

## MEDIA STATEMENT

16 December 2017

### CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ROYAL COMMISSION FINDINGS HANDED DOWN

**One third of sexual abuse prior to 1990 occurred in the out-of-home care sector. Much work still needs to be done to protect vulnerable children.**

Alarming, the final report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has revealed that schools, churches and religious institutions were not the worst sources of sexual abuse. The out-of-home care sector carries this unenviable title.

Survivors reported abuse across a vast range of institutions but disturbingly, more than one third of survivors reported being sexually abused in out-of-home care prior to 1990.

In response to the final report, CREATE Foundation CEO Jacqui Reed is reminding the Australian public that child sexual abuse is not just an historical issue, it remains a significant issue today.

“Whilst, from those interviewed, we saw a drop in the numbers of sexual abuse reports in the out-of-home care sector after 1990, we express caution at becoming overly complacent at these results. We know it can take many years for victims of sexual abuse to report crimes against them and some young people abused since 1990 may still be yet to report these crimes”, said Jacqui Reed in response to the report.

“Many Australians have been affected by appalling experiences in a range of institutions. But we are highlighting again that young people in the care sector remain amongst the most vulnerable. The Royal Commission has focussed attention on this issue at last, but we need to make sure it doesn’t end with just words on a page. Children and young people with a care experience remain highly vulnerable to exploitation and sexual abuse and will continue to be placed at risk without systemic reform ensuring that workers are equipped to deal with child sexual abuse, and avenues for children and young people to report sexual abuse are more accessible,” she said.

“Children who were sexually abused whilst in out-of-home care are incredibly vulnerable given that they have already experienced abuse and/or neglect which led to their removal from their family in the first place. For children to have been subjected to multiple incidences of abuse is a sign of how severely our society failed our children. They were essentially pushed from the frying pan, into the fire.”

Despite the attention of the Royal Commission, there remain limited services and resources to support victims of child sexual abuse and their families. “State

Governments will need to make firm commitment, allocating resources to increasing training for workers and carers in out of home care to ensure appropriate responses to disclosures of sexual abuse. Children need to be able to safely disclose incidences of abuse to adults that are equipped to act decisively to protect the child. Moreover, carers, residential care staff and child protection workers need continued training in understanding the impact of trauma and abuse on children”.

Whilst applauding the work of the Royal Commission and its focus on the issues of vulnerable children and young people being sexually abused in institutional care, Ms Reed says “the courage of survivors to come forward and tell their stories must be acknowledged. It takes tremendous effort to come forward, give evidence and speak up about deeply personal experiences.

Ms Reed stated that “it is incumbent on Australians now to ensure that our children are protected and that the systems in place to do so are resourced and monitored. We cannot let this Royal Commission’s work be in vain, and the recommendations left to sit on a dusty shelf. We must work together to ensure we do all we can to protect our most vulnerable asset, our future, – our children!”

**For more information on CREATE, please visit our website at [www.create.org.au](http://www.create.org.au)**

**For further comment from CREATE’s CEO Jacqui Reed and/or a young person with care experience please call Andrea Doney 0402050418 and [andrea@admarcoms.com.au](mailto:andrea@admarcoms.com.au)**

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Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

- 46,488 children were in out-of-home care across Australia at 30 June, 2016
- 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

