



MEDIA RELEASE

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CREATE SAYS FED BUDGET FAILS CARE LEAVERS ALREADY WITHOUT SUPPORT NETWORKS

CREATE Foundation urges the Abbott Government to ensure young people leaving out-of-home care are not forgotten in the Federal Budget's changes to welfare supports. Over one third of care leavers are known to experience homelessness during the first year of leaving care³, because often they are without the traditional safety net, of family, to fall back on in tough times.

When leaving home, it's considered the norm to return home to have a meal or do the washing, and to reconnect with loved ones. Many young people enter care through no fault of their own, due to abuse or neglect and often remain in care until the age of 18. At present there are over 39,000 children and young people live in care (i.e. foster, residential, kinship care) increasing by 9% p.a.

"Young people transitioning to independence are undoubtedly the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our society," said Ms Jacqui Reed, CREATE Foundation Chief Executive.

CREATE's research has found that 70% of care leavers were at some point dependent on welfare supports, meaning the government's proposed budget will greatly reduce young care leavers' chances of successfully transitioning to independence and become productive members of society."

The CREATE Report Card 2009³ revealed harsh facts regarding the journeys of young people leaving care, such as 29% of respondents being unemployed and 45% of young men having had juvenile justice experience.

Jake entered care as a child and is now aged 18 and living semi-independently in Brisbane. He says that care leavers often are not able to afford rent, food and driver's license and other expenses. The budget's changes to New Start and Youth Allowance could leave young people unable to access any support for up to six months. *"They are really stressed about THIS budget because they don't know what is going to happen,"* said Jake.

"I know someone starting to self-harm because they really feel a lot of stress about the uncertainty of the budget. Right now, I'm looking for work and just want someone to give me a go."

For two decades the level of welfare dependence amongst working-age Australians has been in decline². CREATE says that this budget is likely to leave care leavers even worse off.

"The proposed changes in this budget will be an obstacle to young people reaching their potential and making a contribution to society," said Ms Reed. *"There is a distinct lack of evidence-based policy to ensure the needs of Australia's most vulnerable are not forgotten."*

CREATE is the national peak body representing the voices of children and young people in out-of-home care and works hard to address the negative stigma faced by care leavers. Learn more at www.create.org.au

References:

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3. McDowall, J.J. (2009) *CREATE Report Card 2009 – Transitioning from care: tracking progress*. Sydney: CREATE Foundation