

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE ARE NOT ALONE WITH “NEXT STEP”

Today, CREATE Foundation Queensland Co-ordinator, Mr Lucas Moore celebrates the highly anticipated launch of Queensland’s Next Step After Care services to support the state’s approximately 500 young people leaving care each year.

CREATE Foundation is the national peak body advocating for children and young people in out-of-home care (i.e. kinship, foster or residential care). CREATE’s independent consultations with children and young people in care have revealed that over 35%<sup>1</sup> experience homeless within a year of leaving care.

CREATE works to bring about positive change through ongoing advocacy (since 1990) with children and young people with a care experience about issues affecting the lives of children and young people in care. This united voice along with other key sector organisations has led to in 2012 LNP government making a commitment in 2012 to establish after care supports until 21. In 2013, this commitment was reinforced by key Carmody Inquiry recommendations highlighting significant issues affecting care leavers, until most recently the in 2014 with the Queensland government announcement of \$3million funding p.a. for post-care services leading to today’s ground breaking launch.



*“The launch of Next Step after Care services is a time to reflect on how far things have come and that the voices of children and young people have not only been heard, but will positively impact the future for others in care. These new services are a testament to the determination and courage of many young people who stood up to be counted and requested more support”* said Mr Moore.

The Next Step After Care services enable young people to access support and advice after they’ve left care, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by calling or texting 1800NEXTSTEP (1800 639 878).

The new 1800 phone number and [www.nextstepaftercare.com.au](http://www.nextstepaftercare.com.au) website are key elements of the Next Step After Care services now being delivered by Life Without Barriers in partnership with CREATE Foundation, Uniting Care Community, YETI, South Burnett CTC and IFYS, with funding from the Queensland Government. The Queensland Government has allocated \$11.8M in funding over four years for the Next Step After Care support program which will provide young people between the ages of 15 and 21 who have been in foster care or other out of home care arrangements, with support to build independent lives.

Darcie has shared the journey with CREATE leading to the arrival of Next Step After-Care supports. Darcie says, *“When I think back to both my personal experience in care and that as an advocate, I remember feeling despair, like there was no way forward, no plan for me if something were to go wrong – and it seemed like I had no options.”*

*“When you look at what other kids get in terms of support from family when leaving home, compared with what is available for us young people in care it just doesn’t make sense – especially when we are the vulnerable ones!”*

Next Step services will help young people who have left care with quick access to practical advice in areas such as:

- § managing money and entitlements
- § housing and accommodation
- § training, jobs and preparing a job resume
- § staying safe, strong and healthy
- § relationships, including friends and family
- § legal advice

Conversely, 20 year old Sharna says she had a lot of support around her during her transition from care experience: *“I was fortunate to live with my grandma and overall, my transition to independence was positive as I received really great support from my Community Visitor, and my Grandma was by my side every step of the way,”* explained Sharna.

*“Together they helped me to understand what was going on and advocating for my rights. I was given lots of information about the funding and support that was available to me.”*

Sharna says Next Step After Care supports is also exciting because it can support you when connecting with birth family after you’ve left care.

*“This is something that can help a young person feel like they belong and have a place in the world,”* said Sharna.

In Australia, over 43,000 children and young people live in care (i.e. foster, residential, kinship care) increasing every year. Through no fault of their own, children and young people may be placed in care due to neglect or abuse.

Some young people in care experience social isolation, stigma and chronic low self-esteem.

They feel unconnected, disempowered and unable to do anything about it. Learn more at

[www.create.org.au](http://www.create.org.au)

For more information about Next Step After-Care call 1800NEXTSTEP (1800 639 878) or visit

[www.nextstepaftercare.com.au](http://www.nextstepaftercare.com.au)

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### Background 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 abuse<sup>2</sup>.

- 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

<sup>1</sup> Data source: McDowall, J.J. (2009). *CREATE Report Card 2009 – Transitioning from Care: Tracking Progress*. Sydney: CREATE Foundation

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