

MEDIA ALERT

11 July 2017

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDEPENDENT VOICE

RESPONSE TO RECENT CRITICISM OF TASMANIA'S CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES IN THE MEDIA

ABC media in Tasmania ran a story over the weekend entitled 'Frontline workers in Tasmania's child protection services blast system's priorities', and a news piece yesterday entitled Child protection: Tasmanian Premier claims 'no evidence' of political interference.

Both pieces place current crises in the Tasmanian care system in the spotlight, and highlight a system under strain. The pieces outline issues affecting both workers and young people in care. However, it's not just the voices of the care workers who are important. **It is vital that the independent voices of the young people in care, or who have transitioned out of care, be considered as the first point of expert opinion in this arena.**

"CREATE works daily with young people with first hand knowledge of the care system, and both its strengths and weak points. Their voices are the ones that should be consulted first in any issue that criticises the system, or calls for change" said Jacqui Reed, CREATE's Chief Executive Officer. "Therefore it is vital that there are independent mechanisms where their insights and experiences can be heard. These will ultimately be the tools that transform the system."

Recent media attention has drawn attention to the number of staff in the care sector, and the quality of care that is being provided.

Mark Morrissey, Tasmania's Commissioner for Children's issued a recent report on Children and young People in Out of Home Care in Tasmania 2017 also highlights the importance of young people having a voice, both individually through safe complaints mechanisms and individual advocates, as well as systematically. The Commissioner calls for the establishment of an ongoing consultative panel of young people who have experience of out of home care, and the child protection system, and who are therefore well placed to contribute directly to the reform process.

The Commissioner also calls for robust mechanisms to be put in place to seek out and listen to the individual voices of children and young people in the out of home care system including establishing a visiting program, reviewing current visiting policies and expediting the establishment of a Tribunal in Tasmania vested with jurisdiction that includes decisions made about children's wellbeing in out of home care. **CREATE supports the Commissioner's recommendations for increased oversight and mechanisms to include young people to inform the system to improve its effectiveness.**

CREATE's CEO Jacqui Reed said today that **"CREATE continues to advocate for robust independence in monitoring child protection and the inclusion of the voice of children and**

young people as part of this. We look forward to addressing these concerns through the upcoming reform process.”

ENDS

CREATE Foundation is the national peak consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience.

Key statistics that should be considered:

- 43 009 children were in out-of-home care across Australia at 30 June, 2014 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015. Child protection Australia: 2013-14. Canberra: AIHW)
- 35% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care
- 46% of boys with care experience have had contact with the juvenile justice system
- 29% of young people who have experienced out-of-home are unemployed 36% of children and young people are split from their brothers and sisters in care
- 35% of young people in care have 5 or more caseworkers during their time in care
- 67% of young people in care are not aware of leaving care plans

(McDowall, J.J. (2009). Transitioning from care (CREATE Report Card 2009); McDowall, J.J. (2013). Experiencing out-of-home care in Australia: The views of children and young people (CREATE Report Card 2013). Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

To arrange an interview with a Tasmanian Young Person who has experienced Care please call Andrea Doney 0402050418 or andrea@admarcoms.com.au

For more information on CREATE, please visit our website at www.create.org.au

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