compared to that of the general population)
- 29% are unemployed (compared to the national average which is 9.7%)
- 28% were already parents themselves

Click [here](#) to visit the website displaying the CREATE Report Card 2009 – Transitioning from Care: Tracking Progress, McDowall, J.J. (2009)