

MEDIA RELEASE

24 October 2018

creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

CHANGES TO NSW ADOPTION LAWS PEAK CONSUMER BODY FOR KIDS IN CARE EXPRESSES CONCERNS AROUND ADOPTION

There is little doubt that instability for children and young people in the out-of-home care sector disadvantages them greatly and can negatively impact their future life prospects. Research shows that children who experience instability through moving around between multiple foster homes are more likely to experience emotional and psychosocial difficulties, more likely to struggle at school and more likely to become socially disadvantaged as they approach adulthood. Instability for children and young people in the out-of-home care system has presented a significant problem.

CREATE Foundation is the national consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience (including kinship care, foster care and residential care). CREATE develops policy and research to report on and advocate for a better care system.

Whilst CREATE commends NSW government efforts to seek alternatives to children spending their lives in multiple foster homes with limited stability, and to provide permanency for those in long term stable foster care placements, it is **concerned that adoption is not the panacea for all children and young people**. CREATE Foundation's CEO Jacqui Reed said today that "we are concerned that amendments to the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection Act) and the Adoption Act to be introduced to NSW Parliament this week would mean children in the care system must be found a permanent home within two years of entering the child protection system. Each case should be assessed based on merit not a timeframe."

"At this critical moment in statutory history it is imperative that the NSW Government observe and respect the voices of children and young people who have experienced care when it comes to decisions regarding adoption. Children and young people are the experts in their own life experience and the views and opinions of the child or young person in question must be paramount in any decision regarding permanent adoption as this will fundamentally impact their lives for years to come."

"Adoption is part of a suite of options available to children and young people and is rightly focused on prioritising permanency for at-risk children who are in need of stable care. In some instances adoption may be a fitting option for those children whom a court has already decided can never return safely home."

national new south wales office

CREATE Foundation Limited ABN 69 088 075 058

A 12 Union Street, Parramatta NSW 2150 | T 02 9267 1999

 1800 655 105  www.create.org.au  facebook.com/CREATEfnd  @CREATEfnd

CREATE Foundation's Sibling Placement and Contact in Out-of-Home Care report (2015), identifies that many children and young people in care are separated from their siblings, and highlights the unique role that the sibling relationship plays in a child or young person's life. Ms Reed states that "special consideration should be given to the impact of the adoption process on siblings and wider family relationships to ensure they are maintained."

Australian research demonstrates that stability in care is the key factor in developing a sense of security, belonging and a network of social support by children and young people. Stability is critical to the ongoing development and wellbeing of children and young people and is the ultimate goal for improving a young person's life in out-of-home care.

CREATE calls on the NSW Government to listen intently to the voices of children and young people about their wishes regarding adoption and moreover, that in the quest to reduce costs that the voices of children and young people are not overlooked.

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

ENDS

Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

- 47,915 children were in out-of-home care across Australia at 30 June 2017
- Young people in out-of-home care are 16 times more likely to be under a youth justice order than the general population
- 35% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care
- 46% of males have been involved with the justice system since leaving care
- 29% of young people who have left care or preparing to leave care are unemployed
- 36% children and young people in care do not live with any of their siblings
- 35% of young people in care have five or more caseworkers during their time in care
- 67% of young people in care over the age of 15 are not aware of having a leaving care plan

McDowall, J. J. (2015). Sibling placement and contact in out-of-home care. Sydney: CREATE Foundation

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

national new south wales office

CREATE Foundation Limited ABN 69 088 075 058

A 12 Union Street, Parramatta NSW 2150 | T 02 9267 1999