



stories  
of hope

create  
FOUNDATION

# creating a better life for children and young people in care

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

Most children come into care through no fault of their own after being neglected or physically abused. They often grow up in a series of different foster homes and miss out on a lot of school, making it very difficult to form close friendships. They also have very little involvement in the decisions being made about their lives. When older, young people tend to experience higher levels of homelessness, drug or alcohol dependence, justice system involvement and early parenthood.

**Our vision is that all children and young people with a care experience reach their full potential**

Our mission is to create a better life for children and young people in care.

To do this we;

- **Connect** children and young people to each other, CREATE and their Community *to*
- **Empower** children and young people to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and skills that enable them to have a voice and be heard *to*
- **Change** the care system, in consultation with children and young people, through advocacy to improve policies, practices and services, and increase community awareness.

We achieve our mission by facilitating a variety of programs and services for children and young people in care and developing policy and research to advocate for a better care system.

CREATE is the only independent, national advocacy body whose policy positions are directly informed by children and young people with a care experience. We also campaign for change through our Report Cards, submissions and discussion papers, and our involvement in a range of committees, forums and working parties.

## create turns lives around

In 2014, over 40,000 children and young people around Australia will not be able to stay in their family home. Many of them feel isolated, without a voice and without hope. Some have moved from one foster home to another more times than they can count on their fingers and toes. Those who have left care face tremendous difficulties transitioning to independence because they have not grown up with the holistic life skills many of us take for granted.

We work to help children and young people in care improve their circumstances. I am always so amazed at their resilience and how they can flourish given the opportunity. Above all, they are hopeful for a brighter future.

Inside this booklet are just a few of their stories. I hope you feel encouraged when reading them.

*Jacqui Reed*

Chief Executive Officer  
CREATE Foundation



# creating connections

When Jordi was five, she was taken into care because her Dad passed away and her Mum had a mental illness and was unable to care for her.

Jordi became a clubCREATE member when she was eight years old, but really got involved with CREATE's programs at thirteen. She started by attending a Connection Event; "I met a lot of people like me and it made me less lonely. I also felt more connected to my community."

Jordi has since participated in many of CREATE's programs, giving her the confidence to reach her goals.

Now at the age of twenty, Jordi is a youth worker helping other young people with life's challenges. She credits her achievements as being made possible with a lot of help from CREATE.

**"CREATE makes me feel as though I have a purpose. It ignites the fire in my belly. There are so many things I get from being involved with CREATE, just being able to stand in a role that can create change and improvement, to have people listen to my opinions and ideas, this is such a rewarding feeling for me, it makes me feel as though I have a purpose."**

Amie, 21



# living independently

"My name is Carlatina. I did not have a good experience of being in care. I experienced physical abuse and sometimes got locked in my bedroom. I have been living on my own since 2013.

When the time came for me to move out, the CREATE Your Future workshops gave me information on where to find a place and the steps involved. As someone who didn't have a care plan and no idea what was available to me whilst looking for a place to live, I know how hard it is not having anyone to help at this time. Leaving care is hard but not being prepared is harder.

**"CREATE Your Future makes really complicated things about the system easier to understand."**

Victor, 18

**"Without CREATE Your Future, I would still be living in a shed."**

Young Person, ACT

I want to be a role model for people in care or leaving care. I want to show kids that just because you have been in care it doesn't mean you can't achieve great things.

I have just started my Diploma of Early Childhood Education. When I finish I want to be an Au Pair in the USA."

## 1 in 3

**young people are homeless within the first year of leaving care \***

\*CREATE Report Card 2009



# a voice for children and young people in care

At eight years old, Shannon was taken into care. "I went to school one day and they told me I would not be going home that night and I was going to live somewhere else. From that point on life was lonely. I never got used to people treating me differently, like there was something wrong with me."

Shannon's Child Safety Officer introduced her to CREATE. Since then, Shannon has made big changes in her life. CREATE has empowered her, Shannon has trained to become a Young Consultant and regularly advocates for changes in the system. From Youth Advisory Group meetings and consultations with government officials to speaking at national conferences, "You don't have a voice in care, but that is why CREATE's work is so important."

Shannon says CREATE saved her, "My life would be totally different, being in care is isolating, finding there are other people just like me made me feel normal. CREATE is kind of like everything to me."

**43% of children admitted to out of home care are aged under 5\***

\*Child Protection Australia 2012-13' (AIHW)



**"CREATE is kind of like everything to me."**



# dare to dream

At eighteen years old, young people leave the care system. With limited government support they are often left to fend for themselves in the community. The CREATE Your Future Grant Scheme provides grants for young people to help them get started in life when they have no one else to help.

Last year Ben, from Western Australia, received a grant from CREATE to pursue his dream of participating in training for outdoor education in Canberra.

"This incredibly generous gift has enabled me to pursue my grandest dream – to lead and inspire future generations by engaging them in outdoor environments."

**"I am at such a crucial point at uni this semester, this grant is going to change everything for me. I cannot describe what this means. At this point of my life, something like this is life changing. I just can't believe it has happened to me. Thank you CREATE."**

Sarah, 20

**"I would like society to recognise that kids are a good investment, perpetuating the neglect is a bad investment"**

David Hill, CREATE Foundation Patron



## finding the positive

Chris had been in care most of his life. "I was severely abused whilst in the care system; it was brutal, I am lucky to be alive."

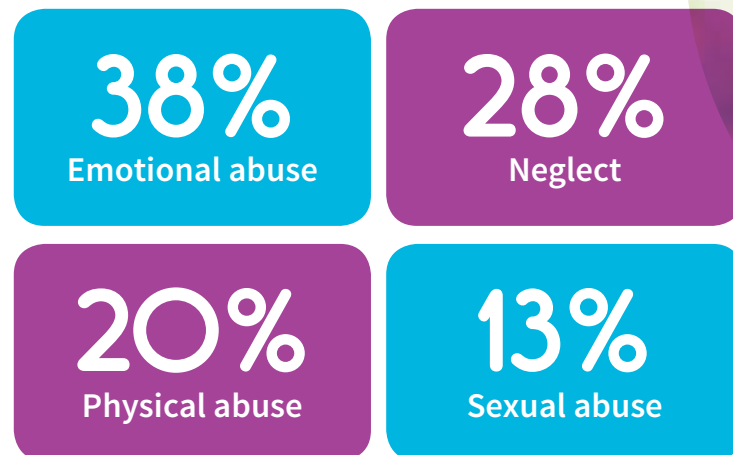
He reached out to CREATE when he was homeless and lacked proper social groups: "It was an extremely difficult time in my life and I needed to find something positive."

Chris took part in Speak Up training and his confidence soared. He now regularly represents CREATE at Parliament House in Canberra. "It has opened up so many doors for me to advocate on behalf of young people to make their experience better."

"If I had not found CREATE, I would have fallen in with the wrong crowd and not done much with my life. They gave me a safe environment when I did not know any. I have made lifelong friends. I will never forget what CREATE has done for me."

Chris wants to be part of the solution and hopes to train in Child Protection Services. "CREATE is so important to ensure the next generation of kids have someone to speak up for them. If anyone can help young people in care, it is CREATE."

### Reasons young people are placed in care:



\*\*Child Protection Australia 2012-13' (AIHW)

## a chance to have fun

"Being in care is difficult. It is difficult because kids are put in care for different reasons. Those reasons usually lead children and young people to engage in risky behaviour like have unprotected sex, take drugs and the like. My sister did drugs heavily, until she found CREATE. She went to one of the camps and it really turned her life around. It turned me around too, because I used to think that I had the worst life until I heard other stories. CREATE did wonders, and by helping support their cause you can help the next generation learn and grow. If you leave kids without help then they go off the rails. A kid needs a chance to get away from life and learn in a fun way."

Emma, 17



# Together we can make a difference



Volunteer to write birthday cards or help run Connection Events in your state or territory



Fundraise by becoming a CREATE Champion to raise awareness through fun runs and other events across Australia



Donate once-off or through workplace giving so that you can invest in changing the lives of children and young people in care



Become a Corporate Partner and fund projects, offer in-kind services or encourage your staff to participate in fundraising activities or volunteer at CREATE events



Become a CREATE Mate if you are a sector worker to spread the word about CREATE to your colleagues, deliver CREATE's key messages in hard to reach regional and remote locations and encourage children and young people in care to sign up to clubCREATE

To find out more about our work and how you can get involved contact us on O2 9267 1999 or visit our website at [www.create.org.au](http://www.create.org.au)





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1800 655 105 is a free-call number that young people in care and their carers can use. However, there may be fees charged if calling from a mobile.