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CREATE REPORT CARD 2013

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for CREATE Foundation



**SPECIAL  
EDITION**

A National Study

# Young Person Report Card



**INSIDE...**

What's a YP RC?  
Facts & figures

- All about you
- Quotes from kids
- Read about important issues

# what is the report card?

**A bit like a report card from school, CREATE's Report Card helps to tell us how the care system is doing on different "subjects" of the lives of children and young people in care.**

The best people to tell us how the care system is working are those who are experiencing it. Children and young people in care (CYPIC) are the experts!

A survey was developed using the areas of a framework called Looking After Children (LAC), as well as the Outline of National Standards for Out-of-Home Care that the Australian government wrote. The Report Card survey asked questions about:

- Stability and security
- Participation
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues
- Planning
- Health needs
- Education
- Social/recreational opportunities
- Connection with family
- Identity development
- Relationships with significant people
- Preparation for transitioning to independence
- Interactions with the Department

A researcher who has done a lot of work with CREATE, Dr Joseph McDowall, developed the survey with 146 questions and also wrote the full version of the Report Card (this can be found on the CREATE website).

Children and young people in care between 8 and 17 years old were invited to participate in the survey. The survey could be completed online, or by speaking with a CREATE worker on the phone or face-to-face. We wanted to make sure as many children and young people as possible had the opportunity to take part.

CREATE surveyed over 1000 children and young people (CYP) across all states and territories (except WA). The Report Card is based on the voices of these children and young people.

**All siblings should be able to contact each other unless there is a strong reason not to. I have brothers in care I have never seen or met.**

*Female, 10 years*

# results

## Placement Issues

83% of children and young people (CYP) surveyed were “quite happy” or “very happy” with their current placement. But they were not as happy about their placement history. Many said they had a lot of placement changes.

There was an average of about six placements per person in SA, TAS, and NT.

NSW had an average of four places per person, and 70% of the CYP in NSW had only one or two placements.

The most placement changes happened for kids in residential care and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children and young people.

## Feels like Home

CYP who said they felt “at home” in their placement were more likely to say they were happy there.

Things that people said made them feel at home included having a good relationship with the other people in the house (carers, siblings, workers) and feeling loved and cared for. This was more important to them than material possessions (having stuff like toys, computers, etc).

A few young people talked about needing to have their own space and privacy and that they didn’t always have it in their placement.

Free time seemed to be more available to CYP in NSW and TAS where a greater proportion have over 15 hours



**83%** respondents reported feeling  
“Quite”  
or “very  
**happy”**  
in their current placement

per week of free time. QLD and ACT didn't have much free time at all. We don't know why there is such a big difference.

Internet use by kids in care was low compared to the rest of Australian kids not in care. Internet access was especially low

in TAS and NT. Girls and young people in residential care were more likely to go on social networking sites like facebook. Boys and younger respondents liked to play online games.



## Communication with Departments

The relationship kids in care have with their case workers is really important in helping them in the care system. It's also important in helping them for their future. It would be great for each young person to have only one or two case workers during their whole time in care. In NSW and VIC, 40% of those who did the survey had only one or two workers. CYP in kinship care also had lower numbers of workers.

One third of all the CYP who completed the survey have had five or more caseworkers during their time in care.

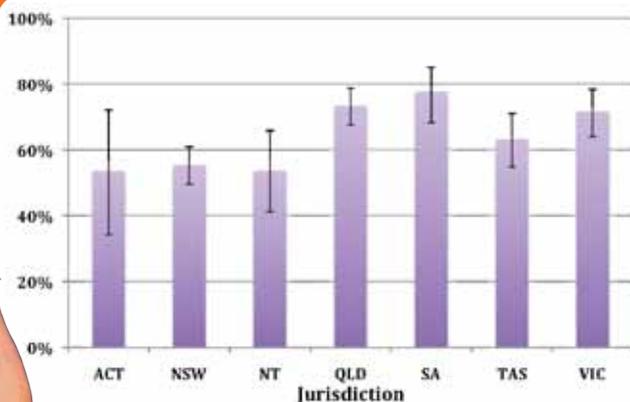
40% said they couldn't contact their caseworker as often as they wanted to. They said they thought the workers could be more helpful in meeting the needs of kids in care. A lot of the survey respondents said they wanted workers

to do things they promised to do.

Children and young people didn't think attending formal meetings with caseworkers and carers was a high priority. Right now, this is the place CYPIC will have the most opportunity to have a say about their future. CREATE thinks the departments should look at different ways to make meetings something more CYP want to participate in.

Less than 30% of CYP knew anything about their case plan. Case plans are mandatory in every state and territory and are meant to be developed with the child or young person. Only one third knew something about what was in their case plan. Participation in case plans was really low in NSW and TAS.

### Facts and Figures



Percentage of CYP who said they could see their case worker as often as they want



**My CSO is really good, more like a big sister. She doesn't tell me what to do; she guides my decision-making. I've had her for 2.5 years.**

*Female 17 years*



## Personal History and Culture

Half of the CYP surveyed had an idea of why they were in care. But that the other half didn't know very much. Those in permanent care knew the most about what was happening, but Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants had very little information given to them.

Almost one quarter of participants said they did not know much about their family history. This means they didn't know much about the background of their family and where they came from.

Sadly, 30% of ATSI children and young people said they had not much connection to their community. A lot of the ATSI kids in TAS said this, and also that there wasn't anyone who talked to them about their culture.

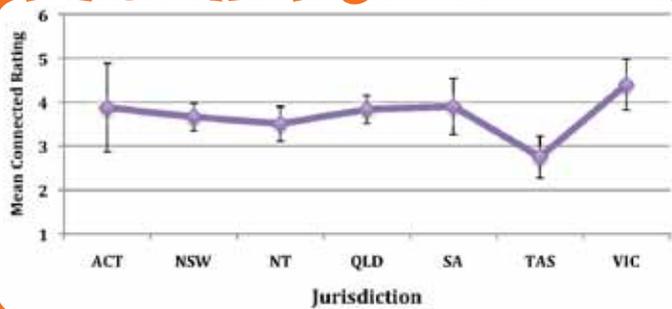
The National Standards talk about how Indigenous children and young people should have a cultural support plan. This would help them be connected to their community. Only 10% of the ATSI children and young people who did the survey were aware of a cultural support plan developed for them.

CREATE believes it's really important kids are connected to their community and know about their culture and family history. The government should have some programs in place to make sure this happens. Of course, children and young people should have a choice about if they want to participate, but options to learn about culture should be available.

*Average of how connected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CYP felt with their culture in each state/territory.*

Note. Connected rating scale used:  
1: Not at all connected;  
6: Very connected.

### Facts and Figures



## Contact with Family and Friends

A lot of other research out there says it's really important that siblings are in the same placement together. It can even help them do better at school and in how they behave than if they were separated.

36% of CYP who did the survey said they had brothers and sisters in care and living in different placements. We call these "split" placements if they are away from all siblings. Over half of the kids in SA who answered the survey question were split from their siblings, and was also really common with kids placed in residential care.

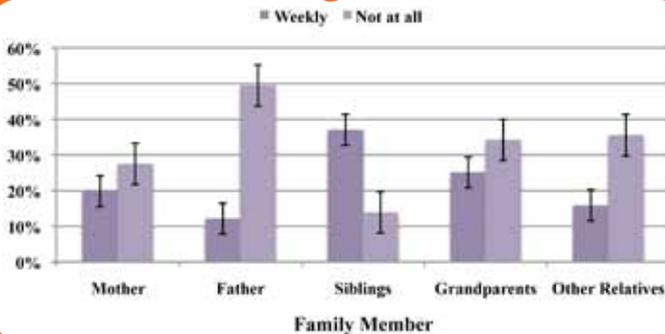
Siblings were the most contacted birth family members, even when they were in split placements. Mothers were seen a lot too, but not as much in QLD. Children and young people in kinship

and permanent placements didn't see their birth parents as much.

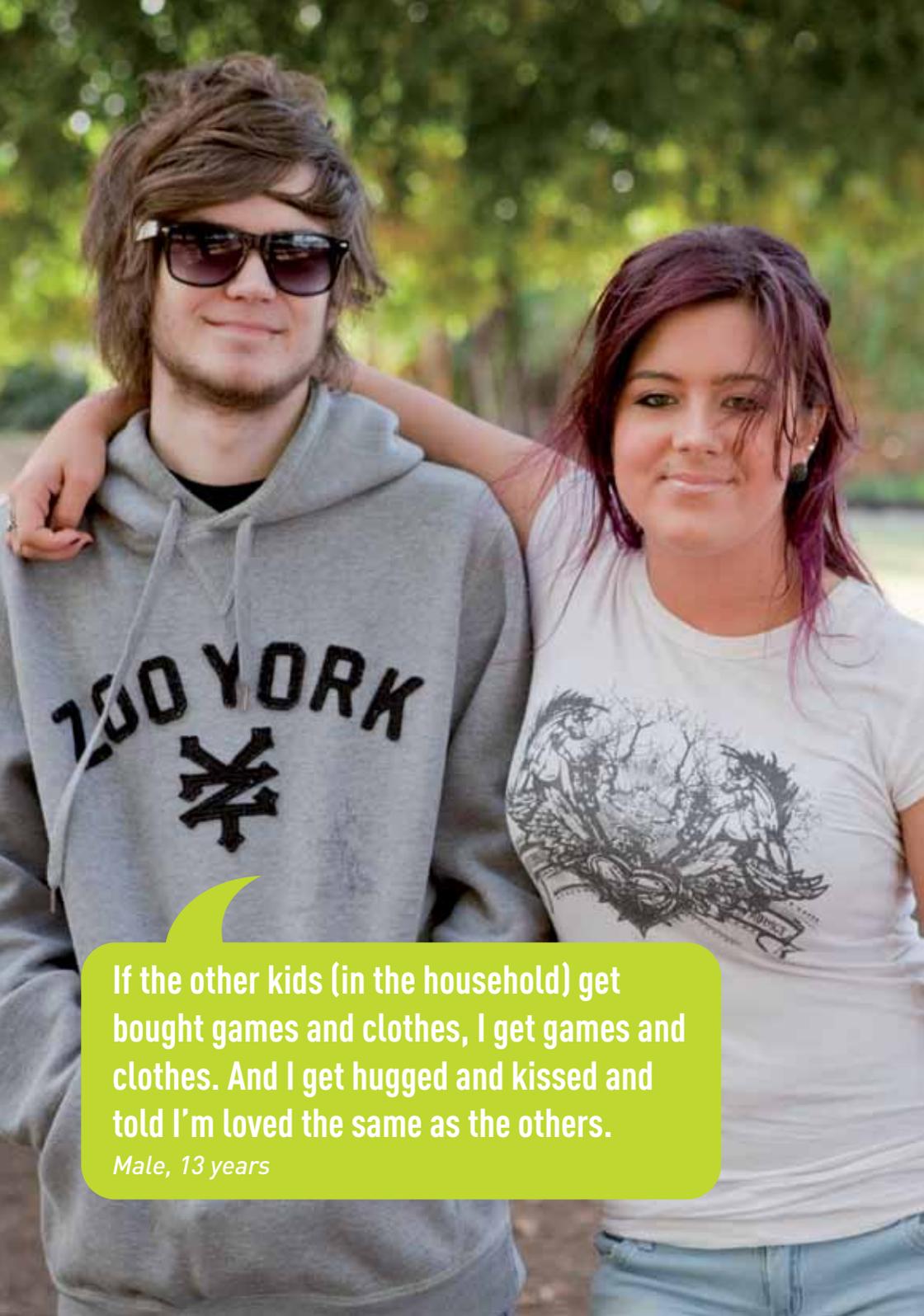
It was really interesting that many kids reported having really low contact with their fathers. Sometimes it's not appropriate for kids in care to see their birth parents, but the fact that contact with fathers was so low is something the Departments should look into.

If children and young people want to see their dads (and it's safe to do so) they should have the opportunity to. Some respondents said it was hard to keep friendships in care. Some children and young people in residential care said that it was hard to see their friends. It's important to have healthy connections with family and friends to be able to have supportive relationships.

### Facts and Figures



*Percentage of respondents who reported the two contact rates of Weekly or Not at all with the designated Family Member.*

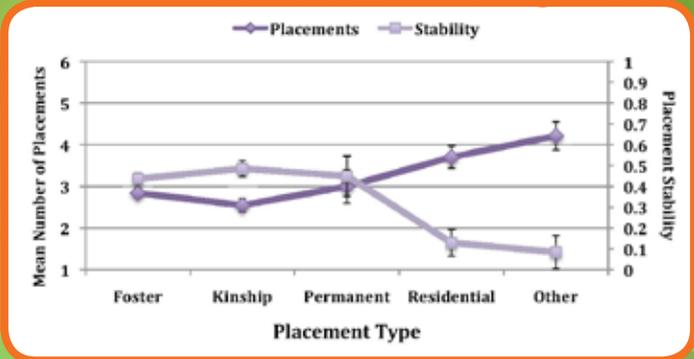


**If the other kids (in the household) get bought games and clothes, I get games and clothes. And I get hugged and kissed and told I'm loved the same as the others.**

*Male, 13 years*



## Facts and Figures



Average number of placements in each placement type

## Health

A lot of other research says that children and young people in care are likely to have different physical and mental health issues. What we found in the Report Card survey is the opposite. 80% of respondents said their health was quite good. Kids in home-based placements thought their health needs were met better than those in residential care.

One third could remember having an initial health check when they first came into care (half of the group in SA). This actual number might be higher because not everyone can remember what happened when they

first came into care.

Over half of the people who completed the survey had used counselling services. In residential care it was even higher – about 70%.

Most people said they were maintaining their health by being active, but one quarter said they didn't do any extracurricular sport. Sporting activity was lower in NT and TAS. It was also lower in residential care placements.

20% of children and young people who completed the survey said they were concerned about their weight.

# Education

Placement change often means change of school too, and a lot of these changes can make it hard to get a good education. CREATE thinks if placements change it's important to try to keep the CYP at the same school, if possible.

31% said they attended three or more primary schools while in care (this was even higher in SA and TAS).

Those living in residential care had the most changes in their schooling. They also had the most suspensions. In fact, one quarter of kids in residential care had been suspended at least three times.

Out of all types of care placements, 13% of males had been suspended at least three times.

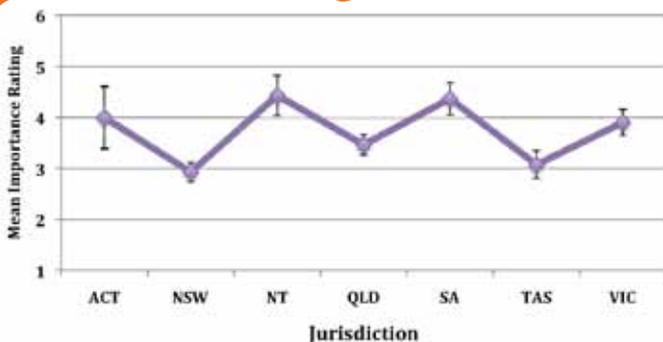
However, two-thirds of CYP who responded said they enjoyed their school experience.

Only one third said that they went to their carers for help with school.

Education planning is something that most state and territory governments say is important, but only about 25% of those surveyed said they were aware of an education plan for them. Even fewer of them had participated in making the plan. Young people in ACT, NT, SA, and VIC thought it was important to be involved in an education plan. But many in NSW, QLD, and TAS didn't think it was very important.

Most of the bullying that children and young people reported on the survey happened at school. About one quarter said that bullying happened to them reasonably often. Bullying was also really high in residential placements.

## Facts and Figures



*How important CYP thought it was to be involved in education planning*

## Communication and Social Presentation – how CYP interact with others

A theme of the entire Report Card is the importance of children and young people participating in decisions affecting them. When asked about opportunities to contribute to these sorts of decisions, 63% said they were able to have a say reasonably often. The numbers were lower in NT and TAS and for those in residential care.

CYP said they were able to have a say most about contact with family and friends, choice of school subjects, and day-to-day living. They said it was important they have a say in all issues affecting them. NT young people were most concerned about living arrangements. In QLD, young people were concerned about how they organise their free time.

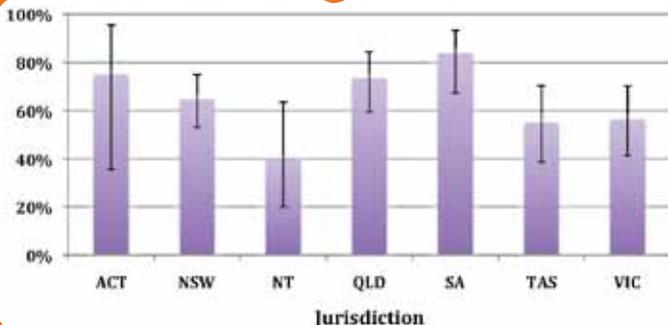
Two thirds said they thought they had the same opportunity do to activities

as their friends not in care. It'd be great if this number was even higher.

93% of respondents were able to identify a significant person in their life they could talk if an issue came up that concerned them. Over half said they'd talk to their carer. Only 9% said their case worker would be the first person they talked to.

CYP were happy to give positive feedback about the Department, but only half knew how to make a formal complaint if they wanted to. It was only 38% in NSW. Kids in residential care seemed to know the most about how to make a complaint. There were quite a few who said they chose not to complain about something because they were worried about what would happen. CREATE believes it's important that all feedback is heard so the system can improve.

### Facts and figures



*Percentage of CYP over 15 who said they had spoken with someone about leaving care*



It wasn't nice  
to be moved  
around so  
much, it felt  
like people  
didn't care  
about me.

*Male, 15 years*

## Life Skills and Independence

Life skills can include everything from grooming (brushing your hair, etc), hygiene (staying clean), making meals, chores, budgeting, and finding your way around. Most of these types of things are learned gradually as kids grow up, seeing them done around you. If there are issues with family, sometimes it becomes harder to learn these things.

The questions on the Report Card survey asked respondents how confident they felt doing different things. Confidence went up with age. Budgeting and managing money was a bigger concern for older respondents.

Leaving care planning was just as low as other CREATE Report Cards have found in the past. Only one third of young people over 15 years old said they were aware of a transition plan

developed for them. The number was higher in QLD, where 45% were aware of their plan. The good news is it seems that young people are talking more with their carers about transition from care than other reports found in the past.

Almost two thirds said they weren't really worried at all about leaving the care system. This would be a great thing if they had already done a lot of planning and had all the information they need. However, this number might be high because they don't realise all the things they need to think about. Carers and workers need to spend more time with young people to work through issues and help them be confident and ready to transition, with all the information and skills they need.



## facts and figures

JURISDICTION	Population	Achieved Sample
ACT	307*	28
NSW	4186	309
NT	424	67
QLD	2953	256
SA	1151	103
TAS	493	144
VIC	1573	162
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10780</b>	<b>1069</b>

### The number of CYPIC who did the survey

\* Note. ACT did not provide specific population data. This estimate was derived from information published in Child Protection Australia 2011 (AIHW, 2012).

# actions

Everyone needs to play a part in improving the out-of-home care system. The Report Card highlights some key questions that can help everyone who works in the system to improve the lives of the children and young people (CYP) they support.

1. How do you ensure that CYP have a say?
2. How do you form good relationships with CYP and involve them in making decisions?
3. What can you do to improve placement stability of CYP?
4. How can you make sure CYP have meaningful contact with family and other important people (including dads)?
5. How will you overcome challenges to making sure CYP know about their culture?
6. How can you help CYP to see education as important and to do their best at school?
7. How can you help young people transitioning from care to be ready for adult life?

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