

MEDIA RELEASE

2 November 2018

creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE

THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSITIONING FROM FOSTER CARE TO SUCCESSFUL INDEPENDENT LIVING

November is “Transition to Independence” Month in Queensland.

Each year, over 500 young people leave the Queensland child protection system (having spent time in foster care, residential care, guardianship or kinship care) and face the prospect of living independently. Of these, a significant number of young people make this transition without support of any kind, and therefore find themselves at significant risk.

Young people in out-of-home care are among the most vulnerable in the community, at greater risk of unemployment, homelessness and abuse. Currently in Queensland there is no statutory obligation for these young people to remain in care after they turn 18. As such they face the challenge of transitioning to independent living at a very young age, often without the support of any family or social networks.

Transition to Independence Month (T2I Month) is held from 1 to 30 November each year to focus on how young people are supported to make the journey from the child protection system to independence and to achieve positive life outcomes.

Several Australian states including Victoria and Tasmania have recently increased the leaving care age to 21 meaning young people can, if they wish, continue to receive support from the Government until they turn 21. Whilst Queensland offers valuable support for young people, Queensland has yet to extend the leaving care age to 21. Jacqui Reed, CREATE’s CEO said today that “things are moving slowly and in the interim young people are emerging from care without the extended support they need. We can do better, and need to be in step with the other more progressive states”.

This year’s Transition to Independence theme “Road to Independence ... Journey to success” promotes the idea that a young person’s transition is a journey that evolves with time.

A young person's transition to independence requires a collaborative approach from everyone supporting them. This is a critical life phase when young people need to be

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encouraged to aspire to reach their goals. Support can come from professionals but it can also come from members of the general community who go above and beyond to help a vulnerable young person.

David*, (19) spent many years in care. Like thousands before him, at 18 he was suddenly faced with the prospect of managing his own finances, accommodation, self-care, education, networking and adult life without the kinds of support experienced by most young Australians. Despite the challenges, David was able to draw on CREATE Foundation and other networks to pursue a positive future. “As a 19 year old, I have changed for the better with the help of my residential care youth workers, program manager, foster carers, CSOs, Next Step workers and CREATE Foundation. I ask the Australian community not to give up on the young people they work with. Look at me, I have graduated high school, have a Certificate III in Business, Certificate II in Rural Agriculture Mechanics, Certificate II in Drilling Operations, Certificate II in Resources and Infrastructure, a blue card as well as a white card. Today I am working at a farm and I would like to see other young people in care graduate school and succeed in life.”

CREATE Foundation has a range of support offerings, apps and networks designed to facilitate the best possible transition to independence. More details are available on their website.

Transition to Independence Month is coordinated by G-Force, a sector-wide working party of the Child Protection Partnership Forum made up of government and non-government organisations including the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, the CREATE Foundation, Foster Care Queensland, PeakCare and the Queensland Family and Child Commission

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

For further comment from CREATE’s CEO Jacqui Reed, David* cited above and/or a young person with care experience please call Andrea Doney 0402050418 and andrea@admarcoms.com.au

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