



Hour of Power Youth Forums Report 2017-2018

Young people's voices in action

- Challenging Stigma
- Our Identity
- Supporting Our Connections

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CREATE Foundation

The CREATE Foundation is the National Peak consumer body for children and young people with an out-of-home care (OOHC) experience in Australia. We represent the voices of around 48,000 children and young people currently in care, and those who have transitioned from care up to the age of 25.

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!



CONNECT to **EMPOWER** to **CHANGE**

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,

connect

children and young people to each other, CREATE and their Community

Children and young people feel more connected to others in the care system and have a greater sense of belonging

Achieve a minimum 10% increase in new members in clubCREATE

ClubCREATE membership is proportional to the Indigenous care population

Maximise our communication platforms to connect children and young people to CREATE

Maximise our connection with children and young people through the clubCREATE database

Children and young people feel more connected to their community of care

empower

children and young people to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and skills that enable them to have a voice and be heard

Children and young people with diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are empowered through participation in CREATE's programs and activities to confidently express their voice and be heard

CREATE's empowerment programs and activities meet the needs of children and young people of diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Empower young people to reach their full potential via the provision of the annual CREATE Your Future grants scheme

Children and young people have access to useful tools to enhance their life skills

change

the care system, in consultation with children and young people, through advocacy to improve policies, practices and services, and increase community awareness

Young people have the right to have a placement supported within the care system until 21 years

Every state and territory has provision of transition support to 25 years

Children and young people with a care experience have priority access to housing services until the age of 25 years

Children and young people are placed at the centre of decision making to inform decision makers

Complaint processes are designed to ensure the safety of children and young people, and are accessible and responsive

CREATE's advocacy contributes to systemic change

The system addresses the instability of the care experience (placement, siblings, carers, and workers)

Information sharing, with CREATE and governments, is implemented in each state and territory

The diversity of children and young people is respected throughout their care experiences

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are supported to ensure their voices reach decision makers

Advance the global voice of children and young people in care

organisational sustainability and development

to build a viable and contemporary organisation responsive to emerging and future needs of children and young people with a care experience

To be accountable and transparent

Meaningful staff engagement opportunities are offered for corporate partners

Growing and diversifying income streams with an emphasis on unattached funding

Committed to investing in our people

Engage positively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds



Executive Summary

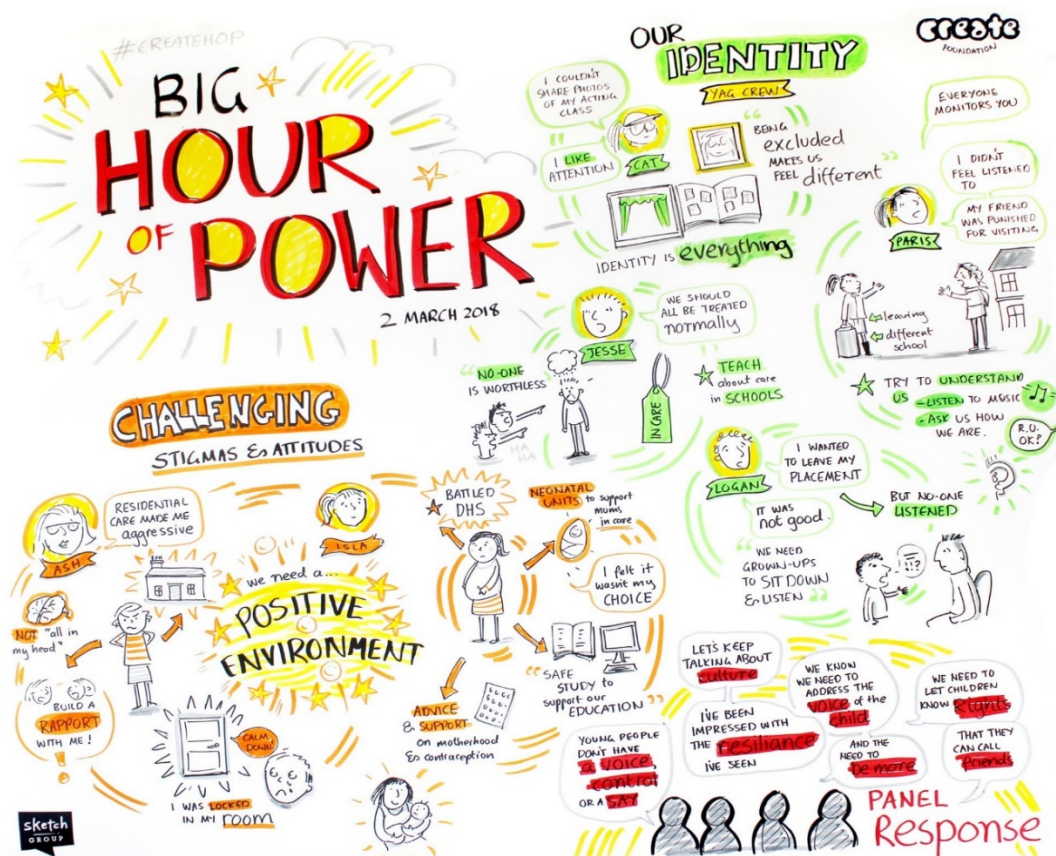
CREATE is proud to present and support the Hour of Power (HOP) Youth Forums. The HOP is a powerful platform and example of youth participation, empowerment and advocacy and in action. CREATE Young Consultants and all young people with care experiences hold incredible insights due to their lived experiences (seen in the HOP). These contributions have and can help inform the care sector to drive changes to improve the lives of children and young people in care.

In 2017/2018 two HOP Youth Forums were run and well supported by the care sector in Victoria. In September 2017 and March 2018 passionate, driven and EMPOWERED young people with a care experience (referred to as Young Consultants in this report) came together and shared their powerful insights, messages and ideas to care sector professionals. This included a panel of senior decision makers such as NGO CEOs, the Children's Commissioner and Minister for Families, Children and Youth Affairs. Young Consultants shared their messages, insights and challenged current practices and thinking and contributed great ideas and solutions to help drive positive CHANGE!

The three main themes included:

1. Challenging Stigma
2. Our Identity
3. Supporting Our Connections

This HOP report recaps the young consultant's messages, insights and ideas. It includes a brief HOP background, a summary capturing the panel and audience's response to the Young Consultants messages and what action is being taken as a result of the young people advocating for change!





Hour of Power - Youth Empowerment and Advocacy in Action

CREATE helps EMPOWER young people as experts of their own care experiences. Young people and their care experience, voices, insights and views are valuable and important. CREATE provides opportunities for young people to be CONNECTED, EMPOWERED and to advocate to create CHANGE. Young Consultants with CREATE speak for themselves and also speak up on behalf of children and young people in care who can't speak up. Young people should be included in decisions that affect them and get opportunities and support to be listened to, to participate and be empowered.

The HOP youth forum is a powerful youth led platform. Young Consultants (with support) plan and set the agenda, topics, messages and ideas with a purpose to share messages to help influence positive changes in the care sector. Young Consultants share their messages directly to our valued OOHC sector partners and key decision makers such as ministers and NGO CEOs.

Together we then workshop to drive action and change collectively with young people, carers, workers and CEO's and share what matters, how to action practice changes and identify the barriers.

Hearing Directly from Young People

At the HOP, passionate and driven young people directly share some of their experiences, insights, ideas and views to a room full of adults who work in the care sector. When young people are valued and heard they are more empowered and the care sector is empowered with young people sharing their knowledge insights and ideas.

Young people know what is working for them and what gaps there are in the system because they have lived them. At the HOP adults have a golden opportunity to listen and learn about what's important to young people, including what they find helpful and what needs to change.



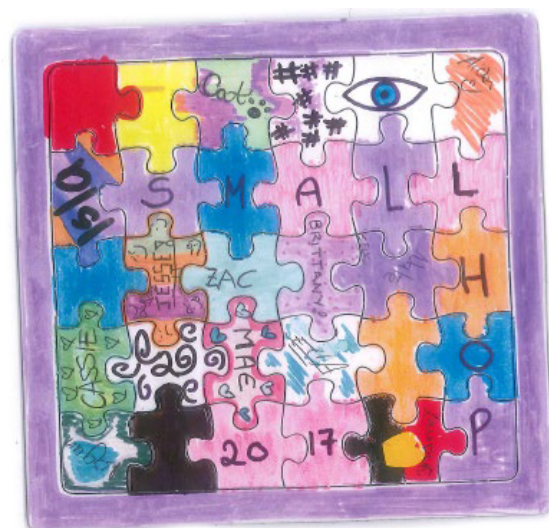
Small HOP September 2017

Young Consultants came together firstly at the small Hour of Power (HOP) in September 2017 to share their messages to 20 key leaders in the Out of Home Care Sector.

The momentum and energy from this small HOP flowed into larger HOP in March 2018. At the BIG HOP young consultants shared their messages, insights and ideas to a much larger audience!

The key themes reflected in this HOP:

- ✓ Challenging Stigma
- ✓ Our Identity
- ✓ Supporting Our Connections





BIG HOP March 2018

The CREATE PLATFORM crew (The PLATFORM Crew is the crew name of the dedicated and driven young consultants who plan and deliver the HOP!) delivered the BIG Hour of Power youth forum in March 2018 at the Library at Dock in front of over 70 care sector supporters.

The following summary recaps the Young Consultants messages and ideas and what they want the care sector to know in informing policy decisions and their work. A panel of leading sector representatives listened then responded and gave their feedback to the young consultants followed by a workshop where attendees looked at how *they* could implement the changes to the topics and ideas identified by young people. Included is a summary of the young people's messages, the HOP panel responses and a summary of the workshop and audience feedbacks and action plans. The HOP Appendixes supports more information about these HOPS.

Young People's Messages to the Care Sector

Challenging Stigma and Attitudes (Towards Young People in Out-of-Home Care)



Supporting Teens and Young Mums - Young Consultant Isla

Support Teens in Making Informed Decisions and Better Access to Contraception

Young Consultant Isla emphasized young people need good support to make informed decisions, and to be empowered with the right information instead of being pressured by workers, carers or a parent without having the full information. This includes young people getting support with pursuing education goals and having accurate information to support young people on the types of contraception available to them and this being easily accessible and available.

Young Mums Need Better Emotional and Practical Support

Isla shared her insights and experiences of early motherhood and informed that young mums need better support if they decide they want to keep their baby. This includes getting emotional support and practical support with parenting classes, a safe study environment that supports them continuing education, vehicles set up to transport babies, and to connect young mums with and mother craft nurses who visit and build supportive relationships that encourage young mums in their life aspirations.

Support Young Mums With Life Skills and Offer Specialised Young Mum Spaces

Isla advocated that young mums need to be supported to build their life skills, because when they turn 18, they are not only taking care of themselves, but another little human as well. Isla discussed the need for specific units or flats which support and encourage young mums and allow them to focus on building a strong bond with their babies.

“The message that I took away was that it wasn’t my choice about what I wanted to happen with my body, my child and my future and I wouldn’t be supported to make the decisions that felt right for me. The impact of this message continued after my baby was born.” Young Consultant Isla



Supporting Young People with Disabilities in Care – Young Consultant Ash

Building a Good Relationship and Rapport. Ask questions to Best Support Young People.

Young Consultant Ash shared her experience and insights of being in care with a disability. Ash informed that she was referred to as the kid in care with Asperger's and that her behaviour was viewed as acting out instead of her trying to communicate her frustrations. Ash highlighted the importance of supporting adults / carers taking time to build relationships and rapport with young people. This includes taking the time to ask questions. By building a good relationship staff and young people will better understand young people and what their needs are.

Behaviour is Communication

Ash highlighted that we need to remember young people's behaviour is a form of communication. If young people feel misunderstood, unsupported and they live in chaotic environments, this will impact them negatively. Ash also emphasized there needs to be trained staff and support plans created with young people to help support them better.

Ash's Tips on Working with a Young Person in Care with a Disability

- ✓ Supporting adults/ carers to be supported and educated about working with children and young people who have disabilities, especially noting one in five people are on the Autism Spectrum.
- ✓ The care environment has a huge impact on how young people feel and cope.
- ✓ Young people need supporting adults /carers who build a rapport with them and take the time to learn about their needs.
- ✓ It's really important to try to understand how a young person experiences their disability and the environments around them – This will help you understand each other better.
- ✓ Recognise that chaotic environments and not being understood and supported can lead to frustration and aggressive behaviours.
- ✓ Building rapport with young people is key to help carers learn more about young people and ways to support them better.

"I felt that the resi staff did not understand me, what I was experiencing or what was needed to help me. Their way of managing my behaviour was to lock me in my room and I was told to calm down. The message I took away was that there was nothing wrong with me and that 'it was all in my head.'" Young Consultant Ash

Safer Residential Care Recommendations –By Young Consultant Zac

Improving the Safety in Residential Care


Zac stated that every young person has a right to be safe in care. Zac shared some of his insights of his lived experience of residential care that better team work and communication between staff and young people would help a lot. In Zac's experience, workers weren't told or aware of things going on in the home such as in handovers and this lead to misunderstandings, disagreements and conflicts.

Zac spoke about the need to improve safety in residential care, including each home having strong and secure bedroom doors that young people are able to lock. Zac believed that this will help young people to feel safe and keep their personal items safe. Zac shared that he often had his door broken and the things that he valued were stolen and there was no other secure place for these things to be stored. Zac acknowledged that 'resi' care staff do a pretty tough job and because of this, they require better support and training that will help them to support young people better. Zac explained that residential care can improve a lot and that speaking up and sharing his insights will really help people understand how they can make a difference.



Better Communication and Safety ideas — By Zac

- ✓ Good communication between staff and young people is key. Doing good staff handovers, so rostered on staff know everything that they need to know.
- ✓ All Residential units should have clear house rules about not entering each other's rooms and respecting privacy.
- ✓ Good communication, between staff and young people, explaining how things work and why rules and guidelines are in place, all help prevent disagreements and conflict (as well as any incidents).
- ✓ Staff can do more to get to know young people, our concerns and issues and working with us on our goals and support plans.
- ✓ Good matching with young people is ideal! Plus support strategies when young people enter or leave the home.
- ✓ Purpose built strong doors with locks would keep everyone safer and reduce theft of young peoples' things. Safety for young people and for staff is really important. Currently doors in resi homes are often kicked in and contribute to incidents, emergency services, secure welfare, theft and other problems.
- ✓ Having things stolen of sentimental value is hard for anyone to deal with, especially young people who may not have many belongings. Theft of replaceable things should be compensated for – Young people shouldn't have to find a way to replace things that were stolen themselves, especially when they don't have secure places to keep them and often an income to replace items.
- ✓ Privacy and security are really important to young people and young people should have a right to their own lockable space. Young people should be able to lock their



bedroom door and staff could have master keys so that they can still access young people's rooms for safety concerns

- ✓ All staff including casuals, need to be well trained in de-escalating conflict and in safe restraining when necessary, which could help reduce serious injuries in the household

Supporting Our Connections!

Supporting Our Connections - Siblings, Culture and Family - By Young Consultant Sharney

Support Our Connections to Siblings, Extended Family and Culture

Sharney a proud Wemba Wemba woman shared the importance of being connected to her sisters and her culture and what this meant to her. Sharney shared that even though her foster carers were not Indigenous, they made sure Sharney and her sisters lived together, were connected to their culture and felt part of their Foster family. This included being connected to VACCA (Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency), going to cultural events and being supported to see extended family regularly. Sharney shared her carers told them regularly they wanted to help keep her and her siblings together and to support them having a strong connection to their culture.

One of the most important things for Sharney whilst being in care was living with her sisters and knowing that her sisters knew they had their big sister with them for anything. This meant having each other when they needed it the most, and that Sharney was able to support her sisters growing up.

Sharney's Key Messages:

- ✓ Be supportive of young people's culture.
- ✓ Carers being supportive of young people's connections to family and culture can mean the world to them.
- ✓ Being made to feel wanted, welcome and loved helps we feel secure. We then get the love and support we need.
- ✓ Try and keep siblings together when possible
- ✓ Connect Indigenous young people to VACCA or their local Aboriginal Child Care Organisation and support them in attending cultural events and family days.
- ✓ Support young people's connection with family members.

What the care sector can do:

- ✓ The sector needs to better enable and encourage carers to support sibling groups. This includes assisting with practical items such as Bunk beds, phones, a bigger car or even making amendments to their house. Consult with children about who they want to live with, and how this can be encouraged or made possible
- ✓ Have one consistent worker for the whole sibling group, or have a mentor for older siblings.

- ✓ Carers and workers can work to understand the importance of young people's culture and follow through in making sure that kids grow up identifying and feeling connected to their culture.
- ✓ Try and see how siblings can live together or be close together if they can't live together and with carers who work together to encourage their connection and support frequent sibling catch ups.
- ✓ If siblings can't be placed together, don't give up. Work with all carers, support the children, involve therapy, support short visits and make all efforts to build their bond.

"Being made to feel welcome, safe and loved made us feel wanted and secure. If it wasn't for my Foster parents being so supportive, I probably wouldn't be doing as good as I am now." - Young Consultant Sharney




Better Supporting and Strengthening Kinship Care – By Young Consultant Mae

Kinship Carers Need Help and Support Too!

Mae shared her insights of living in Kinship care and that Kinship carers need support and help, like other carers. Mae felt that because she was in Kinship care and with family, that there was a view that they didn't need help or support such as those offered to Foster carers.

More Financial and Mental Health Support for Kinship Care

Mae gave her insights feeling at times that due to their financial challenges and not being able to afford things they needed that she felt like she was financial burden in her kinship



family. Mae highlighted the need for Kinship carers to get good financial support so that they can adequately provide for their young people. Mae suggested Kinship carers receive a start-up allowance of \$1000.00 when they agree to support children and this will help buy clothes, a bed and school supplies. Mae recommended Kinship carers also have access to their own mental health supports so that they are in a good position to help the children they care for.

Caseworkers Supporting Communication in Kinship Care

Mae informed that it really helps when caseworkers communicate directly with birth parents rather than Kinship carers attempting to as there can be complicated family dynamics which makes it challenging.

Mae's Key Messages

- ✓ Kinship carers need similar support that Foster carers receive.
- ✓ Providing practical and financial resources is really important to help relatives set up their homes.
- ✓ A lack of practical and financial support can make it feel like the Department doesn't care about children in Kinship care.
- ✓ Let Kinship carers know what they are entitled to and how they can access support when they become a Kinship carer.
- ✓ DHHS can implement a Kinship start up package idea of \$1000.0 to support children going in to Kinship placements.

"It's just the little things. Like help with medication." Young Consultant Mae

"It hurt, seeing my family struggle.... I felt I was an extra burden." Young Consultant Mae

Promoting Stability and Permanent Care –By Young Consultant Kim


Having Stability, Love and People In Our Lives to Call Family

Young Consultant Kim highlighted that she was happy and fortunate to live in Permanent care with a loving family and with her sibling. Kim shared that she wants every young person who enters care to have what she has, a loving and stable home with people who care about her and who she calls family.

Being Asked and Listened To & Supporting Young People with Living Independently

Kim valued being asked what she wanted as a young person in relation to seeing her birth family and feeling she was heard. Kim spoke highly of how helpful it was to be supported by her carers as she grew up and supported to live independently whilst doing her studies.

Kim shared the message she received in Permanent care with her carers was "I'm their daughter and I have my family". Kim wants every young person who enters OOHC to have a stable and loving home with people they call family.



“I go and spend weekends with my carers, they are my family” Young Consultant Kim
“My carers said if I ever need help, they will be there and that I am never without them. They do the same with their other children.” Young Consultant Kim

“I want every young person who enters the care sector to have what I have, to be able to have a stable and loving home with people I call my family, we all deserve this!” Young Consultant Kim

Kim's Key Messages to the Care Sector

- ✓ To have incentives and initiatives to encourage more people to be Permanent carers.
- ✓ Make sure Permanent carers don't get forgotten. Ensure Permanent carers know support is available so they can still get support when they need it.
- ✓ Encourage and promote more people to be Permanent carers.

Better Mental Health Support for Young People, Workers, Families and Carers - By Young Consultant Ella

Need for Pro-active and Early Mental Health Support for Young People

Ella shared that she had to wait for her own mental health to get really bad before receiving support. Ella asked whether it is fair that young people reach the point of being suicidal before receiving assistance. Ella felt she was not listened to or taken seriously by mental health professionals as a young person and that this contributed to her mental health difficulties at the time.


Supporting Carers and Workers Better. Walk the Talk with Young People

Ella shared it was really hard, disappointing and heart breaking when a carer she really liked had to stop her role as her carer because the carer didn't feel supported enough. Ella felt some workers tended to use a one size fits all approach, and while there was a lot of talk about supporting her, there was no action. Ella feels that the system and workers fail to support young people enough with their mental health. While DHHS mean well, they too need more support as they cannot support each child the way they deserve while holding heavy caseloads.

Better Mental Health Care Places for Young People

Ella shared that there is a need for better mental health care facilities to support young people with their mental health, as they require a place to go without being exposed to violence, alcohol and drugs. Ella stated that it was really hard to do normal things like attend school due to the chaotic nature of her care environment at the time. Ella spoke of feeling unsafe due to basic things such as not having a lock on her door. Ella explained that the system needs to work towards breaking down the stigma of mental health as anyone can need support in their lifetime. We need to do better to support young people, families and carers by reforming mental health services.

Ella's Key Messages for The Care Sector:

- 
- ✓ We need to break the stigma of mental health! Anyone can suffer from mental health difficulties and any child or young person could need help in their lifetime.
 - ✓ There needs to be better mental health support for young people, carers and families.
 - ✓ Reforms need to be made for better and more proactive mental health training.
 - ✓ We need to train and support carers so that they are more skilled in responding to the young people that they care for and to reduce carer burn out.
 - ✓ You can't expect young people to trust if they don't know their carers or workers.
 - ✓ Encourage young people's feedback on their mental health support.
 - ✓ Support Residential workers at each house so they are trained, supported and don't leave due to a lack of it. This will help improve the trust, stability and routine for young people.

"To them [Mental Health workers] it was a one size fits all approach... All of the DHHS workers meant well, but they had heavy caseloads." Young Consultant Ella

"If we don't start talking about this now there will be no change" Young Consultant Ella

Supporting Young People's Identity

By BARWON Youth Advisory Crew (BYAC)

Challenge Bullying, Snap Stigma and Don't Serotype Kids in Care – By Jesse

Treat Us Like Other Kids and Educate Others about Care

Jesse shared that many kids experience bullying throughout their care experience. Jesse has taught his class about Foster care and about how kids in care are the same as other kids and deserve to be treated as such. Jesse informed everyone that he wants the care sector to better educate school communities about OOHC in order to reduce stigma and bullying.

Talk With Young People If They Are Moving

Jesse also spoke about the importance of workers finding ways of decreasing stress when a child or young person who is in OOHC changes homes, by helping young people understand why they are moving.

Jesse's Key Messages

- ✓ That children and young people are often bullied as a result of their care experience.
- ✓ The sector needs to do more to tackle bullying in schools and in the community and raise awareness about the lived experience of young people in OOHC.
- ✓ Support and explain to young people the reasoning for moving between houses.
- ✓ That all kids should know where they are going to be living and be able to ask questions with someone they trust. This would help children to know what to expect and provide a greater sense of certainty.




"If anyone is experiencing this {bullying}, remember to be resilient. You need to be the bigger one...and tell someone!" Young Consultant Jesse

"I've taught my class about Foster care...All students need to be taught about foster care across every school in Australia" Young Consultant Jesse



Young People Have a Right to Feel Good With Their Identity and Sharing Photos - Cat



Cat stated that young people in care should be supported in developing their identity and be able to put their photos on social media with permission from their parent's. Developing a sense of identity is really important for young people and social media is an important mechanism for this. Young people in OOHC shouldn't have to hide and should be allowed to be in photos on social media, just as like other young people. The impact of not being able to have video's shared on social media meant that Cat left her acting group because her videos could not be posted online. Cat also shared that it felt like "systemic bullying" to be told that she had to stay out of her school photo. While Cat understands that all kids in care are different, she suggested that young people over the age of 12 are supported to get guardian permission to post online where it is safe. In doing this, young people's identity formation would be supported and they would have the opportunity to learn how to make decisions for themselves.

"We're already different enough." Young Consultant Cat

"I was told I couldn't tell people I was in Foster care. Being in Foster care became a part of who I was. So why couldn't I share that? It didn't make sense." Young Consultant Cat

I like attention...and love being in photos, at school I have to sit out of photos...this makes me feel sad and bad and [its] kind of mean, I feel like I don't belong." Young Consultant Cat

Cat's Key Messages - Supporting Young People with Their Identity

- ✓ Young people have a right to an identity and to be in photos.
- ✓ The current system and legislation doesn't account for all young people's situations in care and safety measures can restrict young people's ability to participate in age appropriate activities, such as engaging online.
- ✓ DHHS could develop a form that seeks guardian permission for young people over 12 years to be allowed in photos and online videos.
- ✓ More can be done to assist young people to understand how the system works and their rights.

Support Our Friendships, Connections and Being Listened To - By Paris

Support Young People's Friendships

Paris shared that changing homes can make it hard for young people in care to maintain connections and friendships. Paris spoke of wanting to maintain contact with a friend after moving house, however the 'process' took too long, and as a result, Paris is no longer connected to this friend.

Music and Feeling Sheets Help Us Express Ourselves.

Paris shared that carers and workers can use music to better understand young people's moods and "How Are You Feeling" sheets can support this. Paris also spoke about her experience of being a young person in residential care being constantly monitored and how this can lead to young people feeling that their privacy is invaded.

"It's frustrating that permission can take too long. I didn't ask to be in the system."

Young Consultant Paris

"You can't see it [depression] because it's inside." Young Consultant Paris

"Adults need to tell us how the system works"... I've only ever found out after I have done something wrong." Young Consultant Paris

My Dream and Goals – By Nate (Supported by the Streets Ahead Program)

Nate shared that at times his life was off track however with the support of Streets Ahead (Streets Ahead is a Youth Service program ran by the Salvation Army - Salvos care East). Nate shared he is doing well thanks to support he receives from his Streets Ahead crew and has big dreams for his future. That having a good support network of people that understand him and feel like family has had the greatest impact on him. Nate shared they are able to hit the gym, do fun things and they eat together. With this support, Nate has been able to do his Year 10 studies and has ambitions of becoming a property developer!

"We always eat together, have fun & build stuff." Young Consultant Nate

"I want to catch up on my year 10 and be a property developer."
Young Consultant Nate



HOP Panellist Responses



Liana Buchanan

Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People

Commissioner Buchanan highlighted the main themes as relating to young people feeling that they don't have a sense of control, they don't have a voice and that they don't have a say in their lives. When young people have a point of view, they want people to hear it and they want those working in the system to help them take control.

Commissioner Buchanan stated that the messages shared reinforce the work that the Commission for Children and Young People are doing. A young mum who has had a tough time, then has to fight to be a mum and to get the support she needs to be a mum. The Commissioner added that young mums are not supported well in some extreme situations, that child deaths occur and in instances this could be preventable if young mums were supported better. The Commissioner stated that community is able to see what the Commission for Children and Young People table in parliament.

"The next enquiry is on young people's experiences of care. To ensure that future reform and government work is driven by young people's experiences" – Liana Buchanan, Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People Announces at the Hour of Power the next enquiry will be into young people's care experience!

"There's no particular service that coordinates all the things that a child needs in care". Everyone should know what the system offers, what's in place and what to do to follow up." Liana Buchanan – Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People

"I'm annoyed that every single seat isn't full... Every time I come here I'm blown away."
Liana Buchanan, Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People



James Fraser

Aboriginal Policy Koori Advisor and Engagement Commission for Aboriginal Children and Young People

James Fraser highlighted the courage of young people sharing their stories and their capacity to work with the barriers they experience in reaching their goals. From an Aboriginal point of view, James asked that young people continue to give the message that culture is a very strong factor for young people's life transitions and identity.

"Keep talking about culture. It's not something we can do on our own" – James Fraser

"We will think about how young people can have a voice through social media and not just having a yarn" James Fraser

Emma Fenby

Assistant Director Children and Families Reform, Department of Health and Human Services

Emma Fenby shared that her main take away is that young people want to be normal and to be able to remain connected to their friends and family. Emma advised that DHHS are currently developing a new Kinship model that will provide carers with flexible brokerage of \$1000 and a greater level of flexibility in the support that they receive from DHHS. CREATE was excited to hear these reforms and it supported what Young Consultant Mae shared about kinship carers and young people getting more financial support and a start-up support package!

Assistant Director Emma reflected on the young people's messages including what therapeutic care means, what connections are needed for children and young people and how DHHS can best support young people to stay in the same placement so they don't bounce around the system as readily.

"The snake in the backyard was finally caught so the kids could go outside and play" Emma Fenby, on Flexible Support for Carers

Katie Hooper

CEO, Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV)

Katie Hooper informed that she wouldn't miss the Hour of Power and the opportunity to hear from young people, stating we need to get the word out. Katie Hooper encourages young people to have a voice through *Carer Kafe* (*Carer Kafe* was launched on 21 April 2017, Carer KaFÉ provides learning and development opportunities for carers throughout Victoria) Took a look here! <https://www.carerkafe.org.au/>

Katie suggested having CREATE Young Consultant's form a part of carer training. She anticipates that it would be great to have this occur more readily!

<https://www.fcav.org.au/news/training>

Katie Hooper informed that she and carers often hear and share the frustrations and messages on encouraging young people in carers identity and with photos. Katie Hooper also reflected on the challenges that carers experience in communicating with the many workers that children and young people have in their lives.

"A foster child asked me: 'Why has no one told me I'm allowed to call my friends back at home?' Not one of those very busy people took the time to say which friends do you want to call?" Katie Hooper, CEO of FCAV


*"We need to make more ways to hear from young people. Maybe a webinar or something? We need to do better at learning from young people" Katie Hooper
CEO FCAV*

Dr Robyn Miller CEO of MacKillop Family Services

Robyn Miller reflected on the importance of organisational boards hearing young people's experiences and feedback in OOH. Robyn Miller reflected on young people talking about family, connections and how it feels to not feel safe in a residential care unit. Robyn Miller informed that as the CEO of a major organisation, she can't think of anything more motivating than that. Robyn Miller reflected on the importance of the people who walk through these times with young people, stating "You're carrying this bag of bricks on your back, that no one else can see, and no one at school can see it. And look at what you've done!" Robyn Miller stated that young people with an OOH experience have to have a much stronger sense of who they are than kids in other families. They have to hold on to this past, to keep on going, and to work through the future.



"I'm never too busy for CREATE, It makes everything else make sense, and everything else that we have to do."



“The young people here from CREATE today are the heartbeat... You think you know, but when you hear young people speak with such integrity about their experience... I said I’d love our board to hear it and to read it and I shared your messages with them”

Robyn Miller shared that her teachings about how to most effectively work with young people, were learnt directly from young people. Robyn Miller informed that the key thing that comes out in all research relating to young people, is the quality of the relationship and young people feeling that they have been listened to and that they are understood.

In addition, Robyn Miller stated that it is of the utmost importance that young people live with good and kind hearted people.

“Yes we read the history of the person. But we kind of sanitise the language.” Dr Robyn Miller, CEO MacKillop Family Services

“We’ve got to do stuff around budgets and compliance... sometimes that becomes people focus”

Take the time to talk and listen and to value what they’re teaching us. Your greatest teachers will be the children and young people that we serve.” Dr Robyn Miller, CEO MacKillop Family Services

“You didn’t give up on me... You didn’t see me just as a kid with problems.... And you didn’t give up on my mum. Even when I’d given up on her.” Dr Robyn Miller, CEO MacKillop Family Services

Honourable Minister Jenny Mikakos

Minister for Families and Children, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth Affairs

The Honourable Minister Jenny Mikakos joined the Hour of Power and shared that the strong voice of young people with an OOHC background is invaluable in her work. Minister Jenny Mikakos shared that from the first time she sat down with young people from CREATE in her first year as a Minister, it was a real eye opener for her and Minister’s need to continue to work with CREATE to achieve what the system hopes to achieve.

“From small things to big things...you’re making a huge difference.”

Minister Mikakos stated that she has implemented key improvements to improve the lives of children and young people in OOHC including the following:

- Making the Debutante Ball an ongoing commitment of the Victorian Government
- Funding additional residential care staff and undertaking more auditing of services
- \$62 million dollars in Therapeutic Care Packages to support young people transitioning from residential care to home-based care

- Increased carer training and pod casts through *Carer Kafé*
 - Shifting the perspective towards residential care only being a short stay with the view of young people transitioning to Home Based Care.
 - The Roadmap to Reform Southern Pilots encouraging a focus on greater mental health support for young people
 - Better training, support and minimum qualifications for residential care workers
 - Young people being encouraged to take up opportunities available to them
 - Lookout centres funded state-wide to improve communication between DHHS and Department of Education and Employment and to improve educational outcomes
 - SIBs 'Compass' leaving care program has been implemented
- 36 dedicated Kinship workers have been funded to improve support for Kinship carers

"I'm really happy to be here and to be a part of this"
Honourable Minister Jenny Mikakos

Young Consultants have and shared their insights into many of these topics and issues. Many of the reforms and changes implemented by the Honourable Minister Jenny Mikakos can be linked to the topics and issues CREATE Young Consultants talked about! Young Consultant Ella spoke about the need for better mental health support for young people and carers. Young consultant Zac spoke about the need for Residential Care reforms and that they need to be improved, that things can be done to make them safer which link in with the extra funding into more staffing and training in residential care and auditing of residential services. Young Consultant Mae spoke of better support for kinship young people and carers which fit with kinship care reform and dedicated kinship workers to better support kinship carers which Mae spoke about.

CREATE Young Consultants and all young people with care experiences hold incredible insights due to their lived experiences (seen in the HOP). Young people need to be supported and empowered so this is recognised and they are respected sharing these if they wish. These insights and suggestions help inform the care sector when thinking about implementing change and improving the care system. It is great to see the Honourable Minister and the Department (DHHS) is on the same page with some of the young people's messages and ideas for improvements to help make care better!

HOP Audience Responses, Ideas and Actions

The BIGHOP had in excess of 70 sector professionals and young people attending and the energy shared in response to Young Consultants ideas was incredibly positive.

In the future it is our vision the HOP will have increased attendance. By care sector partners listening to the perspectives of young people with a lived experience they too are empowered to create change and ensure that young people are given every opportunity to reach their full potential.

CREATE are enthusiastic of the audience's responses during the youth led audience activity, in which the young consultants asked the audience the following four questions:

1. What are you taking away hearing from us today?
2. What can you do in your role? What steps can you start taking now?

3. Reflect and rate from 1-10 your organisations child centred practice

4. What is your goal for the care system of the future?

The audience's responses, ideas and actions are outlined further in Appendix B of this HOP report. The HOP audience feedback highlights the power of young people's voices, speaking up and sharing their stories, messages and ideas to the care sector. The young people called on the audience to take action. This supports the care sector present to be empowered by what young people are saying and to act in an informed way.



In response to question 2: What can you do in your role? What steps can you start taking now? (as seen in Appendix B) The care sectors response was

overwhelming; it strongly identified the importance of young people's voices and being able to change their practice and the system by listening to young people and including them in decision making!

CREATE Foundation Young Consultants shared they were happy to be involved in supporting the audience with taking action in making improvements by being available to support them with their expert experience and insights.

What Action is Being Taken?

1. Enquiry Into Young Peoples Care Experience Announced at the HOP


Young Consultants speak up to be heard and to help make a difference. The PLATFORM Crew make a difference by informing the care sector in why and where they can take action!

Action has been taken and steps are underway within the care system in Victoria. At the BIG HOP in March panel member and Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People Liana Buchanan announced an enquiry into young people's experiences of care! Liana stated this enquiry will help future reforms and government work being informed and driven by what young people in care are saying and by their experiences.

CREATE Foundation supports the commission for children and young people's enquiry into young people's experience of care and it is underway. More information about the enquiry can be found here:

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/news/commission-seeks-views-on-young-peoples-experience-of-care/>

2. Support and momentum for young people transitioning from state care with the home stretch campaign. State Liberal and Labor announce steps to better support young people in state care up to the age of 21.



CREATE has advocated for many years in this area including through previous HOPs, Youth Advisory Groups (YAG's), in depth research and ongoing youth participation, empowerment and advocacy sharing what's important to young people in care, with a care experience and what needs to improve. CREATE welcome the recent announcements in 2018 driven by the advocacy campaign led by Homestretch Campaign with announcements by the two major political parties in Victoria, the Liberals and Labor pledging to support more young people in state care up to the age of 21.

Support and follow the homestretch campaign here. Sign up to support the campaign and receive updates: <http://thehomestretch.org.au/>

- ✓ **The Victorian Liberal Party Announce Supporting Young People Transitioning from State Care with a Pilot in June 2018 – Appendix E**
- ✓ **The Victorian Labor Party Announce Supporting Young People Transitioning from State Care with an Announcement in September 2018 – Appendix F**

3.Supporting Improvement of Residential Care at Resi Rocks!

CREATE supported Young Consultant Zac sharing his messages on improving residential care at the 2018 Resi Rocks Forum with residential workers and coordinators from across Victoria!

4.Reforms to Kinship Care Underway in Victoria

Emma Fenby the then Assistant Director Children and Families Reform, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) announced DHHS are developing a new kinship model that will provide more flexible support to carers and young people in kinship care. This commenced role out in mid-2018.

5. Plus lots of working together with DHHS and care sector organisations supporting youth participation, empowerment and advocacy!

Where To From Here?

The HOP is in a phase of rapid expansion and recognition, particularly given that we are now in an election year. The next HOP will be in October 2018 with an Election focus. It is our intention that the major State political parties will be in attendance to both hear young people's priorities in the lead into the election, in addition to providing their ideas and opinions about the OOHC system and what they would like to see prioritised in the sector. Historically young people's messages have been practised based, with the October Election Hop being more focused in legislation and Policy. Based on these audiences response, feedback and planned actions the HOP Young Consultants impact has been immediate. Young people's stories, messages and ideas help drive the care sector to take action!

See the HOP audience's responses and action pledged in Appendix B in this report!

CREATE Foundation supports young people to share their messages safely and in an empowering way. By hearing young people's insights, messages, stories and ideas the care system has invaluable knowledge on what's working well and what needs to change. Together we can help to improve the care system for children, young people, carers and workers.

CREATE Foundation Thank....

CREATE Foundation is proud of firstly all the amazing Young Consultants and other young leaders who volunteered their time in preparing and sharing their stories and insights. Empowered and driven young people make the Hour of Power the success that it consistently is, including:

Ash P, Ash W, Sharney, Isla, Mae, Cassie, Cat, Jesse, Logan, Nate, Zac, Kim, Brittany & Ella

CREATE Foundation would also like to acknowledge and thank HOP supporters including panel guests, audience and our care sector supporters from across Victoria. Thank you for your ongoing commitment and for your support showing you value young people and what they have to say. CREATE thank the care sector supporters who support young people being connected to CREATE and supporting youth participation, empowerment and advocacy.

Together we can help make a difference to improve the lives of children and young people in care!



HOP HAPPY SNAPS





Appendix A: What is the Background of the HOP Youth Forum & Supporting Youth Empowerment

The PLATFORM crew of Young Consultants are based in Victoria and was established by the CREATE Foundation in 2015. This was in response to the increase of local Youth Advisory Groups attended by young people in out-of-home care. The Platform is made up of young people across all Divisions of Victoria, who are self-identified leaders with an out-of-home care experience. They meet throughout the year to look at emerging issues in their local areas and to discuss solutions and actions. The young people are all committed to sharing their messages and ideas to the audience for better outcomes for children and young people in care.

Supporting Youth Empowerment

Many young people connect with CREATE and are supported to be EMPOWERED because they have been encouraged and supported to do so by someone in their lives. It may be through their carer, a worker, teacher or a family member.

CREATE appreciates our sector partners who value youth participation and empowerment and what it means to young people. Sector leaders, passionate caseworkers and families and carers all can play a big role in helping to encourage and EMPOWER young people to see that their voice matters, and they don't have to be public speaking champions to have their say.

CREATE consults directly with children and young people and provides opportunities for them to share what matters to them. CREATE values children and young people's input and believes that their participation is paramount in decisions which impact on their daily lives. CREATE works alongside care sector partners to spread the word about valuing young people's opinions and experience, as well as the benefits of involving young people in meaningful participation, empowerment and advocacy in creating change in the OOHHC sector.

In Victoria, CREATE acknowledges there are a number of care sector organisations who are committed to hearing from children and young people. CREATE values the effort of these organisations and staff who dedicate their time and resources to support youth participation and empowerment.


By including young people, and through sector wide collaboration we can together make a big difference for children and young people in the care system.

Appendix B: BIG HOP March 2018 Audience Feedback and Action Plan!

Question 1: What are you taking away hearing from us today?


- ✓ To listen to young people
- ✓ Need for education in care – when young people are removed from their home
- ✓ It can be scary to share your views and speak up. Young People need support to do this!
- ✓ More support for Kinship carers and young people living in Kinship care
- ✓ That kids have rights to make decisions about their bodies too.
- ✓ Consistent Safe home with support for all children and young people
- ✓ More support for carers to enable them to look after groups of siblings
- ✓ Message: That workers and carers need more support to so they can best support young people.
- ✓ Need to know about what's in their child protection order.
- ✓ To Facilitate better communication between Residential staff and young people
- ✓ We can learn from the lived experiences of children and young people in care
- ✓ "Young people need more of a voice in their choices – lives. They need to be listened to more!
- ✓ Making Residential care safer
- ✓ More help for Kinship carers
- ✓ Keeping our young people informed of what's going on for them
- ✓ Kids have very valid concerns and need to be listened to
- ✓ That young people should all be better informed of the resources available to them!
- ✓ So many successful stories! So excited to be part of the HOP today. The young people today are so inspirational!
- ✓ The critical need to support Residential care units to feel more like a home
- ✓ Residential care units need to be safer!
- ✓ Everyone's experience is different. It important to listen to everyone's experience
- ✓ Young people should be more involved in shaping policies and programs. Programs that impact them!
- ✓ Kinship carers need help
- ✓ The need to better support Kinship carers especially when they first take in a child
- ✓ We need better support for Kinship carers and give more agency to young people over their care arrangements
- ✓ Empower children and young people! Encourage services to listen to children and young people and take them seriously



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- ✓ Support for Kinship carers
 - ✓ Monitor the sibling program and ensure it is strong for child and young people
 - ✓ Children and young people want to feel safe
 - ✓ Skilled and experienced workers. Especially to advocate and navigate the system
 - ✓ #CREATEHOP – Stronger doors in Residential care homes. People need to feel safe
 - ✓ We need more avenues for young people's voices
 - ✓ The critical need to support Residential units to feel more like a home
 - ✓ Everyone has a story. People can (and have to) listen to you
 - ✓ More support for young people. Connecting with young people and keeping them safe
 - ✓ Children and young people need to know their rights. We need to ensure all carers tell child and young people their rights. We need to put it in the FCAV newsletter
 - ✓ That carers need help too
 - ✓ I think decision makers should put their kids in Residential care for a week. Then let's see if there is action to make Residential care really care for kids
 - ✓ Freedom from anonymity (work around)
 - ✓ Listen to young people. They are the experts!
 - ✓ The need to reform in the OOHC system. Things need to improve!
 - ✓ Real life stories and how to support change in our work. Making Residential care safer. Helping Kinship carers
 - ✓ Children and young people are experts by virtue of their lived experiences. Their voices are vital for change
 - ✓ The issues around no photo/video
 - ✓ To feel safe in the home. More privacy in the rooms and a lock on their own doors
 - ✓ Young People need to feel safe at home.
 - ✓ More funding to support projects.
 - ✓ So many! Young people want a voice, a say, to be safe and to have dreams
 - ✓ The need for better communication between staff and young people.
 - ✓ Young people are the experts in their own lives. Ask them the best/worst things to get to know them and what they want.
 - ✓ Being safe in Residential care. Being more of a voice for the kids in Residential care units within my role
 - ✓ DHHS could do more to support transitions and support Kinship carers.
 - ✓ Ensure young people in Kinship carer get better support earlier
 - ✓ Listen and let children and young people lead in the decision making
 - ✓ It is important to communicate with young people about how the system works – So they can help change it!
 - ✓ Resi needs more funding to keep kids focused on the good things
 - ✓ Young People! Know what they need – We need to have better systems to hear and respond!
 - ✓ Participation is power. Important to have ideas responded to by decision makers.
 - ✓ Never let go of your dreams!

Question 2: What can you do in your role? What steps can you start taking now?

- ✓ Consult with young people about what they need
- ✓ Always think about ways to include the voice of young people when designing policy/services.

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- ✓ Have a strong focus on listening to the voices of young people (and their practical ideas) when developing policy.
 - ✓ Get the voices of young people to carers. Step 1. Foster care newsletter. Other step. Training module for carers written by young people!
 - ✓ Connect young people to those who can make change. Look for opportunities to support the voice of those in care.
 - ✓ Roll out new model of Kinship care and embed in BAV to support carers, young people and children in Kinship care.
 - ✓ Encourage the young people we work with to become more involved in whatever way they can. In sharing their ideas.
 - ✓ Listen to young people, ideas and opinions by advocating for them and supporting them to speak up.
 - ✓ Gather positive stories from one house and share it with staff from other houses to inspire them to enhance their practice.
 - ✓ Advocate for policies that provide more support for carers as well as for more bottom-up consultation.
 - ✓ Work with care teams towards informing young people of what's available to them and the need for change.
 - ✓ Design better systems for permission for photos/video.
 - ✓ Advocate support for Kinship carers.
 - ✓ Build foster care up to get more Permanent carers or carers who can siblings, culture and individuality.
 - ✓ Work with young people to identify what they need from us.
 - ✓ Help young people get their voices heard. Post their stories on to our social media channels.
 - ✓ Listen to young people! Find avenues like CREATE for young people to have a voice.
 - ✓ Helping carers to be aware of support for them and the kids in their care.
 - ✓ To speak out about changes that need to happen!
 - ✓ Listen to young people and assist them to be heard. Advocate with them.
 - ✓ Involve young people in developing better legal services in Child Protection. Invite young people to help us from the start of our work.
 - ✓ Encourage the young people I work with to become more involved in whatever way they can, in sharing their ideas.
 - ✓ Would love to be part of the CREATE team and to keep pursuing my goals!
 - ✓ Influence decision makers to provide opportunities for young people to participate.
 - ✓ Greater communities. More training. Active listening.
 - ✓ Take the messages from children and young people today back to work so decision makers can hear them.
 - ✓ Advocate for the voices of children and young people to be heard in all parts of the system.
 - ✓ Advocate for more Kinship support.
 - ✓ Consider ways to better involve young people in out of home care in education policy / programs.
 - ✓ To listen more to young people and let them make more decisions.
 - ✓ Use my Government role to create change by working more on the ground.
 - ✓ Take messages from young people back to Government to do things differently.
 - ✓ I can use young people's experiences to drive my work and my advice to government.
 - ✓ Get young people back to school. Step: Look at data from Child Protection and link young people with schools.


- ✓ Get more involved. Increase my understanding of problems and be an advocate for change.
- ✓ Advocate for policies that provide more support to carers as well as for more bottom up consultation.
- ✓ Use my position to give a platform to children and young people to speak put their words into action.
- ✓ I can't because I don't have a voice.
- ✓ Incorporate what I hear today and advocate for it. Work better to include youth voices in what we do.
- ✓ Listen and advocate for young people. Tell them their rights.
- ✓ Keep talking about my passion. That's my step.
- ✓ Advocate in my agency for stronger youth voices publically.
- ✓ Create a stronger voice for kids in care in our schools. Education is so important!
- ✓ Advocate for better education about care in schools so everyone is informed.
- ✓ Imagine better record keeping systems that support everyone to do better.
- ✓ Be the voice for kids in Resi. Help give them a voice.
- ✓ Let people know Kinship carers need help! Promote when speaking to anyone who listens.
- ✓ Advocate for young people in care to get an education that meets their needs.
- ✓ Influence workers in making ressi safer or supporting the young person to feel safer, Influence schools to make students feel safe. Support plans and educate teachers.


Question 3: Reflect and rate from 1-10 (10 being the best) your organisations youth participation and empowerment practice. E.G How well do you believe your organisation currently supports youth participation and empowerment?



Question 4: What is your goal for the care system of the future?

- ✓ Well resourced, child centred, recognises and respects rights and helps kids thrive.
- ✓ Care equals Homes not houses. Support extended as long as people need it. Young people's rights and voices are at the centre of all decisions.
- ✓ System that is responsive to the needs of the young people.
- ✓ Empower young people to be able to make their own supported decisions about their futures in safe environments.

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- ✓ To help develop records and IT systems that enable children and young people in care to reach their potential.
 - ✓ Systematic change that supports the child for their whole life and ensures the same life outcomes as children not in care.
 - ✓ Goal to help make change and positive impact in the system. My vision for the care system is for positive impact.
 - ✓ Always think about ways to include the voice of young people when designing policy/services.
 - ✓ Have a strong focus on listening to the voices of young people (and their practical ideas) when developing policy.
 - ✓ No Residential care units alternative settings?
 - ✓ Using young people for political gain and neglecting them for political and funding protection.
 - ✓ That young people feel loved, heard, accepted and nurtured to discover their passion and purpose.
 - ✓ All young people are in a safe environment with loving well supported carers.
 - ✓ That Residential care kids go into family homes with professionally trained full time carers are paid appropriately.
 - ✓ Young people in care are given opportunity to grow and succeed and supported to be happy.
 - ✓ That children and young people's outcomes are at the centre of all we do.
 - ✓ That children/young people in care are empowered to have their family connections, cultural and individual needs achieved.
 - ✓ Flexible empowering young people at centre of decision making and design of system to well support carers.
 - ✓ A well-resourced system supporting all young people on their needs, cultures, identity, dreams and potential.
 - ✓ Services respond directly to what each child or young person wants, needs and aspires to!
 - ✓ Families are supported early to keep their kids happy and healthy. If kids can't stay with their family that they have options and kids can decide between Kinship or many choices of Foster care. That the state supports and treats kids in care as the incredible people they are!
 - ✓ The care system is a safe place where children and young people have a say in what happens.
 - ✓ My vision is that all children that go into care find a family that is right for them. They are provided support and resources and the carers are also provided support and resources and that thought also is given to the future. They need hope!
 - ✓ Creating Change. People need to think creatively about how the work they have to do can incorporate more collaboration.
 - ✓ Increase participation for young people in decisions impacting on their lives.
 - ✓ More investment in what young people can do and be in rather than what they are not.
 - ✓ Taking away: We can combine all of our agendas and work together. It's possible!
 - ✓ Residential Care units encourage the kids in their care to pursue education. No Residential Care units would be better.
 - ✓ Young people to have more control of what their life looks like (System becomes empowering not disempowering)
 - ✓ More support around how kids use their time.
 - ✓ Supporting kids and young people to stay with their families more in the first place.
 - ✓ Support built around the child not the other way round.

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- ✓ That there are equal opportunities for young people in the care system as with all other young people. Equitable support.
 - ✓ More paid, educated, trained carers in Kinship and Foster care.
 - ✓ Young people having more of a say. Voice! A Care Youth Parliament – Politicians need to attend.
 - ✓ Young people having more agency to live the life they want.
 - ✓ A system actually centred on care and childhood.
 - ✓ More support for carers and personal development. So they can keep their care of their people.
 - ✓ FAIR
 - ✓ More Foster carers
 - ✓ Enable education as a realistic pathway for young people transitioning from care.
 - ✓ Reduced numbers in OOHC. Better supports available for children, young people and their carers.
 - ✓ Majority of young people in care in well supported Kinship care.
 - ✓ Placements and supports are based on what the young person needs and wants.
 - ✓ More case management and place based approaches, better trained and supported workers and a system for clients to have some control on their case management.
 - ✓ Listen and learn more.
 - ✓ All kids in care getting and education.
 - ✓ Child Driven. More focus on longevity support than bandage approaches.
 - ✓ No Residential care. Children and young people cared for therapeutically by a family.
 - ✓ For more resources to be provided in achieving real outcomes rather than just covering risk.
 - ✓ No Residential care units but caring, educated placements for kids in OOHC. Inclusive practices in schools.
 - ✓ No need for Residential units and more inclusive schools
 - ✓ More support to families before children enter care. 2. More independent housing options. 3. Extended care to 21. 4. More workers available until 25
 - ✓ A system which sees young people in care receive better support advice, guidance, resourcing, education and training.

Appendix C: The BIG HOP Social Media Response!



Liana Buchanan @BuchananLiana · Mar 1

Raise your hand if you think we can make a better care system...and the whole room raises their hands at [#CREATEHOP](#)

3 9 27



Mind Of My Own @MindOfMyOwnApp · Mar 2

We have loved watching the [#CREATEHOP](#) action from the other side of the world. Fantastic to see when [#thevoiceofthechild](#) is heard and the difference this can make. [#participation](#) is key to change!

CREATE Foundation @CREATEfnd

CREATE's Hour of Power is about to kick off in Melbourne! The sector will come together to hear from care experienced young people about what can make a difference to their lives. VIP panel members joining the conversation include @JennyMikakos MP [#CREATEHOP](#)

1

↳ Liana Buchanan Retweeted



FCAV @vicfostercare · Mar 1

Excited to be hearing from the young people with a care experience at [#CREATEHOP](#) today, and to hear Liana Buchanan, Commissioner, announcing the Inquiry into young people's experience of OOHC



7 8



Liana Buchanan @BuchananLiana · Mar 1

[#CREATEHOP](#) hears "I had a disability & the way people dealt with my behaviour was to lock me in a room and tell me to calm down". Not OK.

1 4



Liana Buchanan @BuchananLiana · Mar 1

Thanks to all the young people who spoke their minds at [#CREATEHOP](#) - your advocacy for kids in care is powerful & I for one will take it on.



↻ 2

♡ 7



Jenny Mikakos MP @JennyMikakos · Mar 1

Proud to be part of [@CREATEfnd](#) Hour of Power, a great way for Young People to discuss how to make things better for kids in out of home care [#CREATEHOP](#) [#springst](#)



↻ 3

♡ 16



Liana Buchanan @BuchananLiana · Mar 1

[#CREATEHOP](#) hears "I had a disability & the way people dealt with my behaviour was to lock me in a room and tell me to calm down". Not OK.



1



♡ 4




Robyn Miller @DrRobyn_Miller · Mar 1

The Create Youth Forum was fantastic. Listening to young people in out of home care is the heart of what we do. [#CREATEHOP](#)







♡ 7






Liana Buchanan @BuchananLiana · Mar 1





[#CREATEHOP](#) hears from young pple with experience in care: "It's important to have a voice and be heard."




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Calum Ware @CWareCLDYW · Mar 1




Fantastic and inspiring speech from [@DrRobyn_Miller](#) from [@MacKillopFS](#) on her working experience. Personally gives me confidence to know I'm in the same boat and effectively, doing well, given the same challenges and experiences she faced. [#CREATEHOP](#) [@CREATEfnd](#)


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MacKillop FS @MacKillopFS · Mar 1

"Our greatest teachers are the young people and families we have the privilege of working with" [@DrRobyn_Miller](#) [#CREATEHOP](#)



 5
 



Gemma Hardie @gemmainmelbs · Mar 1

Minister [@JennyMikakos](#) commits to an annual Deb Ball for young people and gets a big round of applause!!!! [#CREATEHOP](#)


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MacKillop FS @MacKillopFS · Mar 1

Young people from [@CREATEfnd](#) joined by [@JennyMikakos](#) - Thank you for your strong voice and feedback. [#CREATEHOP](#)



 3
 



FCAV @vicfostercare · Mar 1

FCAV and others in the sector hearing from the young people with a care experience at [#CREATEHOP](#) today, and... fb.me/7QPlgz0Uq


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 Liana Buchanan Retweeted

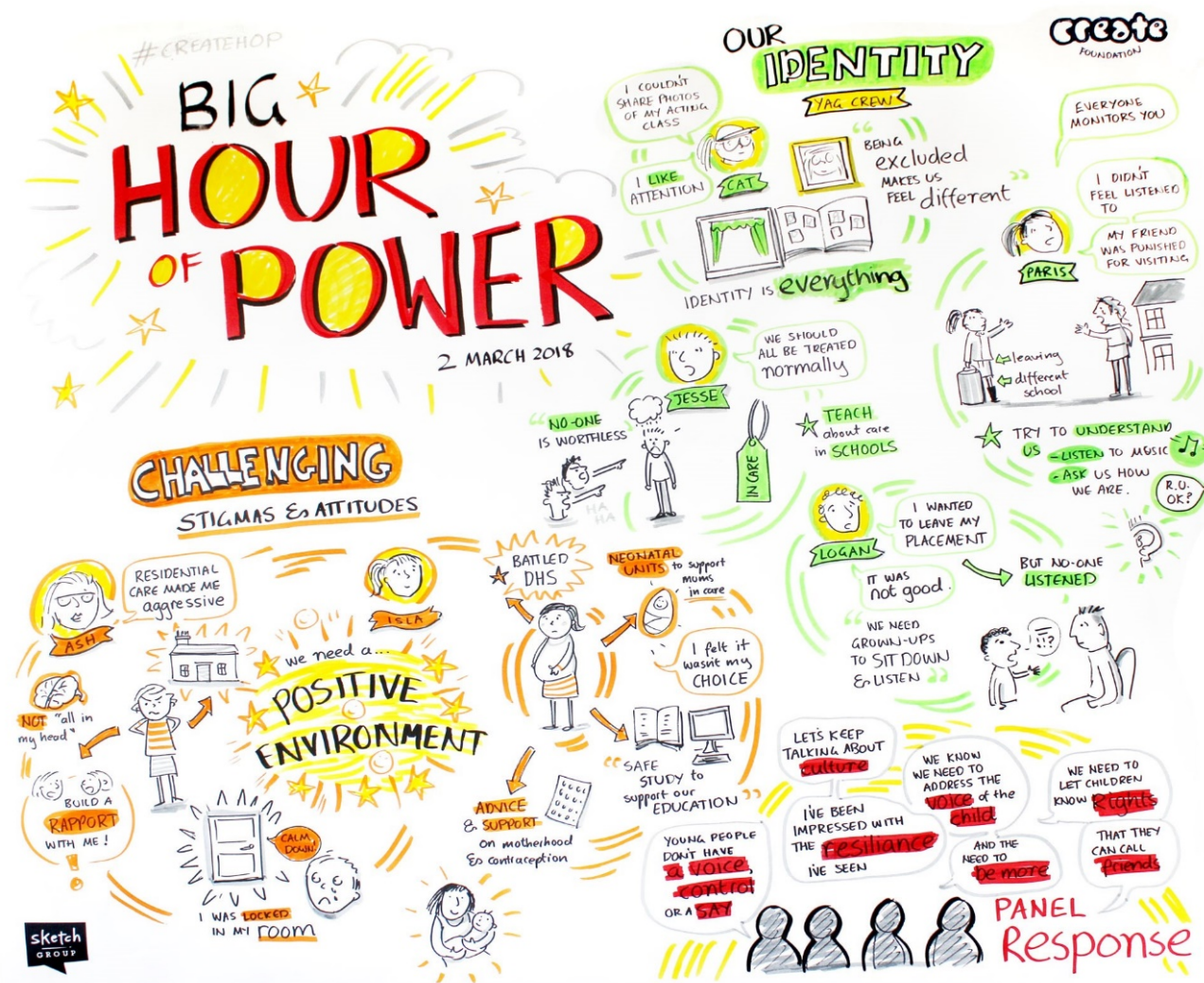


Calum Ware @CWareCLDYW · Mar 1

Special mention to [@BuchananLiana](#). Was great to hear an accent from back home at the [#CREATEHOP](#) event. [✉@CREATEfnd](#)


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Appendix D: The BIG HOP Young Peoples Messages via Sketch It!





Appendix E: Victorian Liberal Party Announce Supporting Young People Transitioning from State Care with a Pilot in June 2018

“A Liberal Nationals Government will pilot the Homestretch program and provide funding for 75 places per year over two years for young people transitioning from state care, to support their education, employment, housing, physical and psychological goals.

In a study by Anglicare Victoria it was found that extending support for young people who are transitioning from state care between the ages of 18 to 21, can halve homelessness, prevent alcohol and drug abuse, reduce incidents of mental health, and involvement in the criminal justice system as well as better enable the state’s vulnerable youth to achieve their full potential.

Whilst Victorian legislation already mandates that DHHS support children who transition from state care, studies also indicate that there are still hundreds of cases of individuals unsupported.

An evaluation will be built into the program to ensure it is effective in helping young people at this challenging time.

Leader of the Opposition, Matthew Guy: “We will provide more support for Victoria’s most vulnerable kids.

“I want to break the current cycle of despair that young vulnerable people experience and this initiative will give those young people hope for the future.”

Comments by Shadow Minister for Families and Children, Georgie Crozier:

“A Liberal Nationals Government will provide practical and useful support to vulnerable young people who are leaving state care because we think every young person deserves a future where they can strive for their dreams.

“Young people leaving state care face an uncertain future and we are committed to making sure that each one has the opportunities to improve their education and training, get a good job and plan for their future.”

<https://www.matthewguy.com.au/media-release/guy-crozier-more-support-for-the-most-vulnerable/>



Appendix F: Victorian Labor Party Announce Supporting Young People Transitioning from State Care with an Announcement in September 2018

“The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring young people make a successful transition from state care to independent living by extending their supports up to the age of 21. Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos today announced \$11.6 million over five years to roll out Home Stretch starting in the first half of 2019, which will give young people the option of remaining with their carer until the age of 21.

The program will arm young people with the tools they need to live on their own two feet, as well as extending care allowance support to foster and kinship carers.

In addition, specialised workers will provide tailored support to young people, helping them to get jobs and access education, as well training and life coaching to help young people set goals and aspirations for their future.

Carers will also be eligible to be reimbursed for the costs of caring for the young person. Young people leaving residential care will be eligible for support with housing costs.

Currently, young Victorians formally leave care at 18 years of age, although a range of further supports are available should they need them.

This investment means 50 young care leavers will receive these supports as a matter of course each year with a total of 250 able to access the support.

Evidence suggests a more gradual and supported transition to independent living can lead to significantly improved outcomes for young people and lower costs to government in the longer term.

The Home Stretch trial builds on the investments already made by the Labor Government for young people leaving care, including over \$5 million per annum for the Springboard program which links them to employment and training, and \$2.3 million for the continuation of the Better Futures trial which provides tailored support to young people to help them transition from care to independence.

The \$14.2 million COMPASS initiative will also support a further 200 young people leaving care.

The Labor Government also invests more than \$6 million a year in services for care leavers, including post care support, referral and information services, brokerage, mentoring and specific services for Aboriginal young people leaving care.

Home Stretch aligns with the Labor Government’s *Roadmap for Reform*, which aims to shift the children and family services system from crisis response to early intervention and prevention and is backed by a further \$858.6 million through this year’s Budget.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos

“For young people who may have spent their whole lives in care, leaving doesn’t come easy.”

“We know we can do more to support them so that they’re empowered and ready to take that step – and implementing Home Stretch will do just that.”

“Every dollar we spend on supporting young people as they prepare to leave care, we get repaid in spades – they will do better and contribute more to our community.”

<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/helping-vulnerable-young-people-on-the-home-stretch/>

Appendix G: Commission For Children and Young People Current Systemic Inquiry Info Page: *In our own words: childrens and young people's experience of care*

"The inquiry we're running at the moment is about understanding what it's really like to enter, live in and leave care, and what needs to change so the Commission can make recommendations to improve it.

When we've finished, we'll send a report to the government about what young people have told us and the changes you want to see.

Our inquiry will provide an important opportunity for children and young people to share their experience of out-of-home care in Victoria. If you are living in or have experience of out-of-home care and would like to play a pivotal role in informing how the care sector can change in the future, we want to hear from you.

The Commission is conducting this inquiry because there have been lots of inquiries into out-of-home-care by different government departments over the years but none of these have focused on the experiences of children and young people.

Do you want to be part of our inquiry?

There are a number of ways you can be involved in this inquiry and share your experience about being in care.

If you give us a few details here we will get back to you about opportunities to contribute in your area. Anyone who is part of the face-to-face consultations will be recognised with a gift card.

You can also send us an email at oohc@ccyp.vic.gov.au if you have any questions about the inquiry.

You can also take part in one of our anonymous online surveys.

[Survey for children and young people who have left care](#)

[Survey for children and young people who are currently living in care.](#)

Finally, keep an eye out for us, we will be popping up at various events over the coming months, and at these we will give you the opportunity to have your say and contribute to the inquiry.

Be involved and shape the future!"

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/upholding-childrens-rights/systemic-inquiries/in-our-own-words/>



COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



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