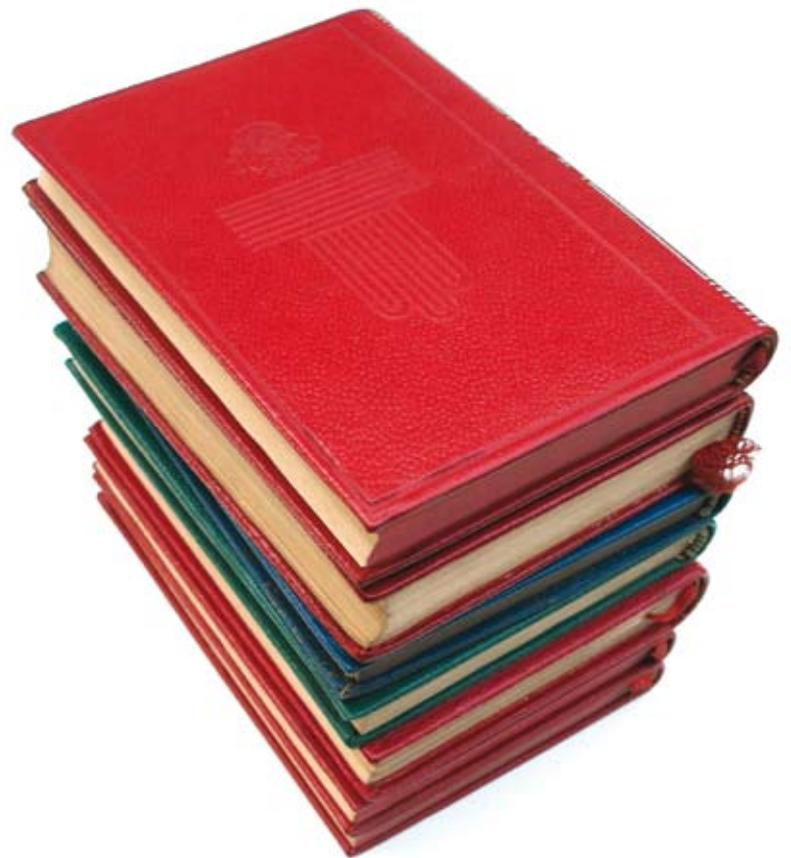


Report Card on Education 2006



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Research and preparation of the Report Card
Education of Australian Children and Young People in Care, 2006 by
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Josh	Gordo	Jelly Bean	Richie	Cassie	Skater Girl
Nelly	Surfie Dude	Mel	Shannon	Lindy Loo	Zee
Gilbert	Jordan	Ash	Jezza	CB	Jessy
Ant	Murri Girl	K	Smeagle	Z	S
Nathaniel	Ash	Little Jake	Nat	La La	Bel
T	Mr D	Donny	Shannon	Jamie-Lee	Skinner
Jade	Zai	Yoda	Hash Brown	A	Timmy
Matt	Fee	Shane	Matt	Little Western	Jase
KR	Samantha	Tim Tam	Rik Rik	Pony	Fi
ChB	Smiley	Kayla	Frank	Minnie	Donald
Taz	B	Kandy	Steven	Brad	Charley &
Flossy	Shari	Aviator	Scilla	Na	Henry
T	Amber	Sarah	Rani	Peter	Shorty
JB	Non	Freak	Boo	Dilzo	Chrissy
Paul	Mik	Alex	Zoe	KK	Gram
Alec	Molly	Snoop Dogg	Sam	Rach	Ju Ju
LH	Shannon	Pumpkin	Tika	DJ	Chicca
Warren	Amanda	Michael	Ella	Nell	Sarah
Ryan	M	Alfie	B	Josh	PJ
Bindy	Tanya	Sammy	George	Shorty	Blondie
Nell	John	Brent	Tasha	Broom	B
Paul	Zip	Eek	Herbie	Dyl	Shannon
Ryder	Shi	Jon	Hammo	Skippy	Little Possum
Sloppy	Shorty	Rick	Porky	Shorty	Mo
Scott	Kle	Andy	Reece	Super Runner	Malli
Samantha	No Name	Zac	Pie	Loz	Jeison
Corky	Charlie Cheeks	Kev	Nathan	Joshua	Ja Ja
Bubbles	Sporty Chick	R	Stampy	Ryan	Emu
Tabby	Pizza Girl	Nicolodean	Sam	J	No
Cindy	M	Dee	Ted	Peoples	Haylee
CH	Skipper	Sports Freak	Jaz	Dwayne	none
Spotz	Ash	Crystal	CJ	Rhys	Em
Aaron	Kelly	Martin	Candy	Lancy Pants	Lozzie
Matt	Louise	Dinga	Shortee	Nelly	Shez
Leroy	Ebony	Steven	Sahara	Mandy Candy	Harles
Nessa	Michael	Zach	Anne	Smiley	nanna
Patrick	Kelly	Jamie	Trickster	Tiny	Nay
Chloe	Skye	Stevie	Rhi	Azza	laz
Whit	Steven	Lucy Long Legs	Hales	Michelle	Yogi
Miss Blush	John	Ashanti	Jess	Spanner	Ads
Tan	Megs	Chippee	Dorothy	Rus	Kay
Margaret	BJ	Arnold	Tam	Damo	Adrian
Jessica	Taz	Paris	Zo	TJ	Clarky
P	Ash	Ash	Code 13	David	Azz
Ian	Aron	Michael	Faye	Dan	Guzza
Max	MM	Anna	Andy	HB	Shazza
John	J	Beachy	Shelley	Drew	Sarah
Krissy	Mel	Leanne	Danielle	Jr.	Kristina
Bubble boy	Tod	Steve	Steven	Hank	Marshall,
Leish	BJ	Danielle	None	Pauls	Marshall, Marshall



Introduction

One of the ways in which CREATE Foundation promotes life opportunities of children and young people in care is by informing the community and Governments about how well they are being protected and cared for across Australia. This involves identifying key issues impacting on the protection and care of children and young people in care, collecting information about their needs and their progress in care, then making this information available to others.

About the Report Card

In 2000, CREATE launched its Report Card series, with the first Report Card focusing on the general status of children and young people in care in Australia, which identified key indicators of what was happening for children and young people in care across Australia and how well they were progressing in relation to their safety and well being. At that time, CREATE indicated its intention to produce other Report Cards that would focus on specific areas of need such as education, health, involvement of young people in the youth justice system and leaving care. The last Report Card, released in January 2006

focused on the health and wellbeing of children and young people in care, and amongst other findings suggested that those in care have a higher burden of health conditions in relation to the rest of the community.

In 2001, CREATE launched its first Report Card on the educational needs, participation and performance of children and young people in care across Australia, with subsequent releases in 2002, 2003 and 2004. This Report Card is the fifth Education Report Card, and provides updates on information derived from the predecessors:

- Report on progress in relation to each of the five areas of immediate action identified in the 2004 Education Report Card
- Report on barriers to the education of children and young people in care
- Report on the views of children and young people about their education.

The five areas of immediate action are:

- Adopt appropriate goals and objectives that promote educational participation and performance of children and young people

in care

- Ensure that all children and young people in care have an individual education plan
- Establish local and regional collaborative structures and processes to promote achievement of the goals and objectives
- Establish mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and review achievement of outcomes
- Establish a collaborative research agenda.

"We need a stable environment. We need to know how to access things like tutoring, resources, and the library. We need as much encouragement from you as you can give."

BJ, 16

The overall aim of the Report Card is to provide a current snapshot of the education circumstances of children and young people in care across Australia.

The Report Card Process

To provide the most relevant results, the Report Card derives information from three main sources:

- A review of the salient research literature
- A structured survey with children and young people from across Australia aged 10-17 years
- Requests for information to State and Territory Governments.

Review of the salient research literature:

Recognising the immense body of literature available regarding education internationally amongst those subject to abuse and neglect and those who grow up in care, only a small body of the salient research literature was examined. The literature review provides a brief overview of trends in the international literature, with salient references to the few Australian studies that have been completed to date.

Structured interview of children and young people in care:

Between February and April 2006, CREATE Foundation interviewed 297 children and young people in care about their education. Participants were randomly selected through CREATE's membership database and State or Territory records, and as such represent a pseudo-random opportunity sample. Participant numbers within States and Territories were determined based on the point of time

population data released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in January 2006. The majority of participants responded to the questionnaire over the telephone, though in a few cases, face to face interviews were conducted. It is recognized that the sample is not necessarily representative of the views of all children and young people in care, and likely has an over-representation of those who have been in care longer, and have lived in more stable settings. Nonetheless, it provides a useful insight into the views and experiences of a significant group of children and young people in care and a basis for further research.

Requests for State and Territory Information:

Ministers responsible for education and out of home care were approached for jurisdictional information in writing in mid February 2006. Ministers were asked to provide written feedback relating to the ways in which their jurisdiction was fulfilling the educational needs of children and young people in care. Furthermore, a request was made to contribute to a comparative policy and practice framework, using a standardised template. Jurisdictions were provided with a six week period in which to provide their responses, which five of the eight jurisdictions managed to achieve. The final response was received in late May.

All Community Service departments responded and two of these were joint responses involving Education. Individual Education responses were received from three jurisdictions. Education departments did not respond in three jurisdictions.



Who are children and young people in care?

Children and young people in care are a diverse group who share a common experience of not being able to live with their parents are therefore cared for by someone other than their parents.

They may have been abused or neglected by their parents, or their parents may have a problem that means they cannot provide for their care and protection. In some situations, the child or young person's parents may have died and there are no other family members who can care for them.

They may come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Indigenous children and young people are more likely to be in care than non-Indigenous children and young people.

They may be in care under a guardianship order or custody of the state, or it may involve a voluntary agreement between their parents and an agency or Government department who provides out of home care.

They may be placed in care for a short period of up to a few months, or it may be for a couple of years; some remain in care until they turn eighteen years of age, and some stay in their care placement long after this time.

They may be cared for by relatives, or the family of friends, a foster family, or they may live in a residential unit. Some older young people may live in a boarding situation or share with other young people in care. Some children and young people in care are homeless and live on the streets.

Many have experienced a number of placements and disruptions of their connections with family, friends, school, community and culture, although a few may not have experienced any disruptions.

Who is responsible for children and young people in care?

Every child and young person in care has a fundamental right to be safe, loved, and cared for, to actively participate in decisions that impact their lives and to be fully supported by the care system.

For these children and young people the State has elected to undertake the responsibilities usually assumed by a parent, although historically this has not always been the case. In the contemporary environment, the State, through enacted legislation has a 'duty of care' to ensure the ongoing safety, development and well-being of those which it elects to place in its care. In other words, the State has a mandated responsibility to provide what a 'good



parent' would provide for their children. The birth family may also continue to play a role in the life of the child or young person depending on individual circumstances. Parental involvement and contact is dependent on a range of factors including the legal status of the child or young person (non-statutory/statutory), the type of child protection order (custody/guardianship), the placement of the child (at home/in out of home care) and the immediate and longer term plan, amongst others.

Where the State is involved in providing care, it generally exercises its responsibilities through a community service department within the jurisdiction, although the names and roles of these Departments vary. Children and young people in care have a range of needs in addition to those able to be provided by these Government departments responsible for their care, including, but not limited to: education, health, sport and recreation, housing,

transport and employment. Other State and Federal Government Departments are usually tasked with providing these services, and share responsibility with State and Territory Community Services Departments to ensure that children and young people in care are able to access the services they require and to ensure that they have access to the same life opportunities as other Australian children and young people.

This shared responsibility is sometimes referred to as 'corporate parenting'. Corporate parenting emphasises the collective responsibility of government and its various departments to achieve 'good parenting'. Of course, there is a broader group of people and agencies that are involved in delivering this parenting. The most significant contributors include direct carers, non-government agencies, Indigenous service providers, education personnel, health personnel and members of the community.

Children and Young People in Care: A Snapshot

At June 30, 2005 there were 23,695 children and young people living within formal out-of-home care placements across Australia, though a substantially larger, yet unknown number spent at least one night in a care placement during the 2004-05 financial year. The total number of children and young people in care has increased markedly during the last seven years, with an increase of 9,716 since

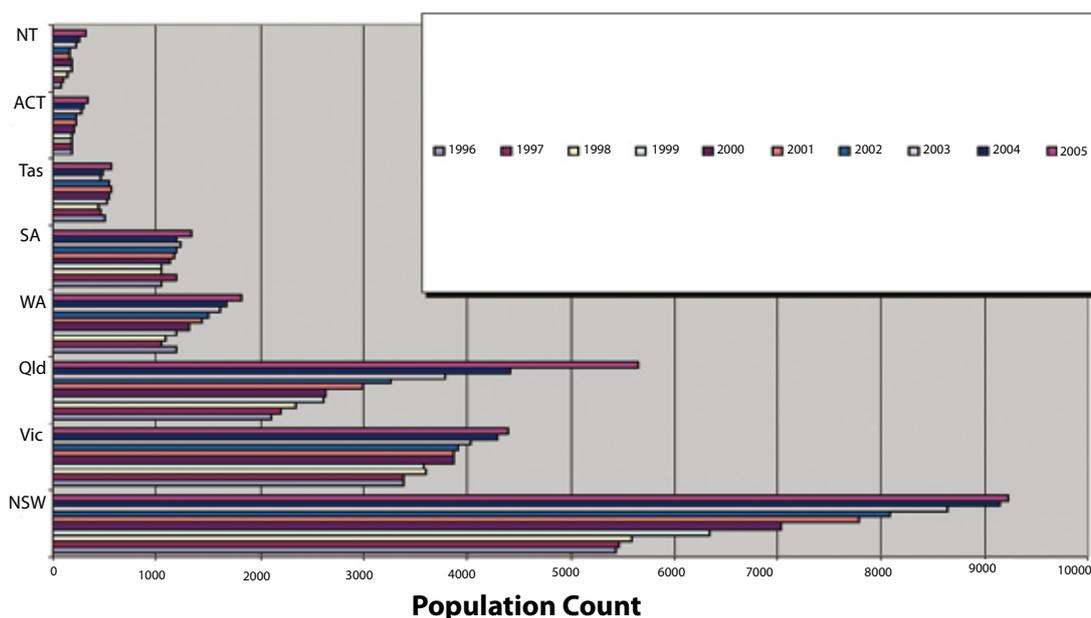
June 30, 1996, despite an overall stagnation, and in some jurisdictions a decline in the overall Australian population of those less than eighteen years of age. The result is a dramatic increase in the rate of care placement as indicated in *Table 1* below, which provides a clearer picture of the dramatic relative increase in care numbers and the required input into services.

Table 1: Out of home care rate per 1000 people aged 0-17 years by jurisdiction June 30, 1997-2005

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
1997	3.4	3.0	2.5	2.2	3.2	3.7	2.1	1.9	3.0
1998	3.5	3.2	2.6	2.3	2.8	3.6	2.2	2.3	3.1
1999	4.0	3.1	2.9	2.5	2.9	4.4	2.2	3.0	3.3
2000	4.5	3.4	2.9	2.8	3.2	4.6	2.6	3.0	3.6
2001	4.9	3.4	3.3	3.0	3.3	4.8	2.8	2.7	3.9
2002	5.0	3.4	3.5	3.1	3.4	4.6	2.8	2.7	3.9
2003	5.4	3.5	4.0	3.3	3.6	4.0	3.6	3.8	4.2
2004	5.7	3.7	4.6	3.5	3.5	4.1	3.8	4.3	4.5
2005	5.8	3.8	5.8	3.8	3.9	4.9	4.5	5.5	4.9

Source: AIHW, 2006

Figure 1: Out of home care population by jurisdiction at June 30, 1996-2005



Source: AIHW, 2006



Education in Australia

Within Australia, school education remains the responsibility of State and Territory Governments though like many other areas of public provision at this level, there is a common agreement across jurisdictions relating to shared goals. In April 1999, the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) met, and endorsed national priorities for schools education, with key aims to assist Australian students in:

- Attaining knowledge, skills and understanding in key learning areas for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society;
- Developing their talents, capacities, self-confidence, self-esteem and respect for others; and
- Developing their capacity to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development.

Implicit in these statements, and identified in the preamble was the role that the family, in particular parents play, in conjunctions with schools staff in providing a foundation for children and young people's education.

Full participation in schools education was also

recognised as a MCEETYA priority with agreement that education is identified as a core enabling mechanism for children and young people to recognise their full potential. Data from the 2006 Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services clearly identifies the link between educational participation, particularly in later school years and participation in the labour force and further education. Those who remain within the formal education system longer have a greater likelihood of participating in further education or entering into employment, whereas those who leave the education system have a greater likelihood of being unemployed, or otherwise not participating in the labour market.

Why is education important for children and young people in care?

As with all children and young people, education makes a significant contribution to the development and well-being of those in care and their future access to employment and life opportunities. For children and young people in care, education is identified as a significant gateway through which they can pass from care to adulthood, to employment and to effectively participating in community life.

"Have to understand them and what they went through. It's not easy for them to be good at school 'cos they have so much more happening for them"

Sahara, 15

A large portion of the more than 30,000 children who spend time in care each year in Australia perform poorly in school. On average, they lag behind their peers academically and are also more likely to have experienced disruption through relocation or exclusion. Internationally, numerous studies have confirmed that those in care perform significantly more poorly at school than do children in the general population. These studies point to a variety of reasons for poor school performance including: higher rates of being kept back a year, lower scores on standardised tests, higher absenteeism, tardiness, truancy and dropout rates. There is a further suggested link between this poor academic performance profoundly affecting the lives of those in care and contributing to higher than average rates of homelessness, criminality, drug abuse, and unemployment amongst care leavers.

To elaborate on these themes

Relocation

Those in care often experience numerous changes in placement that result in a change in school, where they also must adjust to new teachers and staff, classmates, and varied curriculum. In an administrative sense, there may be delays in transferring records, missing information to finalise their enrolment, or difficulties allocating support staff to meet their individual educational needs.

Lack of continuity

School disruptions often result in those in care losing their place in the curriculum; repeating some curriculum components, whilst not receiving others. For example, a child in care may learn long division numerous times, yet never receive instruction on fractions; they may start *Romeo and Juliet*, only to

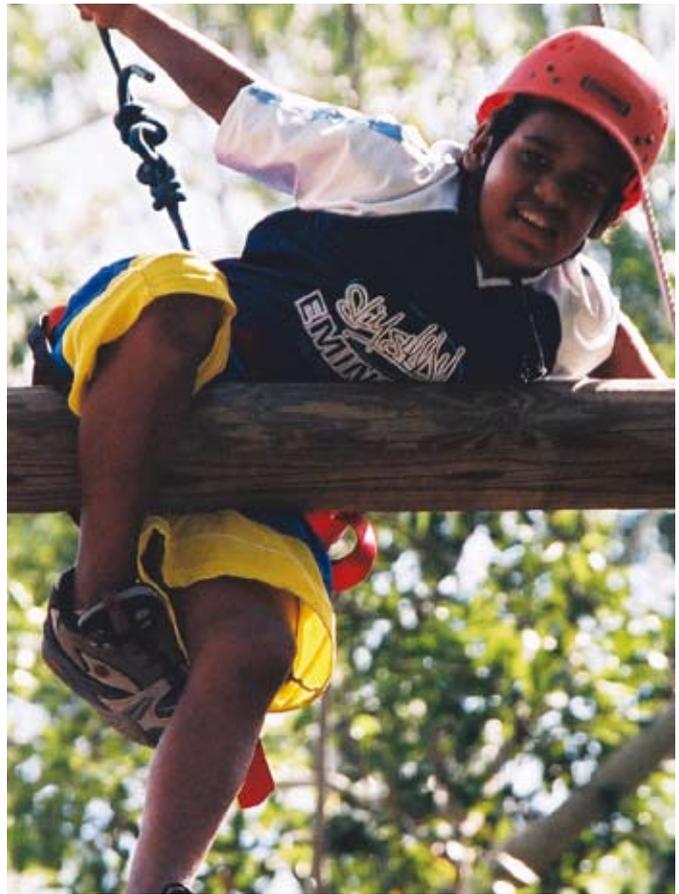
finish *Macbeth*; learn to conjugate French verbs only to learn Italian at a new school; appears in four class photos during a year, or perhaps none.

Relationships

Relocation and disruption often results in strained relations between the child or young person in care and those around them. Teachers may become exasperated with the gaps in knowledge children and young people have. Similarly, peer relationships can be difficult to form due to those in care being "the new kid" in addition to the well documented stigma and bullying that many in care already experience. The lack of a consistent and knowledgeable adult that can advocate and support the child or young person can also be problematic. This forces the student's educational outcomes to rely on the efficacy of practice and procedure within the schools system, which can be problematic, particularly where lines of responsibility and accountability for the educational outcomes of children in care are unclear.

The background and circumstances of children and young people in care mean that they require particular assistance to access educational opportunities, promote their participation and improve their performance if they are to realise their potential. Lack of access and lost opportunities have a cumulative impact on children as the move through the various stages of education and development, from pre-school, primary school and secondary school through to vocational and tertiary education.

Children and young people in care have a right to participate in education and realise their potential. They must have access to a range of educational options that are responsive to their needs if they are to successfully progress into vocational and higher education opportunities.



Educational Research Relating to Out of Home Care

Numerous studies have confirmed that those in care on average perform significantly more poorly in school education than others in the general population (see McDonald, Allen, Westerfelt and Piliavin, 1996). These educational deficits of those in care are reflected by higher rates of being held back a year; greater incidence of disciplinary action; lower scores on standard tests; and higher absenteeism, tardiness, truancy and dropout rates (Blome, 1997). Very little research relating to educational outcomes of those in care in Australia, though of that undertaken, the Australian research findings appear to be similar to other international findings.

Several researchers have examined the educational outcomes of foster children in comparison to children not in foster care. For example, Mech (1994) aggregated four studies and determined that 58% of young people in care had completed

high school upon entering adulthood, compared to 84% of all those aged 20 to 24 who have completed high school. In further support, McDonald and colleagues (1996) undertook a review of research studies published between 1960 and the early 1990s. Of the studies reviewed, fifteen focused on educational attainment or academic achievement. Whilst this review identified some methodological concerns across the studies, their review identified consistent findings that suggest, when compared to age-matched peers, that those in care:

- Have lower high school completion rates
- Complete fewer years of schooling
- Are less likely to engage in higher education
- Are more likely to participate in special education

More recent research not included in the review undertaken by McDonald and colleagues also indicates that the educational difficulties experienced by those in care remain a significant issue. Courtney and colleagues (Courtney, Terao and Bost, 2004) identified that 66% of those in care who entered the third through eighth grade in Chicago during 2002 and 2003 were old for their grade in an analysis of Illinois schools data. This analysis also identified that less than one in three young people in care went on to finish the high school in comparison to almost two-thirds of mainstream students.

These findings are consistent with the present, albeit small body of Australian research.

In a study of 497 children in residential care, Cavanagh (1996) found that:

- More than half of students were rated as below average in the areas of literacy, and numeracy skills;
- Over 50% of participants demonstrated delays in personal development, social skills, and greater levels of emotional and behavioural disturbance;
- Nearly 50% had frequent episodes of truancy, school expulsion or suspension;
- About 7% were not attending school at all;
- Less than 10% of the sample received additional education support; and
- Over half of the sample were identified as having special education needs.

The Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) in collaboration with the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria undertook a comparative study between the educational needs of children and young people in care and the general school population (de Lemos, 1997).

Some of the findings included:

- Over one third of the sample were identified as having a disability compared to an expected prevalence rate of 2% for the student population as a whole;
- Among those students with an identified disability, 61% were identified as having an

emotional or behavioural disorder;

- Just under half were identified as having difficulties in school; and
- Fifteen percent of participants were rated as achieving at an above average or well above average level when compared to the rest of the school population, whilst 44% rated as achieving at a below average or well below average level..

A subset of those in care within this study were assessed in relation to their levels of literacy, numeracy and adaptive behaviour. The results of this study showed that children and young people in care in the participant group on average:

- Achieved lower mean scores in reading comprehension, numeracy and adaptive behaviour; and
- Were more likely to be over-age for their school year level.

Cashmore and Paxman (1996) in a retrospective study of 45 young people who had left care found that:

- They attended an average of 3.4 primary schools and 2.2 high schools in comparison to 1.2 primary and 1.1 high schools for a general comparison group;
- One in four left school before completing Year 10;
- One in three completed secondary school; and
- Twelve months after leaving care, over 40% were unemployed, 20% were employed full time and 20% were studying at TAFE, University or school.

State and Territory Evaluation and Data Outcomes

Queensland, Victoria and South Australia have provided data and/or findings on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care. It should be noted that the collection and analysis of data on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in



care is in its infancy across Australian States and Territories. Comparisons cannot be made across jurisdictions. Data collection and analysis is further discussed in the section Overview of Performance.

Overall, the results indicate that children and young people in care as a group do not achieve as well as general school population. However, Victoria reports significant improvement in the academic performance of children and young people in care when comparing the 2003 data to the 2004 data.

Queensland

Queensland (DChS, 2005) continues to report on the educational achievement of children and young people in care for at least two years compared with those in the general population. Student achievements reported are from the results of Queensland Years 3, 5 and 7 Tests in aspects of literacy and numeracy in 2003 and 2004.

In summary, the results showed:

- A high proportion of the children and young people in care were exempt from tests (14-18% compared with 2% for the population).
- A slightly higher proportion of the children and young people in care were absent for the tests.
- In all test areas in years 3, 5, and 7, the percentage of children and young people in care achieving national benchmarks is lower than the general school population.

- The percentage of children in care above the National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks in 2004 were as follows:

Table 2: Percentage of Children and Young People in Care above National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks in Queensland, 2004

	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Year 03	83%	68%	56%
Year 05	50%	72%	51%
Year 07	73%	70%	46%

Some improvements were noted in the achievements of children and young people in care since 2003 in Year 5 numeracy and Year 7 reading and numeracy. There was a decline in achievement in Year 5 writing.

No comparative results were provided for Indigenous children and young people in care in this report. In the past it was noted that the average result for Indigenous children and young people was below the non-Indigenous average in all test areas in years 3, 5 and 7. This difference was consistent with that in the general state school population. However, the difference in achievement between the children and young people in care and those in the general state school population were generally greater than for non-Indigenous students than for Indigenous students.



Victoria

In Victoria out of home care data was collected in December 2003 and December 2004 and comparisons were made between students in out of home care and the general student population.

Some of the key findings reported are:

- At all year levels the out of home care cohort performs below the expected levels of academic performance as determined by Education standards and also in comparison to the performance of the general population of students.
- The performance trends of the out of home care cohort follows similar patterns to the general population of students in that performance levels decline as students move through the higher school levels in the post compulsory education years.
- For the general population, the performance across the four year reporting period remained fairly consistent whilst for the out of home care population there was more variation between years.
- Overall there has been a significant amount of improvement in academic performance for the out of home care cohort when comparing the 2003 data to the 2004 data for out of home care students.
- The out of home care cohort have higher rates of absenteeism compared to the general population of students. There was significant improvement in the attendance rates for the out of home care population in 2004 compared to 2003, with the average number of absent days declining significantly.
- The percentage of out of home care

students in Year 12 who move to another school prior to completion of the school years is significantly higher than for the general population. For the statewide population the primary exit destination during Year 12 was full time employment.

- At the end of Year 12 the primary exit destination for out of home care students was to alternative training or higher education providers. It is significant to note that a higher percentage of out of home care students moved on to University compared to the general population of students.
- In Years 10 and 11 there was a high rate of movement to other schools. This was also reflected in exit destinations for Year 10 for the general population of students.
- The employment rates are also consistently lower for the out of home care population.

South Australia

In South Australia, the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care was analysed in state schools during Term 2 2004. Data included an analysis of available information relating to attendance, literacy, numeracy and behaviour management incidents.

Key findings reported were:

- The rate of disabilities for the students in care was 33.9%. The most frequent disability was language and communication delay (22.3% of children in care).
- Of the total students in care, 21.9% were recorded as Aboriginal or of Torres Strait Islander origin.
- 12 children in care were excluded and 100 suspended during Term 2 2004. This represents 10.8% of the total number of students in care enrolled in state schools at that time.
- The absence rate for children in care during Term 2 2004 was 9.3%. The percentage of students who did not miss a day was 26% and the students who missed more than 10 days was 11%.
- Significant numbers of children in care have not achieved benchmarks. The percentage of

children in care above the National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks in 2004 were as follows:

Table 3: Percentage of Children and Young People in Care above National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks in South Australia, 2004

	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Year 03	72%	70%	78%
Year 05	67%	75%	66%
Year 07	74%	69%	69%

- The percentage of children in care exempt or absent from the tests was not provided.
- Preliminary analysis indicates that average literacy and numeracy results at each year level for children in care are lower than for the state population.

Suggested Systemic Factors Contributing to Educational Problems

The body of research literature identifies a variety of potential causes for the educational challenges experienced by those in care.

Experience of Abuse and Neglect

Children exposed to abusive or neglectful environments represent a group with multiple aspects of educational disadvantage. As populations who have been subject to extensive abuse and neglect, the poor educational outcomes of those in care are consistent with other groups subject to abuse and neglect. Empirical research conducted by Lansford and colleagues (Lansford, Dodge, Pettit et al, 2002) indicated that those who experienced abuse or neglect in childhood were more frequently absent from school, has lower levels of academic performance, and had more behavioural disturbances than their peers even after the abuse had ceased. These findings suggest that children and young people in care may continue to suffer from some of the legacies of their early abuse and neglect whilst in care.

"Make sure that teachers understand the issues of young people in care - some of them don't know what it means to be in care."

Sam, 13

Poor Treatment by Teachers and Peers

Low teacher expectations have been identified as a source of low confidence and achievement amongst students, even when teachers' reduced demands come from good intentions, students can react with more disengagement or resentment towards teachers for not expecting the most of them (Alpert, 1975). Sonia Jackson (1994) suggests this reduced expectation of achievement can play a critical role in the challenges those in care face. Heath and colleagues (1994) found that although teachers had lower expectations of children in care, the child's involvement with teachers with lower expectations was not associated with a lower level of achievement. They consequently rejected the notion that teachers' expectations influenced foster children's achievement. Other research suggests that the negative peer interactions and the sense by those in care that others have a negative perception of children in care may be a significant contributor to poorer educational outcomes. Carlen, Gleeson, and Wardhaugh (1992) found that many of those in England did not attend school because they felt humiliated by teachers and harassed by fellow students. Similarly, in another study that asked adolescents why they dropped out of high school, one in four of those in care interviewed said they left formal education because of the teachers, compared to only 5 percent of the comparison group (Blome, 1997).

Low Foster Parent Engagement in School

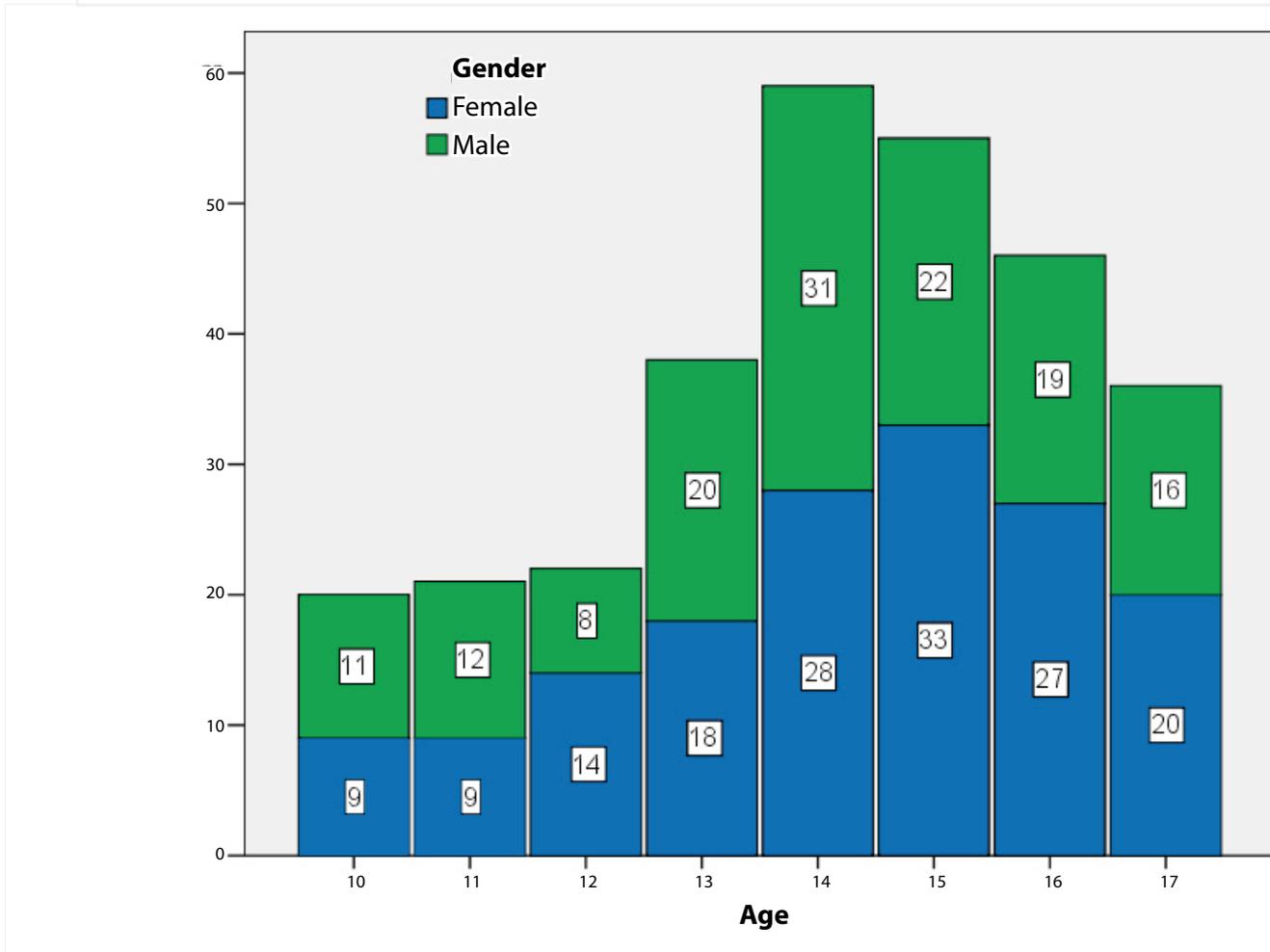
While foster parents and children may blame teachers for students' academic failure, school staff sometimes suggest that carers are at fault. In one study (Dubowitz and Sawyer, 1994), teachers were

asked to rate the level of caregiver involvement in the foster children's schoolwork compared to engagement demonstrated by parents of other children in their classes. Teachers rated forty-four percent of the foster children's caregivers as less than moderately involved. Similarly, Blome (1997) found that foster parents spent less time monitoring their foster children's homework than a comparison group's parents did.

Lack of Coordination between Educational and Out of Home Care Systems

Another explanation for foster children's academic failure could stem from the lack of coordination and communication between Educational and Out of Home Care Systems. For example, Runyan and Gould (1985) found that the histories of abuse and neglect amongst those in care were indicated in the child or young person's school records in only 16 percent of cases. Even if the education system is aware of a child or young person's in-care status, education professionals may have little understanding of the care system and the differing legal and custodial responsibilities of biological parents, carers, and caseworkers. For example, obtaining parental consent can be so complicated that foster children miss out on opportunities such as school excursions, camps and afterschool programs (CREATE 2004b). These complications may inhibit foster children's integration into the school community. Similarly, caseworkers may be so focused on delivering the most basic services to carers and biological parents, such as arranging placement, family contact and general case management that the child's school performance is of relatively minor importance (Jackson, 1994).

Figure 2: Survey Participation by Age and Gender



The Findings of the Report Card Interviews

Participant Demographic Information

Two hundred and ninety-seven Australian children and young people in care aged 10-17 participated in CREATE's Education Report Card survey in 2006. Of the 297 children and young people surveyed, 158 were female (56.2%), and 139 were male. Sixty-four children and young people identified as Indigenous

Australians, equating to approximately 21.6% of the participant group, and twelve (4.0%) identified as culturally and/or linguistically diverse.

Participants' ages were spread across the sample, with a minimum of 20 participants in each age group, though as indicated in the figure below, though there were larger numbers of those in the 13-16 year age bracket.

Table 4: Survey representation by participant frequency and jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Survey Participant Number	Survey Participant Percentage	National Care Population 10-17 Number	National Care Population 10-17 Percentage
ACT	16	5.4%	188	1.74%
NSW	90	30.3%	4180	38.72%
NT	13	4.4%	98	0.91%
QLD	50	16.8%	2313	21.43%
SA	36	12.1%	655	6.07%
Tas	11	3.7%	279	2.58%
Vic	51	17.2%	2297	21.28%
WA	30	10.1%	785	7.27%
Total	297	100.0%	10795	100.0%

As indicated in Table 4 above, participants were spread across Australia, with the sample selected on the basis of the overall size of the care population in each jurisdiction. However, in jurisdictions where there is a larger care population there was a relative under-representation, and the converse for less populated jurisdictions when compared to national population percentages. Overall, the number of participants represents 2.75% of Australia's care population at June 30, 2005.

Participant Care Information

The children and young people who participated in the Report Card tended to have been in care for much longer periods than those in the general care population. Over 83% of respondents had been in care for more than two years, in contrast to the most recent national Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) figures (AIHW, 2006) which indicate that 51.8% of all children and young people have been in care for two years or longer nationally. This distribution reflects the duration of time in care identified in previous Report Cards (see CREATE Foundation 2006, 2004a, 2004b, 2003), and also mirrors Report Card data relating to time in current placement not shown here.

As previously indicated, the sample of children and young people in care interviewed for this report card is not representative of the overall in care population. The relative placement stability of the children and

young people surveyed is likely to impact on their experiences of the care system and their access to educational services.

Reflecting Australian trends, the majority of participants were placed within foster care arrangements, with a secondary, smaller group living within relative care placements as indicated in Figure 3 (opposite).

Nearly sixteen percent of participants experienced over ten distinct care placements, with approximately thirty percent of children and young people experiencing a single placement. These figures indicate a level of stability much higher than that found in other Australian research (i.e. Cashmore and Paxman, 1996), and may relate to aspects of sampling bias inherent in the research design.

Departmental Relationships

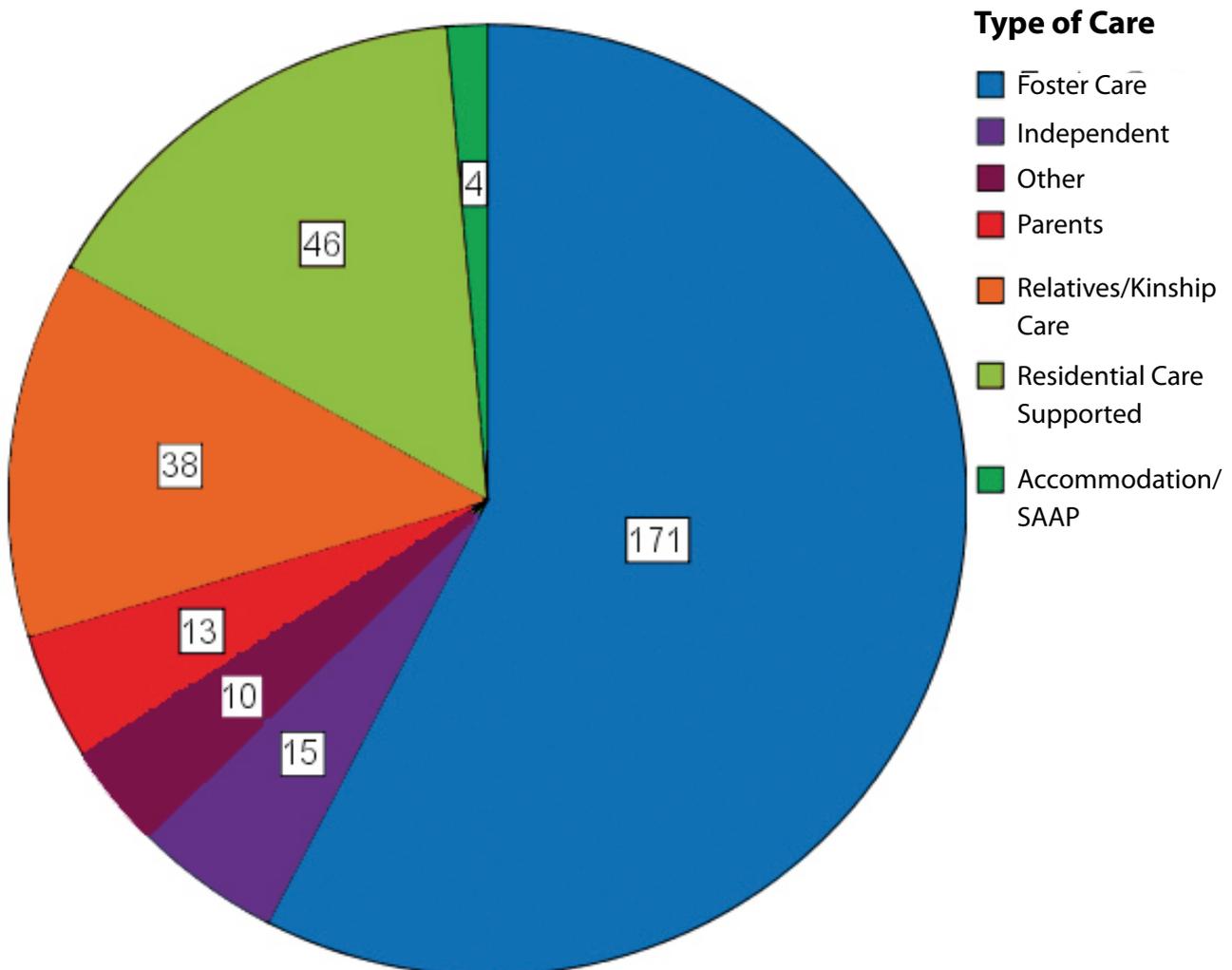
Sixty-seven participants (22.6%) indicated that they did not have a Departmental worker allocated to them. Whilst this may indicate that children and young people are unaware that they have a worker attached to their case, rather than it being indicative of not having one allocated per se, CREATE finds it concerning that more than one in five participants could not identify a worker assigned to them. Amongst those who did identify as having a Departmental worker, the continuity of worker contact appeared to be an issue. Of the

children and young people who could qualify the period of allocation with their current worker, nearly two-thirds indicated that they had spent less than 12 months with their current worker. When taken in context with the number of case workers indicated in Figure 4 below, it would seem that there is very little continuity in the caseworkers that those in care have. This is particularly interesting when the large distribution of those in long-term care and long-term placements within the sample is considered. This is inconsistent with the notion that stability within their care status, if not also their care placement, would presumably make it easier to maintain contact with a smaller number of workers.

"How about some stability and some interest from people in how they are going at school? Placing me near my school so I don't have to go so far to get there."

Nell, 10

Figure 3: Participant care type





Less than half of respondents indicated that they had a current case plan, with seventy participants indicating they did not have a current case plan, and eighty unsure of whether a case plan had been developed. It was promising that of those respondents aware of the existence of their case plan, three-quarters actively participated in that plan, though ideally all children and young people should have the opportunity to participate in making informed decisions about their own lives. The number of participants who did not know whether they had a case plan, or indicated that they did not have a plan, is of great concern; even though these findings represent an improvement on those identified in the 2005 Health Report Card. Even if we assume that a case plan exists for all of these young people, it is worrying that none of these respondents were aware of its existence or formally contributed to its development. Case planning presents important opportunities for children and young people to plan for their future and set identified goals with their case workers and other important people in their lives. Furthermore, upon reaching adulthood, case plan and file information

is frequently the only concrete record that many young adults have of their time in care, and possibly life prior to care entry. The timely completion of case plans, and the involvement of children and young people in the development and implementation of these plans, is critical.

Table 5: Length of time with current case worker

	Frequency	Percent
Not Applicable	67	22.6
Less than 1 month	20	6.7
1 month	12	4.0
2 to 3 months	25	8.4
4 to 6 months	35	11.8
6 to 12 months	40	13.5
Over 12 months	78	26.3
Unknown	20	6.7
Total	297	100.0

Figure 4: Estimated number of case workers throughout time in care

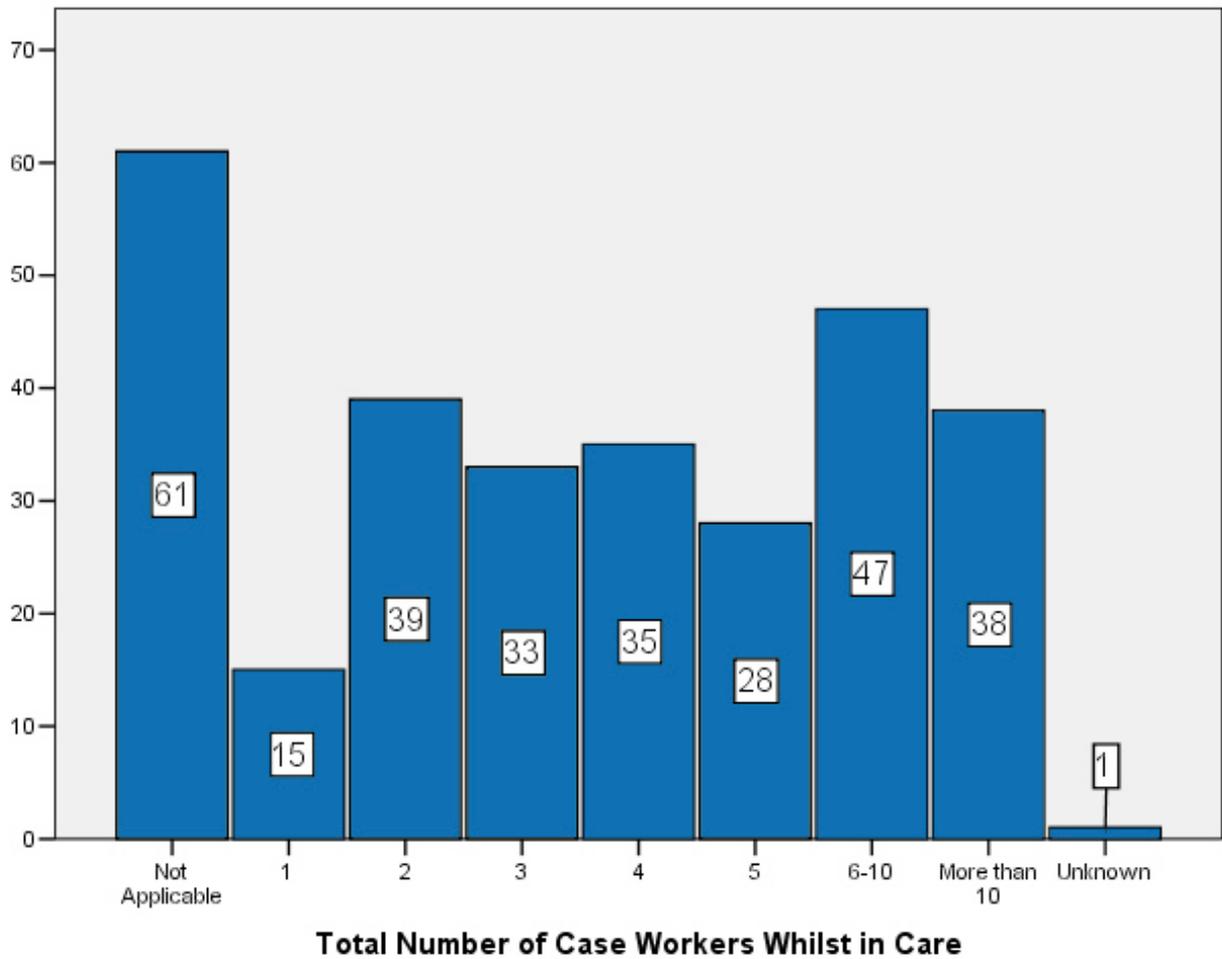
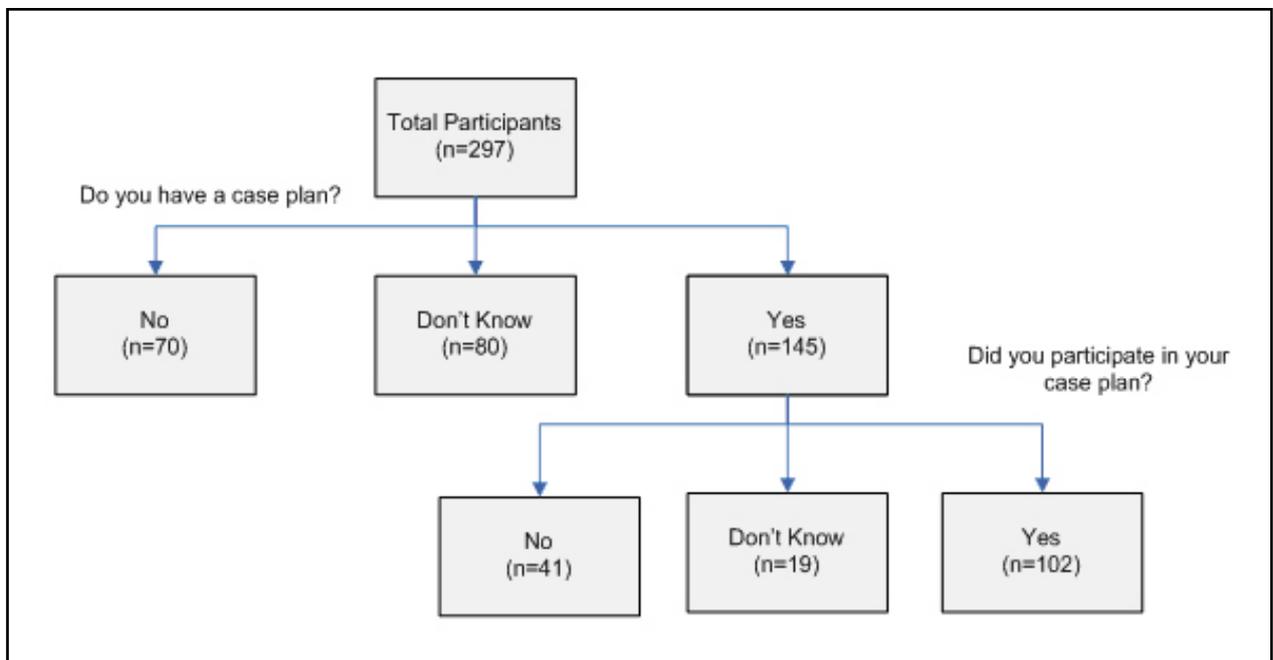


Figure 5: Case plan knowledge and participation





Educational Outcomes

Education, Training and Employment Activities in 2005

The majority of young people interviewed for the Report Card attended school (or alternative education) in 2005. A smaller number of participants engaged in some form of vocational education through the TAFE system, participated in paid employment or were in the process of seeking employment during the year. As indicated in Table 6 and Table 7 below, school attendance remained quite high for all ages except for those in the post-compulsory age group, where there were increases in vocational education and labour force participation. Note that the totals for each age group exceeded the number of participants within each age group as it was possible that any one participant may have engaged in multiple activities (e.g. attended school, and held a part-time job) during 2005. These data support existing research that indicates that a larger than average proportion of children and young people in care are not involved in the schools education system when compared to their age matched peers.

Grade Level Attempted by Age

The distribution of highest school grade attempted by age indicated that most participants tended to be at, or slightly below the standard grade level for their age, although these data did not control for variations in school start age in each jurisdiction. When compared with existing national data (ABS, 2004) participation of those in care was comparable with the rest of the population at age 16, although the level of participation at 17 amongst those surveyed was much lower than the national average. To provide a clearer analysis of the discrepancies between those in care and their peers, comparisons between the highest grade level of education undertaken and the typical age of those in the same year level within the same jurisdiction was undertaken. The result (see Figure 6 below) suggests that on average those interviewed are older than others in their grade (i.e. score below 0). Because the age of those interviewed was taken at March 30, it is likely that an even larger proportion of those interviewed were older than other students in their grade because it is likely that a large proportion of

Table 6: Number of Participants in Education, Training and Employment Activities by Age

Activity Count	Age								Total
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
Attended School	18	20	21	37	52	44	39	16	247
Attended TAFE						7	4	14	25
Attended Alternative Education	1				3	3	3	1	11
Worked						3	4	9	16
Looked for Work			2		4	2	2	5	15
Did Not Attend School	2	1	1	1	7	11	7	20	50

Table 7: Percentage of Participants in Education, Training and Employment Activities by Age

Activity Percentage	Age								Total
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
Attended School	90.0	95.2	95.5	97.4	88.1	80.0	84.8	44.4	83.2
Attended TAFE ¹						12.7	8.7	38.9	8.4
Attended Alternative Education	5.0				5.1	5.5	6.5	2.8	3.7
Worked						5.5	8.7	25.0	5.4
Looked for Work			9.0		6.8	3.6	4.3	13.9	5.1
Did Not Attend School	10.0	4.8	4.5	2.6	11.9	20.0	15.2	55.6	16.8

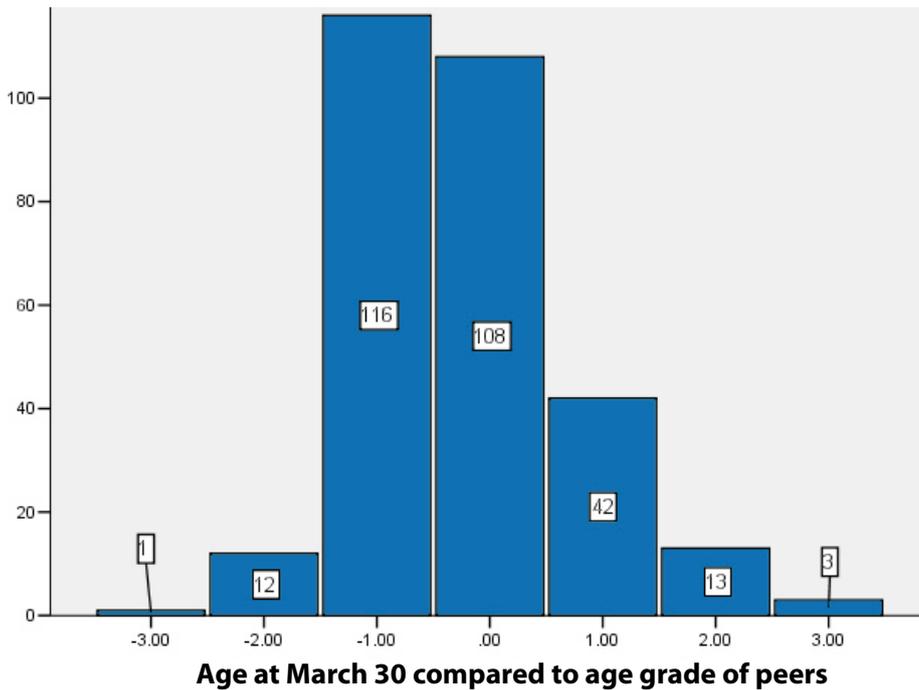
1. TAFE included VET courses, apprenticeships and school equivalence activities offered through TAFE institutes.

Table 8: Highest Grade Level of School Education Attempted by Age

	Year Level Attempted									
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
10	2 (0.0%)	4 (20.0%)	12 (60.0%)	1 (5.0%)	1 (5.0%)					
11		1 (4.8%)	2 (9.6%)	13 (61.9%)	5 (23.8%)					
12			1 (4.55%)	3 (13.6%)	12 (54.5%)	6 (27.3%)				
13*					6 (15.8%)	23 (60.5%)	6 (15.8%)	1 (2.6%)		
14				1 (1.7%)		9 (15.5%)	34 (58.6%)	14 (24.1%)	1 (1.7%)	
15						4 (7.3%)	19 (34.5%)	26 (47.3%)	5 (9.0%)	1 (1.8%)
16						1 (2.2%)	4 (8.7%)	12 (26.1%)	22 (47.8%)	7 (15.2%)
17							6 (16.7%)	6 (16.7%)	12 (33.3%)	12 (33.3%)

*Response was not recorded for 2 cases

Figure 6: Participant Age by Expected Grade Level Controlled for Jurisdiction



participants would have their birthdays later in the year, making them a year older. These findings are consistent with previous research that indicates those in care are more likely than their age matched peers to have been held back a year at school.

School Attendance

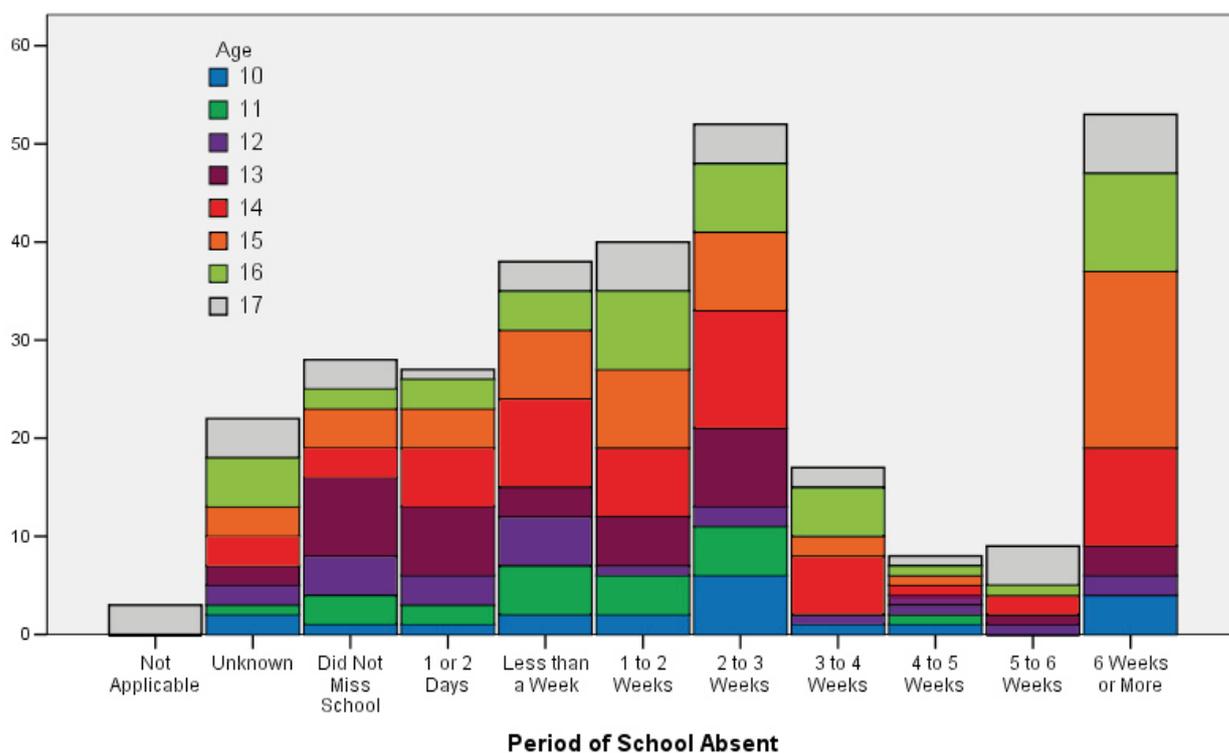
As indicated in the body of research literature, changes in school can have a profound impact on the quality of education received by children and young people in care. Data collected in this Report Card indicates large numbers of primary and secondary schools attended. Because of the different ages at which the move between primary school and high school occur across jurisdictions and that some participants were still completing primary or high schools there is little utility in attempting to draw inference from the distributions. Nonetheless, the number of schools attended is of concern, and is included in the statistical appendix for reference.

More indicative of levels of instability were the numbers of schools attended in the 2005 calendar year. Two hundred and thirty participants attended a single school during 2005, representing just over three quarters of all of those interviewed. A

further forty-four attended two schools in 2005, whilst eight attended three or more schools in the period. Thirteen participants did not attend a school in 2005, and information was missing for two participants. Overall, the stability of three quarters of the participant group in a single school in 2005 is positive, considering the number of previous school changes experienced by the participant group, a number consistent with findings from previous Report Cards. However, when considering existing research that suggests the majority of the population attend only a single primary school and a single high school (e.g. Cashmore and Paxman, 1996) any movement in school for a child in care is a substantial disruption in comparison to the rest of the population.

The majority of participants indicated that they missed periods of school during 2005 due to absence. Disturbingly, almost one in three participants missed more than twenty days of school during 2005, which based on a school year of forty weeks equates to over 10% of total attendance days. As indicated in figure 7 below, those who missed the longest periods of school were evenly spread across the age ranges, suggesting school instability was pervasive across the age ranges. Of the 247 of those who attended school in 2005, over 70 percent (174) did so due to

Figure 7: Periods of School Absence by Age



reasons of illness. A further twenty-six (10.5%) of those at school missed a period of school due to placement change or school change which directly resulted in them being unable to attend school for at least a day, but oftentimes a longer period. A further cause for concern was the level of participants who indicated they missed periods of school for reasons of exclusion. Participants indicated that in 2005 thirty-three (13.4%) missed at least one day of school due to reasons of exclusion. When extended across the participants' school careers, 146 (49.2%) indicated that they had previously been excluded from school, a figure considerably higher than that reported in previous Report Cards.

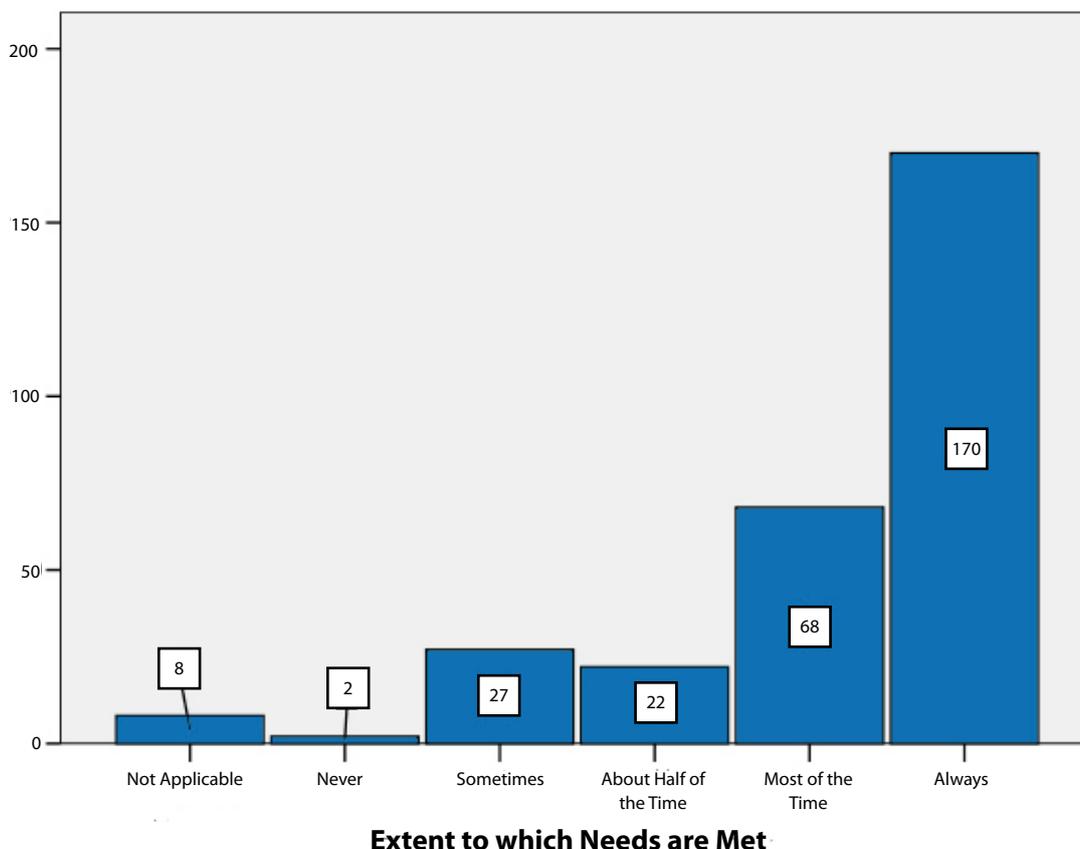
Educational Assistance

A key issue identified in the research literature was the impact that assistance, or the lack thereof can have in the educational outcomes for those in care. This was mirrored in the qualitative findings which suggest that the assistance that children and young people receive can, and frequently does play an important role in their educational development. Two hundred and six participants (69.4%) of the sample of 297 indicated that they felt they had

received educational assistance in 2005 in any educational endeavour (i.e. TAFE or school), with five unsure of whether they had received assistance. Sixty-eight percent of those who received assistance were happy with that assistance 'always', or 'most of the time'. Overall, the majority of participants indicated that their educational needs had been met, with over 57% of participants suggesting their educational needs are 'always' met. These distributions of responses are indicated in Figure 8 below.

Interestingly, outcomes relating to Educational Plans suggest that the majority of respondents were unsure of whether they had an education plan. As detailed in Figure 9 below, very few participants were aware that they did have a specific education plan. In part this may relate to the varying requirement between jurisdictions in relation to the development of discrete education plans for those in care, particularly in jurisdictions that have implemented the Looking After Children framework which includes an educational component. As a key enabling process to help to ensure more positive educational outcomes of those in care it is concerning so that few children and young people are aware of plans.

Figure 8: Perceptions of the Extent to which Educational Needs are Met



Bullying as an impediments to school integration

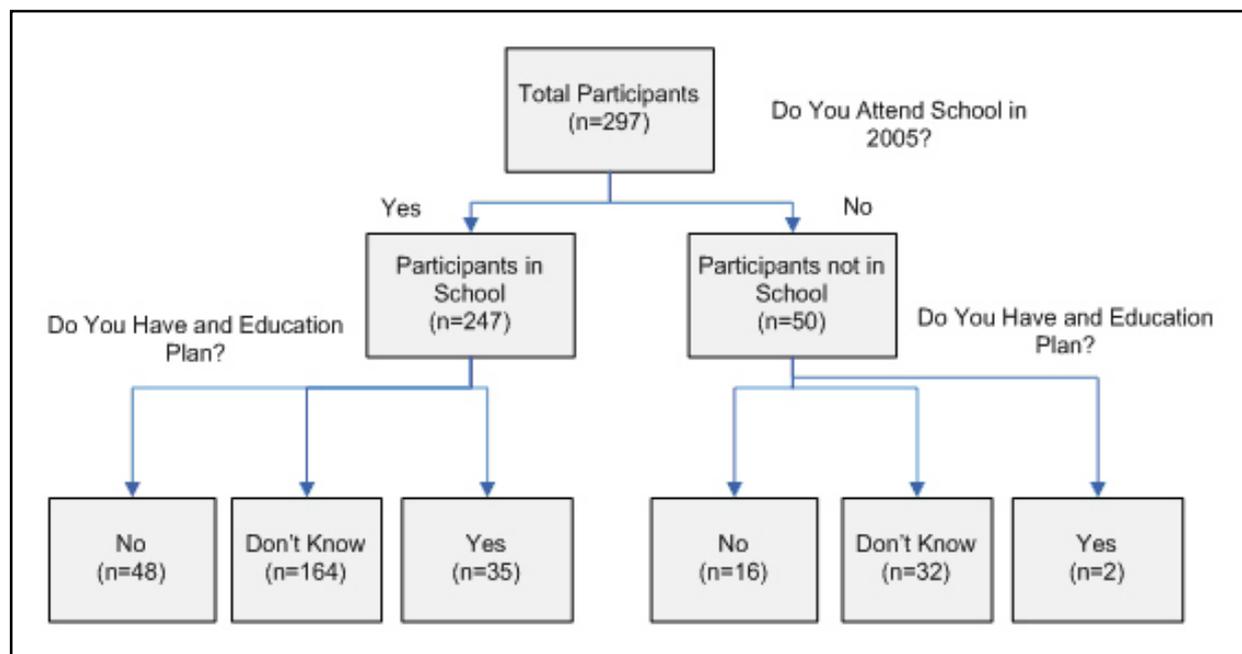
A large body of literature (i.e. Jackson, 1994) suggests that being integrated into the broader school community is frequently associated with more positive educational outcomes. In further exploration of this, participants were asked questions relating to a key area identified in previous Report Cards; the area of bullying.

Consistent with previous Report Card findings, bullying was a major issue for children and young people in care. When asked to report their perceptions of bullying they experienced whilst at school, almost one in five (19.2%) indicated that bullying occurred ‘most of the time’ or always. Without comparable normative data, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions relating the precedence of bullying amongst those in care when compared to the general population, though anecdotally it would seem a higher than average rate. The full data are provided in Table 9 adjacent

Table 9: Participants’ perceptions of the frequency of their experience of bullying

	Number	Percent
Unknown	3	1.0
Never	98	33.0
Sometimes	106	35.7
About Half Of the Time	33	11.1
Most of the Time	38	12.8
Always	19	6.4
Total	297	100.0

Figure 9: Participants' Awareness of Education Plans



Factors associated with early non-attendance at school

Using the data from the 297 participants in the Report Card survey, comparisons were made between those who were attending school, and those who were not. Overall, 247 participants indicated that they attended school in some capacity in 2005, though, as represented in Table 5 previously, there was a tendency for those beyond the age of compulsory school attendance to leave school (only 44.4% of 17 year olds attended school in 2005, compared to 84.8% of 16 year olds). To overcome the bias of those who have left school for age only the participants who were 16 years or age or under at the time of interview were considered in this analysis, meaning that they were fifteen years or under at the commencement of the 2005 school year. This group comprised a total of 261 children and young people, with 30 indicating they did not attend school in 2005.

Significant differences existed between those who remained at school in 2005, and those who were not attending. Those who were not attending school, tended to :

- Have spent less time in their current placement;

- Have spent less time in care overall;
- Have experienced more placements overall;
- Have completed a lower grade than others of their age;
- Have attended more high schools; and
- Have been excluded more

Interestingly, the following factors were not found to be predictive of attending or not attending school within the participant group:

- Age
- Time with caseworker
- Number of caseworkers
- Number of primary schools attended
- Highest level of education

These findings are consistent with the research literature that highlights the importance of stability and inclusion in promoting positive educational outcomes.



Planning for the Future

As a final part of the Report Card interview, participants were asked two questions relating to the outcomes they wanted for their own education and training, as well as questions relating to the outcomes they wanted for other children and young people in care in the future.

Educational Plans for the Future

Participants were asked an open-ended question relating to what educational plans they had for the future. As indicated in Table 9, a large proportion of participants indicated that they wished to undertake further education of some sort beyond that offered within the schools system.

Vocational Plans for the Future

Children and young people interviewed for the Report Card indicated a broad range of desired career outcomes, reflecting a diversity of educational requirements and fields. There were a large proportion of participants who indicated that they would like to work in a field where they are required to take engage in community service activities, or activities involving children. These aspirations may reflect the child or young person's care history, though further research needs to be undertaken. Furthermore, and of interest was the large number of participants who indicated that they were interested in working with animals – as vets, horse trainers and the like. A similar link may exist between a history of care, and a desire to care for animals, in line with that discussed above.

Table 10: Future Educational Plans

Education Level	Participants	Examples
Year 10	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going to complete year 10 Year 9 and 10
Year 11	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I don't have a job by the end of year 11, I'll do yr 12
Year 12	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To finish year 12 and join the navy Complete Year 12
TAFE/Traineeship	77	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goto High school, not university, then an apprenticeship in building or plumbing I'd like to try and get into a makeup and fashion design course
University/College	86	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I want to finish year 12 and then go to University to do law Finish year 12, apply for uni, study psych and business management
Unknown	64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have not thought about it Don't have any
Total¹	291	

¹ Six responses were missing, and not included

Table 11: Frequency of Vocational Choice

Industry Category	Participants
Trade (Carpenter/Electrician/Plumber/Fitter and Turner/Mechanic/Builder)	34
Animal Care (Vet/Horse Trainer/Stablehand)	20
Children (Care Worker/Nanny)	16
Beauty (Hairdresser/Beautician/Massage)	16
Education (Primary Teacher/High School Teacher/School Aide)	14
Military (Army/Airforce/Navy/Astronaut)	13
Hospitality (Chef/Waiter/Hospitality/Food)	13
Law Enforcement (Police Officer/Detective/Forensics)	13
Legal (Lawyer)	11
Sport (Professional Sportsperson/Coach/Trainer)	11
Psychologist/Social Work/Counsellor	9
Youth Work (Youth Worker/Community Development)	9
Fashion (Design/Modelling/Sales)	8
Media (Journalism/Editor/Cartoonist/Advertising)	8
Fire-fighter	7
Medical (Nurse/Surgeon/Doctor)	7
Transport (Truck Driver/Train Driver/Ship)	6
Horticulture (Farming/Work in Nursery)	5
IT (Computers, Network engineer)	5
Scientific (Zoologist/Marine Biologist/Geneticist/Archaeologist)	5
Other Professional (Accountant/Real Estate/Interior Design/Architect)	4
Engineer	4
Entertainment (Singer/Actor)	3
Not Sure/Missing/Unknown	56
Total	297

"There is an expectation from teachers and care givers that all kids in care will fail at school. Support should be offered and shown to a young person so they know its there and take up the opportunity if they need it, but it should not be forced on them ..."

Frank, 16

Summary of Report Card Survey Findings:

The data from the Report Card survey provides a snapshot of children and young people in care that is consistent with empirical research findings in Australia and overseas. Disturbingly, there remains a lack of informed involvement by children and young people in their case plans, demonstrated by the finding that more than half of all participants indicated that they did not or were unaware of whether they have a current case plan. Of further concern was the relative impermanency of relationships with case workers, an area of importance identified in CREATE's 2004 Report Card *Being Our Best* (CREATE, 2004a).

The educational circumstances reported by participants indicated a number of key challenges faced by children and young people in care. Those in care are:

- Are much less likely to continue within mainstream education beyond the period of compulsion;
- Are much more likely to be older than other children and young people in their grade level;
- On average attend a larger number of primary and high schools than other students; and
- Missed substantial periods of school through changes of placement

Furthermore, the data provided a useful indication of factors that were related to non-attendance amongst the participant group, which related to instability and a lack of continuity in placement, and indicators of poor relationships within the school (e.g. exclusion and being older than peers).

Despite these challenges, it was positive that the majority of children and young people surveyed indicated that they did feel supported in their educational endeavours.



Moving Forward 2006

CREATE acknowledges both the considerable progress made by States and Territories over the past five years and the complex challenges ahead in promoting the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care.

The Education Report Card continues to focus attention on the education of children and young people in care as a priority for government action in collaboration with other stakeholders. Actions have been recommended that experience and research indicate are foundational to achieving better educational outcomes for children and young people in care.

CREATE will continue to report on the progress of States and Territories in establishing the foundation for achieving better educational outcomes. In summary these are:

Action 1: Adopt appropriate goals and objectives that promote educational participation and performance of children and young people in care

Action 2: Ensure that all children and young people in care have an individual education plan

Action 3: Establish local or regional collaborative structures and processes to promote achievement of the goals and objectives

Action 4: Establish mechanisms that monitor, evaluate and review achievement of outcomes

Action 5: Establish a collaborative research agenda.

Further, it is clear that within this framework more specific actions are required to address the barriers

that prevent children and young people achieving their educational potential and improve their life chances. In future Education Report Cards, CREATE will request that States and Territories report their actions in addressing barriers under the five areas of change required to improve the education of children and young people in care as identified by the Social Exclusion Unit (2003).

- **Greater stability** – so that children and young people in care do not have to move home or school so often
- **Less time out of school** – longer in education – help with school admissions, better access to education with more support to help children and young people to attend school regularly and to stay on after school leaving age
- **Help with schoolwork** – more individual support tailored to the child or young person backed by more training for teachers and social workers
- **More help from home to support schoolwork** – by giving carers better training in children's education
- **Improved health and well-being** – with teachers, staff from across government departments, non-government service providers and carers all working together in the interests of the child

Victoria

The following is Victoria's response to the actions for moving forward identified in the 2004 Education Report Card:

- Action 1: Adopt appropriate goals and objectives that promote educational participation and performance of children and young people in care
- Action 2: Ensure that all children and young people in care have an individual education plan
- Action 3: Establish local or regional collaborative structures and processes to promote achievement of the goals and objectives
- Action 4: Establish mechanisms that monitor, evaluate and review achievement of outcomes
- Action 5: 'Establish a collaborative research agenda' is reported on in the section 'Overview of Performance'

Goal and Objectives

A partnering agreement, 'School Attendance and Engagement of Children and Young People in Out of Home Care', was developed by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Education and Training (DET) in 2003. The Agreement reflects the commitment by both departments to improving the educational experiences and outcomes of children and young people in care.

A range of structures and processes are in place to guide DHS staff, service providers and schools about the Partnering Agreement including:

- DET and DHS regional contact officers with responsibility for supporting implementation of the Agreement in regions.
- Statewide meetings of the Regional Contact Officers Group to discuss implementation and practice issues.
- Regional implementation groups responsible for implementation of the Agreement.
- Ongoing regional professional development sessions for DHS staff, community service organisations and schools on issues of

relevance – e.g. how to develop Individual Education Plans, working in partnership etc.

- Regional implementation of various strategies aimed at maintaining a focus on the Agreement e.g. newsletters, presentations at Principal meetings, circulars and memorandums reinforcing requirements of the Agreement etc.
- Development of posters and postcards to further promote the Agreement and its requirements to be circulated to all schools, community service organisations and DHS staff.
- Update and rewriting of the Individual Education Plan guidelines and pro formas to promote their usage by schools and make them more user friendly.
- Regular communication between DET and DHS regional officers.

Individual Education Plans

The Partnering Agreement requires all children and young people in out of home care to have a Student Support Group established and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) developed.

The case manager from the DHS or delegated community service organisation case manager is required to contact the student's school or liaise with the DET to locate an appropriate school for the child or young person in care. The school then establishes a Student Support Group that must meet at least once a year at the school that the child or young person is attending. Meetings can be called by any of the participants including the child or young person, parent/guardian or caregiver, case manager, teacher or year level coordinator, Principal or nominee (chairperson), Student Welfare Coordinator and/or Student Support Service Staff. A meeting should also be held when disciplinary action is being or has been initiated. The Education Regional Director must also be notified of all intended expulsions of children and young people residing in out of home care.

The aim of the IEP is to maximise potential and support achievement and attendance at school, which is important to all children and young people in care whether or not there are behavioural or

attendance issues. It describes a set of strategies to address the educational needs of the child or young person concerned. IEP formats are available to schools electronically. IEPs are linked to the development of care and placement plans under the Looking After Children Framework.

DHS have collected data regarding all school aged children and young people in care at three points, November 2004, June 2005 and November 2005. At November 2005, approximately 90% of school-aged children (5-17 years) in out of home care were enrolled in school. Those not enrolled include 'school refusers' and those over the minimum school leaving age or who may be undertaking alternative training and/or education programs. The percentage of enrolments has increased over the reporting period.

Approximately 55% of children and young people in care (over 800) who are enrolled in school have a student support group established. The proportion of children and young people in care who are enrolled in school that have an IEP has varied across the reporting period, from 43% in November 2003, 54% in June 2005 and 45% in November 2005. The reason for the more recent decline will be examined. A priority is to increase the percentage of children and young people in care with these supports. Further snapshot data will be collected at the end of the Term 2 in 2006.

Collaboration

DET and DHS have dedicated staff at central and regional levels with responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Partnership Agreement and liaison with regional contact officers within both departments. Regions have developed Regional Implementation Groups, which use a range of strategies to engage stakeholders including forums, professional development sessions, newsletters and information resources.

A two day congress titled "Resilience Congress: Building Resilience through LAC and Education" is planned for August 2006. Staff of DHS and DET, community service providers, carers and young people will attend the congress. The second day will involve a focus on educational engagement and achievement and ways to improve outcomes for

children and young people in care.

Achievement of Outcomes

Statewide regional contact officer meetings and regional education committees have a role in monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Partnering Agreement, sharing best practice, developing strategies to address implementation issues and overseeing an evaluation proposal.

DET and DHS have cooperated to develop an appropriate data collection framework to monitor educational engagement and achievement of children and young people in care. This was achieved within the Education CASES 21 data collection system by creating a separate cohort description for student achievement reporting using 'out of home care' as a descriptor of the child or young person. This enables the collection of data regarding attendance, student exit destinations and academic achievement. It also enables comparison of children and young people in care as a group with the general population.

Data was collected in December 2000 to December 2004, the period of the Partnership Agreement. A report detailing the analysis of the data will be soon circulated to the regions.

DHS and DET are currently finalising a tender specification to evaluate the Partnering Agreement during 2006. The criteria for evaluation includes the:

- Impact of the Partnering Agreement on improving attendance, retention and educational achievement of children and young people in out of home care
- Extent to which both systems are working cooperatively to improve the education experiences and outcomes of children and young people in out of home care.

The implementation of the Looking After Children Framework will assist in monitoring the educational engagement and achievement of children and young people in care.

DET collects data on expulsion and suspension rates to support planning and implementation of a

broad range of programs. However, this data does not indicate if the student resides in an out of home care placement.

Formal data regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of IEPs has not been collected at this stage. It is envisaged that this will form part of the Partnering Agreement evaluation. It is also proposed that CASES 21 include an IEP indicator for those students in care.

CREATE COMMENTS

Victoria, in 2004 your continued progress work in implementing the Partnering Agreement 'School Attendance and Engagement of Children and Young People in Care' was acknowledged. Progress noted at that time included the:

- Range of structures, processes and activities undertaken at statewide and regional levels to guide and support implementation of the Partnership Agreement
- Development of a comprehensive pro forma and accompanying explanatory material to guide educational planning and link it with Looking After Children
- Initial steps taken to collect and aggregate data in respect of Individual Education Plans
- Efforts and progress in developing the capacity to collect and report on data
- Development of a joint proposal to evaluate the impact of the Partnering Agreement and a commitment to undertake the evaluation during 2005.

Since 2004, your continued progress is acknowledged. Progress includes:

- Ongoing promotion of the Partnership Agreement and its requirements.
- Updating the IEP guidelines and pro forma
- Developing a Resilience Congress for key stakeholders
- Monitoring the proportion of children and young people in care who have a student support group established and in IEP
- Monitoring key aspects of the educational participation and achievement of children and young people in care comparative to the general population over a four year period
- Developing a tender specification to evaluate

the Partnership Agreement in 2006

As noted in your current response, further work is required in:

- Increasing the proportion of children and young people with a Support Group and an IEP
- Evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of IEPs
- Developing further the capacity to report on educational participation and performance including data on suspension and expulsion.

This would increase the range of information available to monitor, evaluate and review the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care. In turn, this would enhance your capacity to assess the impact of your policies and practices and inform continuous improvement.

In 2004, your work to extend the Partnering Agreement to include children and young people attending non-government schools was noted and encouraged. However, there was no comment about progress on this important issue in your current response. Further information is sought on your progress in engaging non-government schools and extending the Partnering Agreement to the benefit of all students in care.

Overall Victoria, you have continued your efforts this year and have made significant progress in establishing the foundations for improving the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care. You have developed a strong policy and practice framework and your capacity to effectively monitor, evaluate and review the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care is improving. This is beginning to enable you to assess the impact of your policies and practices to inform continuous improvement.

Tasmania

The following is Tasmania's response to the actions for moving forward identified in the 2004 Education Report Card:

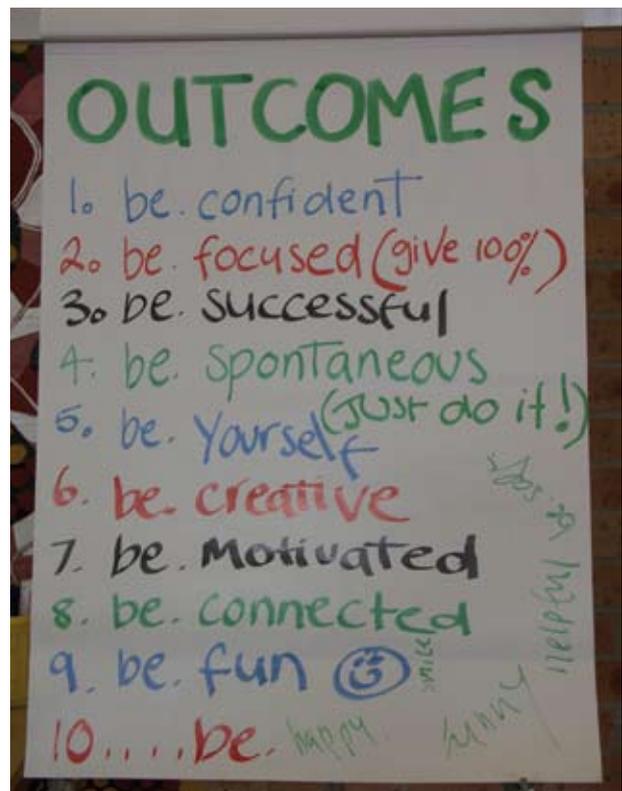
- Action 1: Adopt appropriate goals and objectives that promote educational participation and performance of children and young people in care
- Action 2: Ensure that all children and young people in care have an individual education plan
- Action 3: Establish local or regional collaborative structures and processes to promote achievement of the goals and objectives
- Action 4: Establish mechanisms that monitor, evaluate and review achievement of outcomes
- Action 5: 'Establish a collaborative research agenda' is reported on in the section 'Overview of Performance'

Goal and Objectives

The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 supports the goal to promote and support the participation and performance of children and young people in care.

One of the key goals of the Department of Education is that all children reach their educational potential and that they do so in an environment that is supportive and inclusive. This goal is reflected in a range of policies and plans including the Essential Learnings Framework, the Supportive School Communities Policy Framework and the Attendance, Participation and Retention Policy and Strategic Plan.

A draft protocol Working Together: Supporting Children on Care and Protection Orders exists between Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Education, and is presently being updated to reflect organisational changes in schools implemented in 2005. Education staff are provided with updates on current issues surrounding the protocol and fact sheets related to children in care



are available on the Departmental intranet.

The development of the Essential Learnings Framework and the implementation of Essential Learnings for All are intended to bring about system change to ensure that educational programs and pedagogy are accessible and relevant for all children and young people. This resource is due for release in 2006.

Individual Education Plans

Planning for all children and young people in care occurs through the Looking After Children Framework. The child's education needs are explored through the placement plan and education is one of the developmental dimensions within the assessment and action records. Care plans for children who require additional assistance with their education may include additional funding for tutoring and classroom support. Data is not available on the number and proportion of children and young people who have a care plan.

Education develops Individual Education Plans (IEP) for children and young people, including those in care, where such a plan is required to realize educational outcomes. Plans are reviewed monthly or on a once a term basis. In addition to

IEPs, Educational Pathway Plans are now being developed in a staged process for all secondary school students. Although there are no specific guidelines for students in care, specialist support people work with students considered at risk. Youth Learning Officers provide individual support and pathway planning for young people aged 15-19 who have disengaged from mainstream school or who are at risk of not completing education and training beyond year 10. Aboriginal Education Officers are involved in the development of pathway plans for Aboriginal students. Children and young people in care are often highly represented in both of these populations.

Data on the number and proportion of children in care with an Individual Education Plan is not currently available due to organisational changes within the Department. Work is progressing on the issue of accurately capturing data in the new structure. Education stated that this will be provided as soon as possible.

Collaboration

An inter-departmental committee involving senior staff of both DHHS and Education meets regularly to discuss policy issues and identify strategies to improve educational outcomes of children and young people in care.

There are regular meetings of staff who are involved in the delivery of services to address the needs of individual children and young people and issues that have arisen in the implementation of the protocols.

Following changes in school organisational arrangements, the local, regional and statewide structures were reviewed in 2005. A restructured governance process is required at the regional and state levels. This will be put in place in 2006.

Achievement of Outcomes

Educational achievements of children and young people in care are currently monitored by DHHS on a case-by-case basis. The implementation of the Looking After Children (LAC) Framework will improve the capacity of the department to

monitor individual outcomes. The education report generated by LACES, the current electronic version of LAC, is limited to the highest school year achieved. A new version of LACES will be implemented in 2006 that has much greater capacity to report on educational outcomes.

No Education data on educational participation and performance of children and young people was provided for this report. Collaborative work has been undertaken between DHHS and Education in relation to educational outcomes for children and young people in care. This has been in progress since 2004 and is likely to be released in 2006.

CREATE COMMENTS

In 2004 Tasmania's progress, whilst continuing to build on the foundations already in place, had slowed. Progress noted at that time included:

- Updating your protocol Working Together and informing staff.
- Development of the Essential Learnings Framework.
- Modifying Education data systems to identify and report on the participation and performance of children and young people in care.

Since 2004, your further progress is acknowledged. Progress includes:

- Updating the Working Together protocol to reflect significant organisational changes implemented in schools in 2005.
- Implementing Essential Learnings for All in schools.
- Developing Educational Pathway Plans for all secondary school students.
- Updating LACES to improve capacity for reporting on educational outcomes.
- Continuing work in developing Education's capacity to report on participation and performance of children and young people in care.

The work highlighted in Education's response is commended. However, there appears to be little integration between the policies and practices of the two departments. The Community Service response did not mention the Working Together protocol.



Education's reference to the protocol indicates that it remains a draft. Your 2004 responses also indicated that the protocol was a draft. Further information is sought on when the protocol will be finalised.

No information has been provided on how many children and young people in care have a current care plan. Nor is it clear whether educational planning through LAC is sufficient to engage schools (Education) in working with other stakeholders to identify and meet the educational needs of children and young people in care. It is instructive to note that even in the UK where LAC was developed, individual education planning was still introduced. In addition, it is not possible to report on the number of children and young people in care who have an Education IEP. It is suggested that educational planning undertaken through LAC and Education be evaluated to assess whether it is sufficient to promote, prioritise and improve the education of children and young people in care.

The development of Educational Pathway Plans for all secondary students is commended. Evaluation of the impact of this initiative on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care, and their access to specialist support workers as necessary, would inform ongoing policy and practice development.

Further information is sought on how DHHS care planning is linked with the Education Department IEPs and Educational Pathway planning.

Your progress in collecting and analysing data on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care is unclear, with Education indicating that this information is collected but is not currently available. It was stated that work has been in progress since 2004 and is likely to be released in 2006. Further work is required in Tasmania to effectively monitor, evaluate and review the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care, assess the impact of your policies and practice, and inform continuous improvement.

Overall Tasmania, you continue to make progress in developing a policy and practice framework for the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care, however, your progress remains slow. Your responses do not provide a clear indication that the policies and practices of your two departments are integrated. It is essential that in 2006 progress against the five foundational areas of action be jointly reviewed and strategies developed to build on the steps that you have already taken to maximise the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care.

New South Wales

The following is New South Wales response to the actions for moving forward identified in the 2004 Education Report Card:

- Action 1: Adopt appropriate goals and objectives that promote educational participation and performance of children and young people in care
- Action 2: Ensure that all children and young people in care have an individual education plan
- Action 3: Establish local or regional collaborative structures and processes to promote achievement of the goals and objectives
- Action 4: Establish mechanisms that monitor, evaluate and review achievement of outcomes
- Action 5: 'Establish a collaborative research agenda' is reported on in the section 'Overview of Performance'.

Goal and Objectives

The Department of Community Services continues to implement a range of reforms that will provide the foundations for a stronger out of home care system. These reforms will promote the long-term stability and welfare of children and young people in care, and contribute to their improved educational outcomes.

The review of the draft Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care has been finalised and will be distributed to children and young people in care by the end of June 2006. The Charter includes rights relating to participation of children and young people in care in the decision making process, and includes reference to the right to extra help with education.

In December 2005, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was jointly signed by the Directors-General of the Department of Community

Services (DoCS) and the Department of Education and Training (DET). The MoU provides a framework for a coordinated approach by both agencies in responding to the needs of those in care at specific phases of schooling, when information sharing and joint case planning is crucial to improving engagement in education. An inter-departmental committee has been established to guide implementation of the MoU.

The Stage 1 priority for implementation of the MoU is children and young people in care with complex needs. This will not preclude progression of information exchange and collaboration for the broader target group of all children and young people in care.

An implementation plan is currently being finalised by the joint steering committee, which will include the roll-out of protocols to progress implementation of the MoU at the regional level. A range of communication strategies and tools are being developed to assist promotion of the MoU for use by departmental staff and service providers at both central and local levels.

Individual Education Plans

The MoU provides for the development of individual education plans on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate. It also provides for responding to requests from DoCS, an authorised carer or a child or young person in care for learning support based on identified need. DoCS understand that individual education plans will also be in place for all Aboriginal children attending school.

Collaboration

The MoU Implementation Steering Committee will include roll out at the regional level, enabling its principles, objectives and the key aspects of information sharing and joint case planning to be defined and managed at the local level. It is expected that implementation of the MoU will build on some the existing formal and informal arrangements

in place which provide the opportunity for joint collaboration and information sharing between government agencies and the non-government sector.

Achievement of Outcomes

The capacity for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating educational objectives is now available within DoCS. The implementation of a 'minimum data set' will provide information for educational participation, incidences of suspension and expulsion, educational attainment and retention rates for children and young people in care. Other data collection processes provide for the collection of information relating to a child's educational participation and attainment. However, further investigation is required to improve the quality of information and indicators relating to educational outcomes.

The effectiveness of the MoU will be evaluated after two years on an ongoing basis. The parameters of evaluation and related data collection needs are currently being determined.

CREATE COMMENTS

New South Wales, in 2004 disappointment was expressed about your limited progress in addressing the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care. A renewed focus on the education of children and young people in care was suggested including that:

- The Memorandum of Understanding be finalised
- Individual Education Plans be adopted and developed with all children and young people in care
- Regional structures and processes to support implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding are established
- Key aspects of participation and performance are identified and reported.

Since 2004, you have made steady progress. Your sign off of the MoU and establishment of an inter-departmental committee to guide implementation are commended. It is noted that an implementation

plan is currently being finalised by the inter-departmental committee.

Further information is sought on the scope of the MoU and its coverage of students attending non-government schools. If the MoU does not cover students at non-government schools, what are your plans to engage these schools in discussions to extend coverage?

The MoU provides for the development of IEPs on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate. It is not clear if this means that, over time, that all children and young people in care will have an IEP or whether they will only be developed for those 'in need'. It is CREATE's view that IEPs are a proactive strategy and should be developed for all children and young people in care to maximise their educational participation and performance. Children and young people in care who are doing well in education require access to support and resources to continue to attain their educational goals. Further, where general case planning and review processes are being used to assess and respond to educational needs, this approach needs to be evaluated to assess whether it is sufficient to promote, prioritise and improve the education of children and young people in care.

Further information is sought about how you plan to collect and report on the number and proportion of children and young people in care with an IEP, and assess the quality of the plans.

Your intention to build upon existing networks for joint collaboration and information sharing at regional and local levels to support implementation is noted. We look forward to hearing more about how collaborative structures and processes are established as the MoU is implemented.

No data on educational participation and performance was provided. Whilst you state that you have the capacity for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating educational objectives, it is not clear whether this information is being collected and analysed at this stage. You also state that other data collection processes provide for the collection of information relation to educational participation and performance, though it is unclear if this is a



reference to data from DET. In addition, it is unclear how data collection developments within DoCS are linked to data on educational participation and performance held by DET.

Your commitment to evaluating the effectiveness of the MoU is commended. It would be very useful if a baseline on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care could be established prior to implementation of the MoU.

Overall New South Wales, the development of a MoU provides the necessary focus on the participation and performance of children and young people in care in 2006. Effective implementation will

Australian Capital Territory

The following is Australian Capital Territory's response to the actions for moving forward identified in the 2004 Education Report Card:

- Action 1: Adopt appropriate goals and objectives that promote educational participation and performance of children and young people in care
- Action 2: Ensure that all children and young people in care have an individual education plan
- Action 3: Establish local or regional collaborative structures and processes to promote achievement of the goals and objectives
- Action 4: Establish mechanisms that monitor, evaluate and review achievement of outcomes
- Action 5: 'Establish a collaborative research agenda' is reported on in the section 'Overview of Performance'.

Goal and Objectives

The document *Sharing Responsibility: A Service Coordination Framework for the Care and Protection of Children and Young People in the ACT* has been signed off by relevant government departments including Community Services and Education, and commits ACT government to work together to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect.

'In Reach of Us All', the Action Plan for the Achievement of Educational Success for All Students 2002-2004 identifies the improvement of interagency collaboration as a specific commitment. This has become particularly important since the separation of the Departments of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) and Education and

Training (DET) which were previously within the one government department.

A Memorandum of Understanding exists between DHCS and DET with regard to the exchange of information about children and young people in care, the development and management of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), and the ongoing communication mechanisms for senior staff of both departments.

Guidelines have been distributed to teaching staff and care and protection staff regarding their respective roles and responsibilities in the identification and monitoring of the educational needs of children and young people in care. DHCS staff provide training to DET staff that encompasses supporting children and young people in care. The development of a 'train the trainer' program for senior school counsellors to deliver child protection workshops to education staff is currently being negotiated.

DHCS staff participate in executive forums that aim to resolve difficulties associated with the coordinated provision of services to clients with complex needs. A strategic focus has been developed on providing enhanced education, training and employment options for young people who are in care and reside at the Youth Detention Centre.

Individual Education Plans

All children and young people in care are required to have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and guidelines are in place outlining the required process. Whilst there is a recommended format for the ILP, schools may elect to use their own version. It is a requirement that key people including the child or young person are involved in the development of the plan, and must be prepared within four weeks after the student is first enrolled at the school and is reviewed at least six monthly.

DHCS supports the education of children and young people in care through subsidies to their carers to ensure that they can participate meaningfully and be part of the school community and culture. Assistance is also provided through funding of private tutoring, Canberra Institute of Technology fees and university fees on a case-by-case basis. Where children or young people are placed in care

in regional NSW, the need to fund Special Teachers Assistants is assessed on a case-by-case basis. No data was provided on the number and proportion of children and young people in care who have an ILP.

Collaboration

DHCS fund a Schools as Communities program in two high schools and ten primary schools. This program supports young people at risk of poor social and/or educational outcomes through connecting them with a range of community support services and through active assistance with such issues as employment, housing or relationships. The program has had the dual effect of increasing school awareness of the issues facing youth at risk and focusing attention on young people who are in care.

Turnaround is an initiative of the ACT government that aims to improve services and outcomes for young people with extremely high and complex needs aged between 12-18 years. One of the features of Turnaround is its integrated governance arrangements and promotion of collaborative practice across both the government and non-government sectors.

DHCS also manage two government youth services for young people at risk that, amongst other things, address educational issues and attempt to re-engage young people in education or work preparation.

Achievement of Outcomes

A review of processes for more efficient and streamlined data capture is currently being conducted by DHCS. This will assist in ensuring key aspects of a child or young person's history are reliably and more consistently recorded and reported on for monitoring and evaluation purposes. This review will include ensuring the essential elements with Looking After Children (LAC) are captured more effectively.

Children and young people's progress including education is individually monitored and evaluated through LAC.

Data regarding the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care cannot currently be disaggregated from that of the general school population.

The Practice Partnerships Group and the Substitute Care Committee meet regularly to review and improve mechanisms for meeting the needs of children and young people in care.

CREATE COMMENTS

Australian Capital Territory, in 2004 it was noted that your progress in addressing the foundational areas of action had slowed during a period of significant reform of child protection including the separation of government departments. However, it was acknowledged that you were building on a strong base through the:

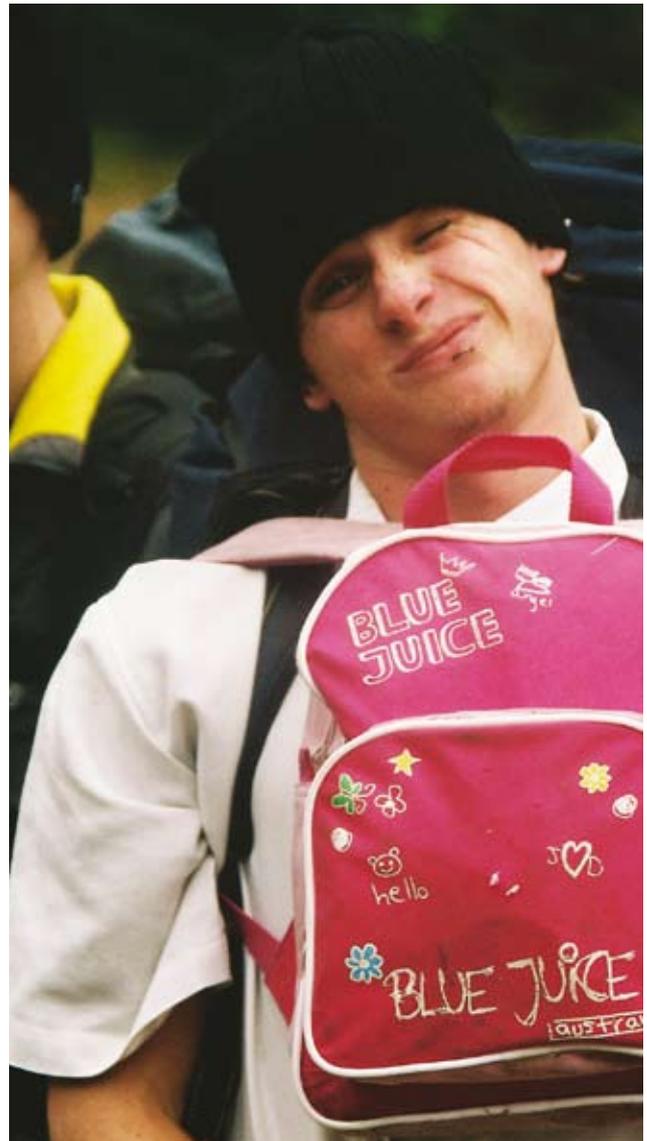
- Development of a Memorandum of Understanding between Community Services and Education, and the development and distribution of guidelines to staff in 2004
- Requirement that all children and young people in care have an Individual Learning Plan.

Since 2004, your further progress is acknowledged. Progress includes:

- Developing a cross government department service coordination framework
- Providing ongoing training of education staff
- Improving access to education, training and employment programs for young people in care who reside in detention
- Developing Turnaround
- A review of data collected and data collection processes within DHCS.

However, areas identified as requiring action in 2004 do not appear to have been addressed including:

- Developing the capacity to report on the number and proportion of children and young people in care with Individual Learning Plans
- Putting in place the regional structures and processes to support implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding
- Identifying and reporting on key aspects of educational participation and performance.



No data was provided on the number and proportion of children and young people with ILPs. You had previously advised that the planned audit of Individual Learning Plans had been delayed due to the broader child protection reform. No comment was made about the planned audit in your current response. It is important that the audit be progressed in 2006 to identify compliance and assess the quality of plans.

Your Schools in Communities program is acknowledged. However, as noted in 2003 and 2004, CREATE remains concerned that without appropriate structures and processes at a local level, staff and key stakeholders will not be supported in implementing the Memorandum of Understanding and related initiatives for the benefit of children and young people in care.

Your review of data collected and data collection

processes is noted. However, it is unclear what progress has been made in reporting on DET data on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care. In 2004, you advised that data regarding the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care could not be disaggregated from the general school population. Further information is sought on whether your capacity in this area has changed.

Overall Australian Capital Territory, whilst you continue to build on a solid policy and practice framework, your reported progress since 2004 is slow. Further work is required to effectively monitor, evaluate and review the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care, and to assess the impact of your policies and practices and inform continuous improvement.

Queensland

The following is Queensland's response to the actions for moving forward identified in the 2004 Education Report Card:

- Action 1: Adopt appropriate goals and objectives that promote educational participation and performance of children and young people in care
- Action 2: Ensure that all children and young people in care have an individual education plan
- Action 3: Establish local or regional collaborative structures and processes to promote achievement of the goals and objectives
- Action 4: Establish mechanisms that monitor, evaluate and review achievement of outcomes
- Action 5: 'Establish a collaborative research agenda' is reported on in the section 'Overview of Performance'.

Goal and Objectives

The Partnership Agreement: Educating Children and Young People in the Care of the State (2004) articulates the responsibilities of Child Safety and Education in educating and supporting children and young people in care. It commits to working together to improve the life chances of children and young people in care, to proactively plan for their educational success and to provide a seamless, child-focused service delivery model to meet their educational needs. The Catholic and Independent School authorities have adapted the agreement for use in their schools.

The outcomes of the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) Inquiry Protecting Children: An Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Foster Care have led to the establishment of the Department of Child Safety and, amongst other things, has reinforced the need for a whole of government approach to child protection and the delivery of enhanced outcomes for children and young people in care.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between

the respective departments was signed in 2005, which reaffirms the principles of the Partnership Agreement and outlines arrangements for administering funding to enhance education support services for children and young people in care. These funds are distributed to schools to support the strategies identified in a child's Education Support Plan. The MoU also recognises the inclusion of the Catholic and Independent Education sectors in the education support planning process. Education has developed processes to ensure that these sectors have access to the funds. A total of \$7.1m is available for education support of children in care (this includes funds administered by Child Safety for personal assistance at home and funds administered by Education for support services and programs in schools).

The goals and supporting objectives of the Education Support Funding Program are reflected in several supporting documents produced and distributed to school and field staff to assist the implementation process. These include fact sheets for schools, child safety officers and carers to inform them about Education Support Plans, and an Information Pack with Guidelines for the funding program. Information workshops were held for staff of the two departments.

Individual Education Plans

A central feature of the Partnership Agreement is that all children and young people in care are required to have an Individual Education Support Plan (IESP). The support plan is a formal written document that identifies the student's educational goals, the strategies and the resources required to achieve these goals, who is responsible for implementing the strategies, and processes for monitoring and reviewing the plan. Following initial advice from Child Safety, the school principal is responsible for ensuring that a child or young person's support plan is finalised within one month of enrolment. The child or young person's progress toward the specified goals is actively monitored and the plan is formally reviewed at least once per year.

As at the commencement of Semester 2, 2005 there were 2612 children and young people in the care of the state enrolled in state schools. Of these, 63% (1643) had a completed IESP and 36% (947) had an

IESP under development, whilst 1% (22) had not had an IESP commenced. Of the 225 children and young people in care enrolled in Catholic schools, 71% (159) have an IESP completed, and in Independent schools 100 students in care have an IESP in place (total number of students in care not stated).

Individual Education Support Plans are monitored, reviewed and updated at a local level. IESPs for children and young people in state schools or a summary of these are submitted to the relevant Regional Executive Director and the outcomes of implemented strategies and expenditure of allocated funds are measured. A database is being established to record the relevant information to assist in identifying the achievements and outcomes for children and young people who have an IESP.

Collaboration

At a regional level, both departments have established senior level contact points and processes to promote collaboration and to ensure that policies and practices to support children and young people's education are implemented. Education has established contact points for policy, reporting harm and developing IESPs.

Child Safety Interagency Therapeutic and Behaviour Support Services have been established to enhance mental health, behaviour support and participation in education for children and young people in care through a collaborative interdepartmental response (involving Child Safety, Education, Disability and Health departments).

A Statewide Partnership Taskforce involving senior officers of Child Safety and non-government agencies has been established to ensure that the safety and well being needs of children and young people are being met. Education is also represented on the Taskforce.

Child Safety Directors in twelve government departments including Education meet regularly to facilitate a more coordinated response to child protection and service delivery across agencies.

Achievement of Outcomes

Each region is required to develop a Regional Education Support Action Plan and report on the performance and outcomes for students in care at

the end of 2006.

Data from the standard skills test for those in grades three, five and seven tests are collected, analysed and reported upon. There continue to be issues in matching data between the two departments and Education Department data relates only to children and young people enrolled in State schools.

The performance of the Education department in respect of improvements in educational outcomes for children and young people in care will be reported and reviewed on a six monthly basis by the Executive Management Team, and annually through reports to Community Services, Parliament and CREATE.

Education is upgrading its student management database, which is expected to be completed by 2008-09. It will enable an extensive record of all students attending stage schools and the details of additional supports provided to them while at school. It is anticipated that all data relevant to children and young people in care including data relevant to their IESPs will be collected in this new student management system. It will greatly enhance data management processes, improving secure and efficient data matching against records maintained by other agencies.

Systemic achievements are monitored through the implementation of the Partnership Agreement, particularly the Education Support Plan and related resources, implementation of policies and procedures and their effect on students in care, and the rate of enrolment, participation, retention and achievement of those students.

CREATE COMMENTS

Queensland, in 2004 your work in establishing and implementing a Partnership Agreement resulted in substantial progress being made in each of the foundational areas of action identified. Progress included:

- Supporting implementation of the Partnership Agreement through the development of materials for key stakeholders including information for children and young people in care
- Adapting the Partnership Agreement to cover children and young people in care attending non-government schools
- Developing and implementing Individual

"It's about forming a good network for kids, and making a study plan and goal for the year. Carers having regular contact with teachers so they know what is going on in the family home. Help carers have more involvement with teachers."

Rhi, 17

Education Support Plans

- Collecting and reporting data on the number and proportion of children and young people in care with an IEP
- Continuing to identify and report on the educational performance of children and young people in care in respect to years 3, 5 and 7.

Since 2004, your further progress is acknowledged including:

- Allocating of \$7.1m for educational support of children and young people in care
- Developing a MoU outlining arrangements for administering funding to enhance education support services for children and young people in care
- Extending reporting of IEPs to non-government schools
- Establishing senior level contact points and processes are regional level
- Developing specialist support services for children and young people in care
- Developing monitoring requirements including reporting against Regional Education Support Action Plans
- Refining data collection systems to improve the scope and quality of data.

Your ongoing work in developing the capacity to record and monitor IEPs is commended. In your response for the 2004 Report Card you indicated

that a review of the support plan process was being undertaken. You have not indicated the outcomes of this review. It is important that the IEP process be evaluated and that, as part of this, the views of children and young people about their involvement and the impact of their involvement is sought.

Your work in developing the capacity to report on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care is acknowledged and highly commended. However, you have highlighted a range of issues in reporting specific data related to children and young people in care that effect the accuracy and scope of that data. Further information is sought on what steps are being taken to improve data matching between departments and what steps, if any, can be taken to collect relevant data in relation to children and young people in care who attend non-government schools.

In addition, your comments on data collection in relation to specific aspects of educational participation and performance including enrolment, suspension and exclusion, performance on entry to care and over time, rates of exit at school leaving age and retention are noted. Further information is sought on what steps can be taken to collect this data for children and young people in care as part of standard data collection (e.g. suspensions and expulsions) or as part of an evaluation or research project (e.g. educational performance over time and rates of retention). Your reported work in this area appears to have slowed.

Your Partnership Agreement was established in 2004 following a review led by the then Minister for Education. No information was provided about plans to review and evaluate the Agreement. It is important that Agreements such as this are evaluated to inform continuous improvement.

Overall Queensland, you have continued to build on your efforts and achievements of previous years, and have established a strong policy and practice framework. Further progress is required to effectively monitor, evaluate and review the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care. This will enable you to better assess the impact of your policies and procedures and inform continuous improvement.

Northern Territory

The following is Northern Territory's response to the actions for moving forward identified in the 2004 Education Report Card:

- Action 1: Adopt appropriate goals and objectives that promote educational participation and performance of children and young people in care
- Action 2: Ensure that all children and young people in care have an individual education plan
- Action 3: Establish local or regional collaborative structures and processes to promote achievement of the goals and objectives
- Action 4: Establish mechanisms that monitor, evaluate and review achievement of outcomes
- Action 5: 'Establish a collaborative research agenda' is reported on in the section 'Overview of Performance'.

Goal and Objectives

A primary goal of the strategic framework of the Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS) 'Building Healthier Communities' is to 'give kids a good start in life', whilst the primary goal of the DHCS substitute care program is to 'provide quality care appropriate to the needs of the child'.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training's (DEET) goal of improving the educational participation and performance of students at risk is reflected in its Student Enrolment, Attendance and Retention Strategy. Whilst the strategy is not specific to children and young people in care there are initiatives that would support any student who was in need of support.

DEET provides guidance to staff through the Schools Policy Handbook. This includes reference to issues of enrolment and attendance, responsibilities under the Community Welfare Act, discipline procedures,

recognition of students with special needs and service provision to them.

A process to formulate a service agreement between DHCS and DEET has commenced with sign off expected later in 2006. This is the initial step in developing a partnership agreement to provide a more coordinated approach to managing the wellbeing and health needs of students that impact on their learning. In addition, the two departments are continuing to work together to develop the capacity to match data and analyse health and wellbeing impacts on educational achievements.

Individual Education Plans

The educational needs of children and young people in care are regularly assessed and monitored through the baseline assessment soon after entry to care, the ongoing child in care assessment and case review.

Schools develop Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students on the basis of assessed need. All plans are reviewed at least annually, with most reviewed every six months. Schools also develop Individual Behaviour Plans and Health Care Plans to support students with specific needs. The move to middle school years will see all students in Years 7 to 9 developing Individual Learning Plans.

No data was provided on the number and proportion of children and young people in care who have an IEP (through education) or a current Child in Care Assessment.

Collaboration

The Healthy Educated Territorians Memorandum of Agreement between DHCS and DEET provides a framework for cooperation that aims to build more effective resources and education services through shared solutions; maximise available resources to improve health and education outcomes; enable shared action on agreed priority areas.

The two departments are in the early days of a project to develop a Parenting Support Plan with a focus on shared responses to children and families referred to Student Services.

Collaboration occurs in responding to the needs of students and their schools who require support with managing behavioural issues. This can include Individual Support Assistants who work one on one with students in the school for an agreed period of time. Secondary schools have student welfare teams that work to suit the needs of their community and students.

In addition, close collaboration occurs in relation to children and young people in care with high support needs who attend school irregularly or have been excluded. Educational packages are tailored to the young person's needs.

Achievement of Outcomes

DEET has implemented the Student Administration Management System (SAMS), a system for tracking students within the education system. Information relating to enrolment, suspension, expulsion, performance and retention of the government school population is collected. Whilst the data can be aggregated for the whole school population it cannot be aggregated for specific groups such as children and young people in care. DHCS collects and records information about children and young people in care on individual records. There is currently no information management capacity to track outcomes of individual clients over time.

The DHCS Information Management Group has prioritised the need to explore opportunities to combine information with other program areas to promote better outcomes for children and young people in care.

The annual Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP) consists of literacy and numeracy tests in years 3 and 5 (and 11-16 year olds in non-urban schools) to provide information for reporting against national benchmarks. As yet, there has been no attempt to correlate the results of these tests against children and young people in care.

CREATE COMMENTS

Northern Territory, in 2004 your progress in addressing the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care was limited. A continued reliance on generalist policies and processes with no capacity to identify

and report upon what effect they have on children and young people in care was noted.

Since 2004, progress has been made in developing a Service Agreement between your two departments and sign off is expected in 2006. We note that this is a step toward developing a Partnership Agreement to provide a more coordinated approach to protection and care, health and education. In addition, work is continuing to develop the capacity to match data and analyse health and wellbeing impacts on educational achievements.

The 2003 and 2004 Report Cards noted your policy requirement that every child and young person in care has a case plan of which education is a component and the development of individual education plans for students on the basis of assessed need. In light of research findings, we suggested that a review of these approaches be undertaken to see if it was sufficient to promote, prioritise and improve the education of children and young people in care. However, your response for this Report Card does not address this area. Further, no data was provided on the number and proportion of children and young people in care who have a case plan or those with an Education IEP.

Your response outlines a range of agreements and protocols between DHCS and DEET. It remains unclear what collaborative structures and processes are in place to coordinate these activities, to monitor children and young people in care's access to them, and to evaluate their impact on the education of children and young people in care.

It is noted that you are unable to identify and report on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care. However, your work in developing a protocol for data collection and management is noted and encouraged. Further information is sought on when you anticipate that this work will be completed and data will be collected.

Overall Northern Territory, your progress in establishing a policy and practice framework for the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care is limited. Your work on developing a Service Agreement and a protocol for data collection and management are important steps. However, significant work remains on addressing the foundational areas of action.

Western Australia

The following is Western Australia's response to the following actions for moving forward identified in the 2004 Education Report Card:

- Action 1: Adopt appropriate goals and objectives that promote educational participation and performance of children and young people in care
- Action 2: Ensure that all children and young people in care have an individual education plan
- Action 3: Establish local or regional collaborative structures and processes to promote achievement of the goals and objectives
- Action 4: Establish mechanisms that monitor, evaluate and review achievement of outcomes
- Action 5: 'Establish a collaborative research agenda' is reported on in the section 'Overview of Performance'.

Goal and Objectives

The Children and Community Services Act 2004 (enacted March 2006) includes reference to education in identifying those matters that must be taken into account in determining a child's best interests. In the context of participation, the Act requires the provision of information about significant decisions that affect the lives of children and young people including decisions about the provision of education and training services.

A Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care has been drafted in consultation with 115 children and young people who were in, or leaving care. The first principle emphasises the rights of children and young people to be treated like their peers who are not in care, and given support and encouragement to maximise their potential particularly in relation to their health and education. A working party has been formed to finalise this Charter.

Further, the Act includes provision for supporting young people leaving care who are moving to independent living. Support and services include assisting young people to access education and training services amongst other provisions.

The Department for Community Development (DCD) is updating its Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in Care. It is intended that this will include goals and policy objectives for improving the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care

Goals and supporting objectives relevant to improving educational participation and performance of children and young people in care are inherent in the Department of Education and Training's (DET) core purpose and are articulated within the principles of the Curriculum Framework (1998) and the Students at Educational Risk Policy and Guidelines (1998).

A range of system wide initiatives have been developed and funded to improve learning outcomes for all students, particularly those at educational risk and those students with diverse learning needs. These initiatives including improving services for students with disabilities and learning difficulties, supporting schools management of students with challenging behaviours, and countering bullying and promoting child protection strategies. Students in care who are at educational risk also have access to these initiatives.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between DCD and DET outlining Protocols for Education Enrolment and Support Procedures for Children and Young People in Out of Home Placements is nearing completion. Finalisation has been delayed due to imminent changes to DET enrolment procedures and associated documentation, and the need to reflect the Children and Community Services Act 2004. A protocol for enrolment and support of children and young people who reside in SAAP services was completed in February 2006.

Information and guidelines for staff will be developed for the endorsed SAAP related protocol and the Out of Home Placement Protocol when finalised. New enrolment procedures to be implemented in government schools will ensure that when a child in

care is enrolled, any special needs and intervention requirements for that child will be identified.

Individual Education Plans

DET develops Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for all children and young people deemed to be at educational risk. Not all children and young people in care are considered to be at educational risk. The IEP takes into account the child's current level of achievement and the steps that will be undertaken to ensure the child makes academic progress relative to his or her ability.

DCD requires a Provisional Care Plan to be developed within seven days and a Care Plan to be developed within 28 days of a child or young person coming into care. The Assessment and Planning System (APS) requires that seven dimensions of a child's wellbeing including education be addressed in care planning. This includes assessing children and young people's educational needs, participation and performance and the level and type of support required. Care Plans are to be reviewed at regular intervals not exceeding 12 months.

DCD have thirteen Education Officers who provide services for children and young people in care who are at educational risk. Education Officers identify and review education goals for the child or young person and where no DET IEP is in place, work collaboratively with DET staff to develop appropriate strategies.

At this stage no data is available on the number and proportion of children and young people in care who have a Care Plan or an IEP.

It is anticipated that DCD new information system ASSIST D will be implemented in 2007/08. It will enable reporting on the number of children and young people who have a current care plan.

In 2004 an Education Assessment Form was sent to those schools in WA where there were children and young people in care. Comment was sought on level of achievement, their social interaction with peers and other issues seen as important. A report on the outcomes (2005) indicated a response rate of 83% and found that 58% of children and young people

were considered by their teachers to be working at a successful, highly successful or satisfactory standard. The remaining 42% were deemed to be at educational risk. The majority of these children and young people already had an Education IEP in place. Some of the children and young people without IEPs are likely to be involved in specialised programs in Education Support Schools.

The survey is to be repeated annually and to this end data was again collected towards the end of 2005, with results available later in 2006. The project will continue in 2006 allowing children and young people to be tracked over time.

Collaboration

A statewide Interagency Working Party involving DET, DCD, CREATE and the University of Western Australia was established in 2002 to ensure that the goals and support policy objectives for the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care are targeted towards addressing individual needs. It has resulted in improved collaborative relationships.

There are no specific regional structures or processes at this stage.

Local initiatives have been developed in two Districts. The South West Metropolitan Children and Young People in Care Advisory Committee seek to enhance the quality of life for children in care including promoting education, employment and training opportunities. Reading the Country is a unique alternative education project in Broome, developed through the collaborative efforts of government departments, traditional owners, Aboriginal organisations, youth groups and services, and local schools and employment agencies. The program targets young people (including those in care) aged between 12-25 years who have experienced alienation from the school system and aims to reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour, truanting and involvement in the justice system. The program is run by the Yawuru people in conjunction with TAFE.

Achievement of Outcomes

Data on educational participation and performance

of children and young people in care is not currently available.

Previous legislation prevented the release of information identifying children and young people on orders (in care). The Children and Community Services Act 2004 does not have the same restriction.

As previously indicated, the education survey has provided a snapshot of the education of children and young people in care and related issues. This survey will be repeated annually and 2005 data will be provided when it is available. This will enable outcomes to be tracked over time. However, the data set does not provide comparison with the general population.

DCD's new client information system 'ASSIST', which is currently under development, will provide the capability to capture information on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care.

The Data Linkage Project: developmental pathways to health education and delinquency outcomes in Western Australian children: a holistic approach to inform early intervention will allow the linkage of DCD data and data from other sources, including DET. It is anticipated that analysis of the linked data would allow a broader understanding of the pathways and experiences of children and young people in care and give a clearer picture of their educational outcomes in comparison to the general population. A Memorandum of Understanding is currently being established between the two departments. Data linkage and analysis will commence in the second half of 2006.

CREATE COMMENTS

Western Australia, in 2004 your continued your efforts and progress in laying the foundations for improving the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care were noted. However, your progress against the five foundational areas of action was identified as slow. Progress included:

- Establishing an Interagency Steering Committee

- Drafting a protocol for children and young people at educational risk and work on developing an agreement about the provision of education services
- Developing local collaborative initiatives
- Conducting a survey of the educational achievement, social interaction with peers, and other issues relevant to the education of children and young people in care
- Developing appropriate data collection systems.

We congratulate you on your efforts in reforming legislation and policy in relation to the protection and care of children and young people and implementing the Children and Community Services Act 2004 this year. The drafting of a Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care and updating of the Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in Care are understood to promote a focus on the education of children and young people in care. In addition, the leaving and after care protocols and procedures include a focus on education, employment and training.

Your progress in developing a MoU outlining Protocols for Education Enrolment and Support Procedures for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care Placements is commended. It is noted that delays have occurred in finalising the MoU. Further information is sought on when you anticipate that it will be completed and your plans for implementation.

The local collaborative initiatives identified are commended. Further information is sought on proposed regional structures and processes to support effective implementation of your MoU.

Your approach to care planning for all children and young people in care, the role of Education Officers in providing services to children and young people at educational risk, and the development of IEPs for students at educational risk was noted in the 2004 Report Card. In light of research findings, we suggested that a review of this approach be undertaken to see if your approach was sufficient to promote, prioritise and improve the education of children and young people in care. However, your response for this Report Card does not fully address



this area. The survey of the education of children and young people in care may be useful in this regard but, on the outcomes reported, do not provide a full picture. Further, no data was provided on the number and proportion of children and young people in care who have a case plan, whilst some data was provided on children and young people in care with an IEP.

The development of a process to survey the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care in 2004 and 2005, and your intention to undertake this annually, is highly commended.

It is noted that you are unable to identify and report on standard educational participation and performance data for children and young people in care. Your ongoing work in developing the ASSIST D system

and the Data Linkage Project is acknowledged. It is critical that you further develop the capacity to identify educational participation and performance outcomes and to monitor, evaluate and review the impact of your policies and practices.

Overall Western Australia, you continue to make progress in establishing a policy and practice framework for improving the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care. This will be consolidated by finalisation and implementation of the MoU. Further work is required to effectively monitor, evaluate and review the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care. This will enable you to better assess the impact of your policies and procedures and inform continuous improvement.

South Australia

The following is South Australia's response to the following actions for moving forward identified in the 2004 Education Report Card:

- Action 1: Adopt appropriate goals and objectives that promote educational participation and performance of children and young people in care
- Action 2: Ensure that all children and young people in care have an individual education plan
- Action 3: Establish local or regional collaborative structures and processes to promote achievement of the goals and objectives
- Action 4: Establish mechanisms that monitor, evaluate and review achievement of outcomes
- Action 5: 'Establish a collaborative research agenda' is reported on in the section 'Overview of Performance'.

Goal and Objectives

On a broad level, the goal of improving the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care is included in Keeping them Safe, the government's priorities for reforming the child protection system. In particular, there is a commitment to significantly improving the standards of care for children and young people who have been placed under the care and guardianship of the Minister. This includes ensuring that they have 'opportunities to do their best in school'.

In its strategic plan, Families SA has as one of its goals 'Children and young people's developmental needs in all life domains are assessed and addressed.' Specific initiatives under this goal that relate to educational outcomes for children and young people in care include:

- Developing of agreements and data exchange processes between government

departments to improve planning and targeted service responses

- Participating in the interagency working group to develop individualised and group responses and to monitor education outcomes
- Assessing, evaluating and reporting on educational support packages
- Establishing IT systems to track children and young people in care at risk of or disengaged from the education system.

Improved educational outcomes are being achieved through the Rapid Response: Whole of Government Services initiative. Rapid Response aims to ensure that children and young people in care receive the necessary supports and services to ensure their health, education and wellbeing. It includes a specific across government strategies to achieve the goal of improved educational outcomes for children and young people in care. Although not specifically named a 'partnership agreement', Rapid Response details the partnership relationship between both agencies and respective roles and responsibilities for improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care.

Families SA and the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) are also considering developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two departments. In addition, work is currently underway between the two departments to review and update the MoU Habitual and Persistent Non Attendance of Students.

Practice guides have been developed to ensure Families SA staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in relation to IEPs, Change of School and Placement and Suspension and Exclusion

Families SA District Centres and Operational Units are developing business plans that detail steps to achieve the goals and objectives as detailed in the Keeping them Safe report.

Individual Education Plans

Following a trial of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) undertaken in 2004, IEP procedures were refined in

2005. All children and young people are required to have an IEP. An extensive IEP implementation process is currently underway.

A range of practice guidance and information for participants has been developed and distributed to support the development of IEPs.

An extensive training program Improving Educational Outcomes for Children and Young People under Guardianship was delivered between May and December 2005. The training involved over 1500 DECS and Families SA staff, carers, alternative care service provider staff, and staff from other agencies involved in supporting the IEP development process e.g. CAMHS.

The timetable for implementing IEPs is:

- Children and young people under guardianship to 18 order in state schools – to be completed by the end of term 1, 2006
- Children under guardianship or custody 12 months orders in state schools – to be completed by the end of term 4, 2006
- Other – private schools, TAFE, kindergartens – still to be determined.

The IEP describes agreed strategies to address the educational needs of a child or young person in care. IEPs are to be developed within one month of a child or young person going into care or enrolling in the school and be reviewed every year. A Student Support Group is to be formed for each student. Members of the support group should include the child or young person, parent, carers, statutory case manager, principal or nominee, teacher, and other relevant support personnel.

Focus groups have been held with staff of both departments to identify the factors that are assisting and inhibiting the IEP development process. Both departments have provided staff specifically dedicated to providing a feedback link for carers and staff.

There is no data available on the number and proportion of children and young people in care with an IEP due to implementation only commencing at the beginning of Term 1, 2006. It is anticipated that data should be available soon after the end of the first term.

Collaboration

Families SA have employed regionally based Program and Service Development Officers. One of the functions of these positions is the development of collaborative links with education to address educational issues for children and young people in care. The officers are currently taking responsibility for facilitating the regional guardian network meetings at which systemic issues are identified and addressed.

Some regions have interagency behaviour management groups comprising staff of both departments. These groups meet to discuss individual student issues as well as systems level educational issues. In addition, Education has regionally based Student Inclusion and Wellbeing Coordinators. It is anticipated that they, along with the Community Service Program and Service Development Officers, will play an integral role in the further development of regional structures and processes.

At a local level, this collaborative commitment will be implemented through the development and review of each student's Individual Education Plan.

In addition, the Social Inclusion Unit, a section of Premier and Cabinet has developed a School Retention Action Plan has cross agency committees to oversee specific initiatives, which report every three months to the Board of the Social Inclusion Unit and through the Across Government Guardianship Steering Committee to Cabinet.

Achievement of Outcomes

A data matching process was undertaken in 2002, 2003 and 2005 between Families SA and DECS. This enabled assessment of children in care against measures such as attendance, basic skills tests in numeracy and literacy, and suspension and exclusion data.

The data matching process has been funded over four years through the Social Inclusion School Retention Action Plan. The funding is targeted to providing intensive services responses to 10% of children and young people under guardianship most at risk.



A senior information analyst was appointed in September 2004 to provide leadership, program management and support for the joint department data analysis project in the context of the Social Inclusion initiatives. The outcome of this project was the publication Statistical Report: Children in Care 2004 (a copy was provided).

Data on educational participation and performance of children and young people in care is collected by DECS. Some difficulties have been encountered in the data collecting and cross-matching process between the two departments due to the incompatibility of data systems. DECS has updated its data collection system to enable the identification of children and young people in care. Since January 2006, this information is routinely added to the system by school based staff at the time of the child or young persons is enrolled. Families SA staff inform DECS staff of a child or young persons care status and provide their file number for inclusion in the DECS data system.

CREATE COMMENTS

South Australia, in 2004 advances in respect of each of the foundational areas of action were identified. Progress included

- Implementing reforms of the child protection system and broader based social inclusion initiatives
- Developing policy frameworks and commencing the development of a partnership

agreement to ensure the best educational outcomes for children and young people in care

- Committing to developing Individual Education Plans for all children and young people in care and your initial work in conducting a trial
- Developing and/or identifying key regional positions with responsibility to develop collaborative links and identify and address educational issues
- Taking initial steps to match data between departments and using this information to inform policy and program developments
- Identifying steps to enhance data collection and analysis and thereby improve the quality of data.

Since 2004, your further progress is acknowledged including:

- Release of Rapid Response including the partnership relationship between Families SA and DECS, their respective roles and responsibilities, and specific strategies to achieve improved educational outcomes
- Developing a comprehensive framework for individual education planning including relevant guidelines, resources and training, and commencing implementation
- Enhancing regional and local collaboration including Regional Guardianship Networks
- Updating data collection systems to improve the quality of information about educational

"Probably just a bit more understanding. It seems that teachers have a bad attitude about it (care). You say that you live in a refuge and they treat you differently when they know you are homeless and live in a refuge. Just more understanding and more acceptance, and help when we're in trouble."

Ella, 17



participation and performance

- Reporting data on educational participation and performance.

You indicated that the option of developing a MoU between Families SA and DECS would be explored. We support the development of a MoU that provides a broader policy and practice framework for the intent and actions specified in Rapid Response.

Your work so far appears to have focused on the education of children and young people in care who are attending state run schools. Consideration needs to be given to engaging independent schools in discussion about the education of children and young people enrolled in these schools in the future. Further information is sought on your work in this area.

In relation to the implementation of IEPs, further information is sought on how you plan to assess the quality of the plans including seeking feedback from

children and young people.

Your efforts in enhancing the quality of the data collected on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care is highly commended. Further information is sought on how this information will be used to inform continuous improvement in policy and practice across your respective departments.

Overall, South Australia, you have continued to build on your efforts and achievements of previous years, and have established a strong policy and practice framework. This will be further enhanced following implementation of IEPs for all children and young people in care. Your capacity to effectively monitor, evaluate and review the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care is improving. Further work in this area will enable you to better assess the impact of your policies and procedures and inform continuous improvement.



Barriers & Strategies

States and Territories were asked to identify barriers to the education of children and young people in care and strategies developed to address them. Responses are organised under the five areas of change identified by the Social Exclusion Unit (2003) as required to improve the education of children and young people in care.

Greater stability – so that children and young people in care do not have to move home or school so often

Barriers

- Events prior to placement (the trauma, disruption and instability which may be associated with entering care). (WA, Tas)
- The high proportion of child coming into the CEO's care with complex and special needs including special education needs. (WA, Qld)
- Instability of care arrangements (home and placement) leading to changes in school. (NSW, WA, Tas)
- Maintaining and support children and young people in care. (Vic)

Strategies

- Enhance number and range of placements available including recruitment of additional

foster carers and caseworker support for foster carers (NSW, WA)

- Establish an Intensive Treatment and Placement Support Services to provide professional home based care, intensive placement support and an enhanced treatment program for children in the CEO's care who have high risk behaviours and complex needs. (WA)
- Cooperation to ensure that if a change in care placement (or a school placement) is necessary, that both departments will make every effort within available resources to ensure continuation of the care placement, or to maintain enrolment at the school where the student has established relationships, if it is in the best interests of the child or young person (NSW)
- Promoting permanency emphasising early decision making for children in care about the realistic possibility of restoration or the need to actively pursue an alternate permanent placement, including adoption (NSW)
- An Enhanced Treatment Team of six psychologists to provide a specialist focus on trauma treatment for children and young people prior to entering care and for those who have experienced abuse in care. This team

will provide an expert assessment framework for children entering care and offer early and ongoing therapeutic interventions as required. (WA)

Less time out of school – longer in education

– help with school admissions, better access to education with more support to help children and young people to attend school regularly and to stay on after school leaving age

- Release of Rapid Response including the partnership relationship between Families SA and DECS, their respective roles and responsibilities, and specific strategies to achieve improved educational outcomes

Barriers

- Lack of targeted educational resources for the most disadvantaged children and young people in care. While Education provides many targeted resources to children and young people who are educationally disadvantaged, there is also a need for resources specifically targeted to students in care, especially Aboriginal children and young people. (SA)
- Lack of opportunities to further educational interests: Many children and young people who have come into care have not previously had the benefit of a broad range of educational opportunities. (SA)
- The levels of children and young people under guardianship who are suspended and excluded. (SA)
- Absenteeism of students. (SA)
- Retention rates of students and vocational education: Young people in care are identified in the literature as having poor school retention rates and poor take-up of further education options. (SA)
- Children and young people who fail to attend school on an ongoing basis are at risk of disengagement and not achieving academic success. (Vic)
- Access to alternative education settings can be influenced by the capacity and the geographic proximity of those programs. (Vic)
- Students are linked to and attend a particular school. If a student ceases to attend for an extended period or be enrolled at that school there are limited means available to Education to locate them. (Vic)
- Relevance of the education experience to the

individual. (Tas)

- Lack of educational recognition: Our society places a high priority on sporting prowess to the exclusion of educational and other achievements. (SA)

Strategies

- Improved information exchange, referral protocols and joint case planning and review to improve educational participation of children and young people in care. Areas for improved collaboration identified include those related to key transition points in schooling – enrolment, change of schools, and transition from primary to secondary school. (NSW)
- Outlining responsibilities of departments and authorised carers in those circumstances where transfer or enrolment at a new school is required, where school attendance is an issue and where suspensions may occur or expulsion is under consideration. (NSW)
- Developing specific programs for the most disadvantaged children and young people in care identified as being most at risk of low levels of engagement and participation at school. (SA)
- A small group of staff coordinate the Social Inclusion funded Assertive Management of Educational Needs for Young People under the guardianship of the Minister initiative. The program provides identified young people with additional educational supports and resources to help them meet or surpass state average retention rates. (SA)
- Around 20 young high-risk Aboriginal people aged between 12 and 18 and their families are supported and re connected through Warriappendi school (DECS) and Metropolitan Aboriginal Youth Team (Families SA) to educational opportunities. The young people participate in collaborative case management which is culturally accountable and engages family support. (SA)
- Alternative education programs have been developed by community service organisations that provide out of home care services to children and young people in care and the range of programs being offered is increasing. There are approximately twenty alternative settings statewide. (Vic)
- Providing opportunities to further educational

interests. (SA). Two young people under guardianship were among ten SA students who travelled to England in December 2005 to take part in a high-profile, historic science program. The girls – both science enthusiasts – joined eight other local teenagers from disadvantaged backgrounds who participated in the Royal Institute of Science Christmas Lecture Series. The trip was instigated by Thinker in Residence Susan Greenfield, who visited Adelaide in 2005. (SA)

- DECS has initiated and leads, and Families SA participates in, a suspension, exclusion and expulsion advisory group which is reviewing the impact of DECS policy and procedures in the area of behaviour management strategies as they contribute to the broader objective of student engagement. (SA)
- Families SA and DECS are currently reviewing the across agency Memorandum of Understanding – Habitual and Persistent Non Attendance of Students. (SA)
- TAFE SA has agreed to waive fees for young people currently or previously under guardianship up until 25 years of age. Anecdotal evidence from TAFE suggests that a significant number of young people have taken up this offer and are currently enrolled in a range of TAFE subjects. (SA)
- The Department funds Achiever Awards and the Ida Curtois Scholarships each year to young people up to the age of 25 years who have been in the CEO's care and are currently enrolled in the first year of post secondary study or training. Instigated in 1990, the awards provide financial assistance and encouragement to young people. (WA)
- Planning and support to enable a successful transition through the post compulsory years to further education, training or secure employment. (Vic)
- Offering students non-academic and flexible educational programs in the final two years of secondary school. (Vic)
- Collaboration between mainstream schools and TAFE providers to provide a flexible program that meets the needs of students in out of home care under 15 years of age. (Vic)
- Providing teachers with professional learning and relevant resources to differentiate the curriculum and ensure real inclusion of all students. (Tas)

- Educational engagement and/or re-engagement of young persons aged 15-17 under the Education and Training Reforms for the Future to achieve a Senior Certificate or Certificate III vocational qualification. (Qld).
- A celebration of the academic achievements of some young people under guardianship was held at Government House during December 2005. The Minister for Families and Communities as well as the Minister for Education and Children's Services were among those at the morning tea to congratulate more than 50 young people in State care who completed stage one (Year 11) or two (Year 12) of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE). (SA)

Help with schoolwork – more individual support tailored to the child or young person backed by more training for teachers and social workers

Barriers

- Lack of training for education staff to support students who have been abused or neglected. (SA)

Strategies

- Seeking referrals for educational assessment, support or assistance for a child or young person in care. (NSW)
- Identify the scope of existing services and programs in regions to provide educational support and assistance to children and young people in care. (NSW)
- Provide specific funding for short term supplementary educational support and assistance to children and young people in care where a need is identified. (NSW)
- DECS are currently undertaking an extensive training program for all school counsellors to assist them gain knowledge and skills in supporting and managing children/young people who have been abused or neglected. The SMART (strategies for managing abuse related trauma) program is being facilitated by the Australian Childhood Foundation and includes the participation of Families SA and other agencies involved in working with children and young people who have been abused or neglected. (SA)
- Education Officers work collaboratively with children and young people in the CEO's

care, carers, case managers and teachers to improve access, participation and achievement. Education Officers provide a range of educational support services for children and young people in the CEO's care including:

- educational needs assessments
- assessments to ensure that students are in the most appropriate educational placement
- individual tutoring and/or other additional resources. (WA)
- Anti-bullying initiatives. (WA, Vic)
- Implementing a Positive Behaviour Support Program across schools. (Tas)
- Additional teacher aide support for academic, mentoring and social skills programs. (Qld)
- Better Behaviour – Better Learning initiative to strengthen school discipline and student learning. (National Safe Schools Framework). (Qld)

More help from home to support schoolwork – by giving carers better training in children's education

Barriers

- Commitment of social workers and carers to improving educational outcomes for children in care: While there are many positive examples of social workers and carers working together to improve the educational attainment of children in care, the literature also identifies that they do not always place a high priority on educational engagement and achievement. (SA)

Strategies

- Provision of training sessions throughout the state to address the issue of the commitment of social workers and carers to educational attainment. (SA)
- Information and support to improve carer's ability to assist with homework and ensure they have a realistic understanding of each child's educational level and support needs. (WA)

Improved health and well-being – with teachers, staff from across government departments, non-government service providers and carers all working together in the interests of the child

Barriers

- Information sharing between agencies: Families SA has previously been criticised for not providing adequate information to schools regarding the educational needs of the child/young person or any other information required to enable the school to assist the child/young people achieve to their full educational potential (SA)

Strategies

- Development of information sharing and client privacy policies and procedures for children and young people in care. (SA)
- Information and training for staff, carers, other government and non-government agencies to ensure appropriate information exchange to enable needs to be identified and services to be provided to children and young people in care. (SA)
- Implementation of Mind Matters to enhance student health and wellbeing. (Tas)

Other Factors

The Northern Territory reported that there are a number of barriers unique to the NT that inhibits the capacity of government agencies to provide effective services to the general population and address the needs of specific groups. These barriers include the small population base and the widespread distribution of population over a vast geographic area. They are reflected in extra costs of delivering services, a lack of economies of scale and fewer opportunities for private sector providers. In addition, a high percentage of the NT population is Indigenous, 70% of whom live in remote communities. This diversity adds complexity to the provision of mainstream services.

The NT government is promoting a whole of government approach to address service delivery challenges that are barriers to improving the extreme levels of disadvantage.

Further, the NT highlighted the need to recognise the importance of children's education outside of a formal, structured setting, and the need for children and young people to learn about their culture and retain cultural continuity. Steps are being taken to ensure that all students in NT schools have access to relevant and high quality Indigenous languages and culture programs.



Overview of Performance

It is now five years since the release of CREATE's first Education Report Card in 2001. Five foundational areas of immediate action required to support and improve the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care were identified and have been reported on since 2002. The five areas of action are:

- **Action 1:** Adopt appropriate goals and objectives that promote educational participation and performance of children and young people in care
- **Action 2:** Ensure that all children and young people in care have an individual education plan
- **Action 3:** Establish local or regional collaborative structures and processes to promote achievement of the goals and objectives
- **Action 4:** Establish mechanisms that monitor, evaluate and review achievement of outcomes

- **Action 5:** Establish a collaborative research agenda.

In that time, the education of children and young people in care has received considerable attention across Australia. State and Territory governments clearly acknowledge the critical role that education plays in the lives of children and young people in out of home care and have continued their efforts to promote educational participation and performance.

Since 2004, all jurisdictions have made some progress against one or more of the five areas of immediate action. However, in overall terms, progress against the five areas of immediate action over the past five years has been slow. In brief:

- Victoria, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory, and Tasmania have established and implemented a Partnership Agreement outlining their goals, roles and responsibilities and strategies. South

Australia has established a Rapid Response framework that seeks to provide children with access to whole of government services including education, and is considering the need for a specific Partnership Agreement between Community Services and Education. New South Wales has signed off a Partnership Agreement and is finalising an implementation plan. Western Australia has an agreement drafted. Northern Territory will finalise a Service Agreement between Community Services and Education this year and see this as a step toward developing a Partnership Agreement

- Victoria, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and South Australia require all children and young people in care have an Individual Education Plan that brings together people and resources to identify and respond to their needs. New South Wales indicated that it will develop Individual Education Plans for children and young people with complex needs (it is not clear if, over time, this will be extended to all children and young people in care). Western Australia, Northern Territory and Tasmania address education within its broader assessment of needs and planning processes. In each of these jurisdictions Education Plans are developed for those children and young people considered being at educational risk.
- Victoria and Queensland can identify and report on the number and proportion of children and young people in care who have an Individual Education Plan. South Australia and New South Wales have the capacity to identify and record this data and will do so in line with implementation of Individual Education Plans. Western Australia has some capacity to report this via an annual survey of schools. Tasmania reported that Education is working on capturing this data in their new structure. In 2004, the Australian Capital Territory reported that steps were being taken to enable identification and reporting. However, no update was provided this year. Northern Territory reported that they are unable to identify and collect this information.
- Queensland, South Australia and Victoria can identify some aspects of the educational participation and performance of children

and young people. Western Australia has developed a survey that is conducted annually within schools. New South Wales reported that it has some capacity in this area but further clarification of that is required. Western Australia and Tasmania reported that steps were being taken to enable identification and collection of relevant data. The Northern Territory indicated that this was a priority for its Information Management Group but it is unclear as to what steps are being taken. In 2004, the Australian Capital Territory indicated that it was taking steps to address this area. However, no update was provided this year.

- Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia provided some data on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care.

Three states – Queensland, Victoria and South Australia - can claim to have made significant progress against each of the five foundational areas identified for immediate action. Progress in Western Australia and more recently in New South Wales is encouraging. A tabulated overview of State and Territory progress in responding to the five foundational actions is attached (Appendix One).

These five areas of action are referred to as foundational because they are essential to identifying and addressing the educational needs of children and young people in care. Together they provide a framework for developing policies, services and practices that address barriers and improve the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care.

In 2004, CREATE renewed its call for all State and Territory governments to double their efforts and sought a commitment that the five foundational areas of action be addressed by 2005. Unfortunately, this has not been achieved. No jurisdiction can claim to have addressed all of the foundational areas. The progress of each State and Territory against the five foundational areas and the tasks that still need to be addressed have been identified earlier in CREATE's comments on each jurisdiction's responses. After five years of reporting, this is disappointing. For children and young people in care this is unacceptable.

CREATE will increase its efforts to encourage and work with States and Territories to address this.

CREATE calls on each State and Territory to review their progress and make specific plans to address the five foundational areas of action. Following the release of this Report Card, CREATE will seek a formal response from each jurisdiction and will organise a meeting with each jurisdiction to jointly discuss the pathways to improving the educational performance and participation of children and young people in care.

We acknowledge the complexities of the issues involved and understand that the commitment and effort of all stakeholders is required if education, as a gateway to opportunity, is to be opened to children and young people in care.

CREATE again calls on all foster care associations, non-government peak bodies, Commissions for Children and Young People, media, and other special interest groups across Australia to strengthen their efforts in promoting the education of children and young people in care with their members.

The education of children and young people in care must be a priority if we are to truly make a difference in their lives.

CREATE looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with States and Territories and other stakeholder groups in building on the progress made and actioning the recommendations for moving forward made in this report.

Policy

Government policy provides the framework for acknowledging and responding to the educational needs of children and young people in care and improving their participation and performance. It provides leadership and a framework for practice.

All State and Territory Community Services and Education departments have goals that promote the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care, and contribute to the maximisation of their life opportunities. In some instances, there is still a tendency for education departments to refer to generic policies that relate to all children and young people or to those 'at risk'

as opposed to policies that specifically address the needs of children and young people in care. In these instances, it is important that jurisdictions assess the impact of generic policies on children and young people in care.

The extent to which policy is reflected through the formation of statewide committees or groups, the development and implementation of partnership agreements, and in guidance to staff is variable.

Most States and Territories have established a forum or committee comprising senior officers of respective departments to promote the education of children and young people in care. In Western Australia a forum with representation from key stakeholder groups has been established that effectively models collaboration at a statewide level.

At the point of our reporting on education last year, Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory had partnership agreements between relevant government departments. Western Australia had drafted an agreement, whilst New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory indicated that they had commenced work on agreements.

This year, New South Wales and South Australia have developed agreements, and Tasmania has further updated its agreement following changes within Education. The Northern Territory has developed a Service Agreement, whilst Western Australia is amending its draft agreement in line with changes to child protection legislation and changes in Education.

In Queensland, the Partnership Agreement has been adapted for non-government schools and individual education planning has been implemented in these schools. Victoria had previously identified the need to work with non-government schools to ensure that all children and young people in care are covered by agreements and their requirements. However, they did not provide an update this year. Other jurisdictions are encouraged to consider this issue and initiate discussions.

Victoria is in the process of tendering a process and impact evaluation of its Partnership Agreement. It is critical that all jurisdictions undertake an

evaluation of their Agreements to inform continuous improvement.

CREATE encourages States and Territories to finalise and implement partnership agreements as a matter of urgency.

CREATE believes that State and Territory governments should:

- Clearly define their policy objectives;
- Establish requirements and provide guidance to service providers;
- Provide an appropriate level of resourcing to achieve the objectives;
- Establish robust monitoring, evaluation and review strategies to assess achievement of the objectives; and
- Use this information to inform continuous improvement in policy and practice.

Individual Education Plans

The educational needs of children and young people in care must be assessed and addressed if they are to maximise their potential and access life opportunities.

This requires the development, documentation and review of individual education plans involving the child or young person themselves, their parent, carers, staff of community service organisations, staff of schools and staff of the Community Service department. The focus of planning should not be focused on identifying and addressing problems and, therefore, only be developed for children and young people in care who are experiencing difficulty. Research indicates that the educational performance of children and young people who are doing well prior to entering care can deteriorate after entry to care (Evans, 2004). The focus should be on maximizing potential and, therefore, all children and young people in care should have an Individual Education Plan, which is reviewed regularly and as circumstances change.

In 2004, three States and Territories, Victoria, Queensland, and the Australian Capital Territory, reported they require all children and young people

in care to have an Individual Education Plan, whilst Tasmania indicated they required those in long term care to have a plan. Western Australia, South Australia and Northern Territory indicated that they required plans for children and young people at risk educationally. Most States and Territories indicated that they provide additional support and resources to students who are experiencing educational difficulty.

This year South Australia reported that they are implementing Individual Education Plans for all children and young people in care and New South Wales reported that they would be developing plans for children and young people with complex needs. Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory reported that education planning is undertaken as part of its general assessment and planning processes for children in care.

All States and Territories require that children and young people in care have a 'statutory case plan' and, in most instances, a care or placement plan for those children and young people who are placed in out of home care. Increasingly, planning is designed to assess and address each of the dimensions of children and young people's care and developmental needs including education. States and Territories have developed tools to assist staff in this process. In all but three States and Territories, the Looking After Children Program (a United Kingdom initiative) has been adopted and implemented.

It is acknowledged that assessment, planning and review processes should be integrated to ensure a holistic response to the child or young person, minimise disruption and promote effective coordination of efforts across stakeholders and agencies. However, this should not occur at the expense of a comprehensive response to a child or young person's educational needs, or any other dimension of their care and development needs.

Further, it is noted in United Kingdom's *'Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care'* (2000) that the *Looking After Children* records were to be revised and it was envisaged that the Personal Education Plan would become a subset of those records. Victoria previously

indicated that it has redeveloped the *Looking After Children* documentation to drive compliance with its Partnership Agreement.

Experience and research in the United Kingdom indicates that case plans and statutory reviews have not proved sufficient in promoting and prioritising the education of children and young people in care. In the light of this, it is recommended that Western Australia, Northern Territory and Tasmania review this approach and evaluate whether it is sufficient to promote, prioritise and improve the education of children and young people in care.

Similarly, in those jurisdictions where Education develops individual education plans for students at educational risk, it would be useful to review this approach evaluate whether it is sufficient to promote, prioritise and improve the education of children and young people in care. Such a review should also look at the level of integration between Education and Community Services in their work with those children and young people, and, where necessary, opportunities to enhance this.

Queensland and Victoria provided data on the number and proportion of children and young people in care with an IEP. South Australia has commenced implementation and indicated that it has the capacity to report this information in the future, whilst New South Wales has also indicated that it has the capacity to report on this once it implements the MoU.

Victoria reported that at November 2005 approximately 55% of children and young people in care (over 800) who were enrolled in school had a student support group established. The proportion of children and young people in care who were enrolled in school that had an IEP has varied across the reporting period, from 43% in November 2003, 54% in June 2005 and 45% in November 2005. Victoria advised that it will seek to increase the percentage of children and young people in care with these supports as a priority.

Queensland reported that at the commencement of Semester 2, 2005 there were 2612 children and young people in the care of the state enrolled in

state schools. Of these, 63% (1643) had a completed IESP and 36% (947) had an IESP under development, whilst 1% (22) had not had an IESP commenced. Of the 225 children and young people in care enrolled in Catholic schools, 71% (159) have an IESP completed, and in Independent schools 100 students in care have an IESP in place (total number of students in care not stated).

However, a recent report on the views of children and young people in care produced by the Children's Guardian (2006) indicates that of 728 children and young people aged 9-18 years, 28.9% stated that they had an Education Support Plan, 19.5% stated that they did not have a plan, and 47.5% stated that they did not know if they had a plan or not. Further, of those that said they did have an Education Support plan, 45% reported that it was helpful, whilst 55% reported that it was not helpful.

CREATE's survey of children and young people in care indicated that of those attending school, who responded to this question (n=247), 35 (14.2%) indicated that they had an Individual Education Plan, whilst 48 (19.4%) indicated that they did not have one and 164 (66.4%) did not know. The proportion of children and young people reporting that they have an IEP is lower than that found in the 2004 Report Card when 28.4% (65) children and young people indicated.

There is a significant difference between State and Territory reports on education planning and the number of children and young people surveyed who do not identify with having one or do not know that they have one. In the case of Queensland, this is supported by the report of the Children's Guardian. As stated earlier, as a key enabling process to help to ensure more positive educational outcomes of those in care it is concerning so that few children and young people are aware of plans. Further to this, the proportion of children and young people who identify with having a case plan is also low. Less than half of respondents indicated that they had a current case plan, with seventy participants indicating they did not have a current case plan, and eighty unsure of whether a case plan had been conducted. The reasons for such low levels of recognition of both Individual Education Plans and case plans need to

be further investigated by jurisdictions. The views of children and young people must be sought as part of this process.

At this stage, no jurisdiction has reported that they have undertaken a formal review of the process or formal evaluation of Individual Education Plans to examine their appropriateness and effectiveness. Hayden (2005) reports on a study of the quality of Personal Education Plans for looked after children (in the UK) via perceptions from key actors and through an assessment of the content and quality of a sample of completed plans. The findings showed:

- Although social services staff and teachers were critical of specific aspects of PEPs, they have helped to raise the profile of the educational needs of looked after children in the area studied.
- They have provided a forum for social work and education professionals to meet in the interests of particular children.
- Key problems relate to practical issues: ensuring social workers and teachers feel able to fulfil their expected roles; making the system focus on meeting the needs of children as well as practitioners; difficulty in meeting specified timescales; more meaningful, constructive and sensitive involvement of children in the process of producing and reviewing PEPs.

It is recommended that all jurisdictions develop and implement formal review and evaluation processes.

CREATE believes that all children and young people in care should have an Individual Education Plan, which promotes their educational participation and performance, and maximises their potential.

Individual education plans should involve:

- Assessment of their educational needs, participation and performance within one month of them coming into care;
- Development and documentation of their individual education plans within two months of them coming into care;
- Identification and allocation of resources required to implement their plans and achieve the outcomes sought;
- Six monthly documented reviews of their education plans;

- Transitional planning when children and young people are changing schools; and
- The participation of the child or young person and that of key people in their lives including family, direct carers, teachers and other relevant education personnel, statutory services providers and non-government service providers, at all stages of the development, implementation and review of their plans.

In those jurisdictions where educational assessment and planning is integrated within broader processes, it is essential that the education dimension is a subset of the overall plan and record. It is also essential that these plans be subject to review to ensure that they are sufficient to promote the education participation and performance of children and young people in care.

CREATE believes that all States and Territories should develop a capacity to monitor and report on this including the number and proportion of children and young people in care who have a case plan.

Further, in those jurisdictions that require Individual Education Plans (for children and young people at educational risk) it is also essential that these plans be subject to review to ensure that they are linked with their overall care planning and are sufficient to promote the education participation and performance of children and young people in care. Jurisdictions should also develop a capacity to identify and report on the number of children and young people in care who have such a plan.

Bullying

As noted earlier in this report, consistent with previous Report Card findings, bullying was a major issue for children and young people in care. Sixty-four percent of participants reported having experienced bullying at school, whilst almost one in five (19.2%) reported that bullying occurred 'most of the time' or 'always'. Research from the UK indicates that children and young people in care are more likely to be bullied than the general student population (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003).

The issue of children and young people in care being bullied requires continuing attention. Further consideration is required of the factors that make children and young people in care particularly vulnerable to bullying. There is also a need to review



policies and strategies for preventing and responding to bullying and consider their application to, and impact on, children and young people in care.

As noted by some States and Territories in the last Report Card, individual education support and planning has an important role to play in establishing relationships with children and young people in care that strengthen opportunities to identify and address issues such as bullying.

Collaboration

The effective implementation of government policy in respect of the education of children and young people in care requires collaboration between government and non-government service providers and other stakeholders at all levels.

The establishment of statewide groups provides leadership in collaboration and, in some instances, models effective collaboration in developing and planning the implementation of policy initiatives such as Partnership Agreements. At the same time, the requirements that children and young people have Individual Education Plans and guidelines that promote the involvement of all stakeholders provide a focus for collaboration on a case-by-case basis.

However, these policy and practice intentions will not just happen without structures and processes at a regional and/or local level that can drive the implementation of policy and support effective practice.

States and Territories have developed a range of approaches to promoting collaboration at regional and/or local level including

- Nominating Regional Contact Officers or appointing Program Development positions (Victoria, Queensland and South Australia);
- Holding professional development sessions and workshops (Victoria and South Australia);
- Distributing information resource kits (Victoria);
- Developing information sharing protocols (Queensland);
- Developing educational awareness packages for stakeholders (Queensland);
- Developing integrated programs across government departments (Australian Capital Territory and Queensland);
- Appointing specialist teachers or education officers (New South Wales and Western Australia);
- Establishing inter-departmental committees (Tasmania); and
- Developing broader school based programs (Australian Capital Territory).

A combination of these approaches is required if States and Territories are to have an impact on the current educational participation and performance of children and young people in care.

At this stage only Victoria and South Australia appear to have established (or identified) collaborative structures and processes at a regional level that are clearly linked to their goals and Partnership Agreements.

The Northern Territory previously indicated that due to the small number of children and young people in care, collaboration at the individual case level was more appropriate and effective. This approach can

still be supported by clearly identifying roles and responsibilities and mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing that these are being appropriately performed and that the outcomes sought are being achieved.

CREATE believes that State and Territory governments need to establish local and/or regional collaborative structures and processes to promote the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care. These will provide avenues for champions of children and young people in care to identify and break down barriers to education. These structures and processes should be subject to periodic review to ensure that they are appropriate and effective.

Evidence based practice

Policy and practice in responding to the educational needs of children and young people in care must be informed by performance information at both the individual and group level. Without performance information there is no way of knowing how an individual child or young person is progressing and whether additional supports and interventions provided are having an impact. Similarly, at the group level, without performance information there is no way of knowing whether government policies, programs and strategies are having an impact on children and young people in care.

The publication of data on educational participation and performance is important in terms of promoting public awareness of the issues facing children and young people in care, in informing other stakeholders of issues and trends and enlisting their support in improving performance, and for the purposes of research. Further, and most importantly, it is essential in terms of public accountability. Governments are accountable to the public in respect of their policies, the expenditure of public funds and the outcomes achieved. With an increased emphasis on public awareness the potential for stigmatising children and young people in care due to lower than average educational performance in comparison to their peers can be addressed proactively. The United Kingdom Department of Health (2002) provides a useful discussion of the collection and use of data to improve outcomes for children in care.

All jurisdictions collect and analyse a range of data about the educational participation and achievement of children and young people at a State and Territory level. They also collect and analyse a range of data about children and young people in care. However, these two different sources of data need to be matched to identify and report the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care.

In 2004, only two states - Queensland and South Australia - indicated that they could match data between government departments on some aspects of the educational participation performance of children and young people in care and compare this to that of their peers. This year Victoria has also indicated that it has matched data. There is some indication that New South Wales can match data but further clarification is being sought. Western Australia cannot match data at this stage, but is undertaking an annual survey (through schools) of the education of children and young people in care.

Whilst the situation is slowly improving, jurisdictions do not know or only have a limited idea of how children and young people in care, as a group, are faring in terms of their attendance, participation and performance at school. In turn, this means that jurisdictions have no or limited means of identifying the impact of their policies and programs on the education of children and young people in care. This is clearly not acceptable.

All jurisdictions have undertaken an initial examination of the issues involved in matching information held by their respective Community Services and Education departments. Further, all jurisdictions have indicated that they have made, or are making, changes to their information systems to make data matching possible.

Queensland, Victoria and South Australia provided a summary of this information for this Report Card. Western Australia also provided some information from its survey.

Issues in matching data between departments and the limitations of data systems are understood. However, developments over the past five years across jurisdictions indicate that considerable

experience and knowledge has been developed. Opportunities exist to promote further positive development by sharing this experience and knowledge between jurisdictions.

CREATE believes that all States and Territories must prioritise the matching of data on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care.

Information on the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care is required at a number of levels:

- Regional
- State or Territory
- National

The information required includes:

- enrolment in school
- attendance at school including rates of suspension and/or expulsion
- results including performance on entry to care and changes over time
- retention
- qualification on exit
- pathway/destination on exit.

Each State and Territory should define the forms of care to be included for data collection purposes in line with their child protection legislation and policy.

Some of the information identified as required may be best collected through evaluation and research. Each State and Territory should identify what data can be collected through data matching as part of their standard data collection, and what information is best collected through evaluation and research.

For the purpose of national reporting, CREATE recommends that a common definition inclusive of children and young people on custody or guardianship orders is adopted.

At a national level, agreements already exist that establish benchmarks for literacy and numeracy that provide a capacity to report on and compare educational outcomes for children and young people in care across States and Territories.

All States and Territories have referred to their commitment in principle and/or participation in the National Child Protection and Support Service (NCPASS) educational outcomes project. This is detailed in the next section.

Research

The role of research is critical to improving our knowledge and understanding of educational participation and performance of children and young people in care.

In 2002, it was reported that a proposal had been made by the NCPASS Data Group to measure educational outcomes of children and young people on custody or guardianship orders across States and Territories. This proposal was endorsed and funded by the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council (CSMAC) in 2003. The project is being undertaken through the NCPASS Data group and is led by Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. All States and Territories referred to their commitment in principle and/or participation in the NCPASS educational outcomes project. The project requires collaboration with state educational departments in each jurisdiction.

The educational outcomes project will be conducted in two stages. Stage 1 will include children in years 3, 5 and 7 who have been on a guardianship or custody order for one year or more. The educational achievements of this group, as measured by standard national testing, will be compared with relevant state and national benchmarks. The analysis will take into account the socio-demographic profile of children on orders. Stage 2 will track changes in the educational outcomes for those children who were included in Stage 1 and who remain on orders continuously for 2 years. Changes in the aggregate outcomes for children on orders will be compared with aggregate outcomes at both the state and national levels. It is understood the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is currently preparing a report on Stage 1 of the project and a draft is being reviewed by jurisdictions. The report is expected to be referred to the Community Services Ministers Advisory Council later in 2006.

CREATE has strongly supported the Educational Outcomes Project and has highly commended NCPASS for the development of the proposal and Ministers for its approval and funding. CREATE believes that this research is a significant milestone in promoting the educational participation and performance of children and young people in care

It should be noted that CREATE does not believe that State and Territory involvement in this project replaces the need to collect and analyse educational participation and performance data at a state or territory level. They have different purposes and the scope of data collection is considerably greater at a state or territory level than that at a national level.

A number of jurisdictions identified research projects or strategies specific to children and young people in care and their education:

Western Australia

Government departments and the Telethon Institute of Child Health Research are undertaking a data linkage project partly funded by the Australian Research Council. One component is the de-identified linking of out of home care and educational data. The analysis will allow a broader understanding of the pathways and experiences of children in care and will, in particular, give a better picture of the educational outcomes for children in care and how they compare with the rest of the population. This is a three year project that commenced in 2004.

South Australia

South Australia indicated that a proposed collaborative research project with the Australian Centre for Child Protection on the education of children and young people in care would be broadened to the national context.

New South Wales

The Department of Community Services reported that in 2005 it half funded a PhD scholarship in a joint initiative with the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University for a project that will examine ways to improve the educational outcomes of children and young people in care.

Queensland

Education's research strategy encourages researchers to consider researching:

- Teachers, principals and the school administration staff knowledge of the impact of child safety reforms on educational outcomes for children in care
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of child protection policies and their responsibilities and their use of such policies
- Effectiveness of education support plans in producing improved educational, social and behavioural outcomes of students in care.

Education has undertaken negotiations with Griffith University around a research proposal considering 'School to work transition for young people in the care of the State'.

National

A number of jurisdictions identified the National Plan for Foster Children and Carers 2004-2006 that will promote a national research plan and agenda for children in foster care and uniform data collection across jurisdictions.

New South Wales advised that Community Services Ministerial Advisory Council is collating research projects and priorities across jurisdictions as a means of improving information co-ordination of research activities and identifying opportunities for potential collaboration between Commonwealth, State and Territory jurisdictions.

States and Territories also reported on a range of other studies that whilst not specific to children and young people in care may have a positive impact on their education and/or well being.

CREATE continues to encourage States and Territories, and the Commonwealth to explore avenues for developing a national research capacity in out of home care and in particular the education of children and young people in care. Further, CREATE supports the recommendations of the Audit of



Table 12: State and Territory Progress as Identified in 2006 Report Card

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	ACT	Tas	NT
Goal and Objectives								
Stated	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Partnership Agreement	Y	Y	Y	Drafted	Y	Y	Y	N - p
Guidance to staff	N-p	Y	Y	N-p	Y	Y	Y	-
Individual Education Plans								
Requirement	Y - complex	Y	Y	At risk - CP	Y	Y	Y - LTC - At risk	At risk - CP
Number/Proportion	N-p	Y	Y	Ltd	N - p	N	N	N
Current	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	N	-
Collaboration								
Statewide	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Regional	N-p	Y	Partial	N - ad hoc	Y	Partial	Partial	Case basis
Monitor, Evaluate, Review								
Data collection	Y	Y	Y - p	Y - p	Y	N - p	N - p	N - p
Reporting data	N	Y	Y - p	Y - p	Y	N	N	N
Evaluation - PA	Y-p	Y-p	N	-	Y-p	-	-	-
Research								
National	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
State or Territory	Y	N	Agenda	Y	Y	Broader	Broader	Broader

p = in progress

LTC = long term care

cp = case plan

Australian Out-Of-Home Care Research (Cashmore and Ainsworth 2004) that include the development of a national research agenda, the funding of a national longitudinal study, the quarantining of funds to support child welfare research, and the establishment of a data warehouse with research access to de-identified case level data. The ongoing efforts of CAFWAA to promote out of home care research and the development of national research priorities and action are also acknowledged and supported.

CREATE supports the active involvement of children and young people in research. A review of research on the education of looked after children (Goddard, 2000) identified a lack of studies seeking the educational experiences of children and young people in care. However, since that time a number of education related studies have examined or included the views of children and young people in care (National Youth in Care Network, 2001; Martin and Jackson, 2002; Finkelstein et al., 2002; Who Cares Scotland, 2004; Harker et al., 2003; Harker et al., 2004; Coleman, 2004; Uniting Care Burnside, 2004). Only one of these, Uniting Care Burnside is Australian.

A bibliography Education and Out of Home Care is available from the CREATE website.

Barriers to educational participation and performance

In responding to the five foundational areas of action, it is essential that States and Territories identify and address the barriers to children and young people in care participating and achieving in education.

As detailed in the previous section of this report, States and Territories identified a range of barriers to

the education of children and young people in care and strategies that are intended to address these. They are organised under the five areas of change identified by the Social Exclusion Unit (2003) as required to improve the education of children and young people in care.

- **Greater stability** – so that children and young people in care do not have to move home or school so often
- **Less time out of school – longer in education** – help with school admissions, better access to education with more support to help children and young people to attend school regularly and to stay on after school leaving age
- **Help with schoolwork** – more individual support tailored to the child or young person backed by more training for teachers and social workers
- **More help from home to support schoolwork** – by giving carers better training in children's education
- **Improved health and well-being** – with teachers, staff from across government departments, non-government service providers and carers all working together in the interests of the child

In identifying and addressing barriers to educational participation and performance these areas of action are complementary to, and build on, the five foundational areas of action.

It is important that States and Territories review their policy and practice in respect of these areas, further develop integrated strategies that address the identified barriers and monitor the impact of those strategies.



Education for children and young people in care can be a place of safety, support and growth. Too many children and young people in care do not have this experience. Our challenge is to create a best practice system that nurtures the individual and responds to the collective needs of children and young people in care.

The children and young people in care throughout Australia invite you to continue to take the challenge and build on the progress achieved so far.

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About the CREATE Foundation

CREATE Foundation (formerly known as the Australian Association of Young People in Care, AAYPIC) and its networks in each State and Territory of Australia, was established in 1993 to provide a consumer voice for children and young people in care from within the care system.

During this time CREATE has effectively provided this voice, initiated and participated in major policy and practice forums in the care of children and young people in this country.

Most importantly, the direct participation and input by children and young people has provided governments and agencies with new solutions to address widespread and systemic problems in the care system of Australia.

CREATE runs programmes and services to:

- Promote and enhance the connection between children and young people in care and their communities
- Build upon the inherent skills and resources of children and young people in care so that they can improve their own lives, and those of others in care
- Change the care system from the inside out through promoting the participation of children and young people in care, and providing best practice advice to the out of home care sector

CREATE is committed to the safety and well being of children and young people in care.



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