

MEDIA RELEASE

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creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO INDEPENDENT MONITORING IS NEEDED TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

CREATE Foundation acknowledges the complexity of keeping children safe, yet is very concerned to hear of any instances of failings to protect a child. As an independent advocate for children and young people in care, CREATE calls for greater commitment by government to independent external monitoring of the system, for all placement types including foster carers. CREATE Foundation is the peak consumer body representing the voices of children and young people in care (i.e. foster, residential and kinship care).

Every person in care has the right to feel safe and that their voice will be heard. Governments need to ensure that they provide external child-friendly mechanisms to monitor the child protection system itself, to keep children safe and well while they are in the care system.

Most foster carers are caring people who open up their hearts and homes to assist vulnerable children and positively impact their lives. There are established and robust process for selecting assessing and monitoring carers.

"In more than two decades, I have witnessed a great deal of change first-hand, with a recent significant change being the previous Newman Government's step to cut funding for both independent Community Visitors (to foster homes) and for independent advocates that make it possible for children and young people to access a supportive, independent voice," commented Ms Jacqui Reed, CREATE Chief Executive.

"Having independent mechanisms like the Community Visitors scheme and independent advocates strengthened the system created a robust monitoring system for children and cutting this weakened the capacity to effectively externally monitor and support children and young people in care."

CREATE has heard from children and young people with a care experience that they would welcome increased unannounced visits by Community Visitors at their care placement.

CREATE Foundation calls for government to keep children safe by galvanising the system to achieve optimum performance, guided by regular external monitoring. A child friendly approach would include the voices of children who have a lived experience of the system.

CREATE Foundation provides programs and services to create a better life for children and young people in care. For more information, visit: www.create.org.au

Through CREATE Foundation's consultations with children and young people since 2006, we've learned that 35% are homeless within in the first year of leaving care (at 18), only 35% completed Year 12 (compared to that of the general population) and 46% of boys are involved with the juvenile justice system. In addition to these figures, 29% are unemployed (compared to the national average which is 9.7%) and 28% were already parents themselves.

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View CREATE's reports here: <http://create.org.au/publications/create-research-reports/>

Sources: * Data source: McDowall, J. J. (2013). *Experiencing out-of-home care in Australia: The views of children and young people (CREATE Report Card 2013)*. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

