MEDIA RELEASE

27 June 2019

CREATE CALLS FOR SHARING INFORMATION

TO IMPROVE CHILD SAFETY IN CARE

The Audit Office of NSW has released a report illuminating the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) systems of tendering, contracting and monitoring of essential child protection and homelessness services for vulnerable children and families under strain.

Titled: "*Contracting non-government organisations*" (26 June, 2019), the report highlights inadequate training, support and guidance for FACS contract staff responsible for monitoring external non-government agencies who provide care, protection and housing for vulnerable children, young people and families. Services provided to children and families are in turn impacted and these same services are often criticised for the quality of care they offer.

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.

Today, CREATE Foundation's Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed, said in response to the report; "*The report highlights that there are not adequate resources within government departments and this impacts on their ability to keep children safe*"

CREATE welcomes the long awaited implementation of the anticipated Quality Assurance Framework. It defines the outcomes for all children and young people in out-of-home care with respect to:

- Safety: children and young people feel safe, secure and protected from harm;
- Permanency: children and young people have residential stability and maintain relationships with family, kin and community;
- Wellbeing: academic achievement, mental health, cultural and spiritual identity, social functioning and physical health.

An additional significant contributing factor has been the challenges of appropriate information sharing. "*Appropriate inter-agency and department sharing of client information can positively impact child safety, wellbeing and establishing permanency and stability,*" added Ms Reed.

CREATE would welcome the opportunity to promote information sharing across the sector and with FACS – to ensure children and young people are provided the best opportunity to succeed and have access to service supports.

For more information please visit the CREATE website at **www.create.org.au**

For further comment from CREATE Foundation's Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed, and/or a young person with care experience please call Leigh White 0431 932 122 or via hello@leighwhite.com.au, or Andrea Moller 0402 050 418 and andrea@admarcoms.com.au

Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

- 45,800 children were in out-of-home care across Australia at 30 June 2018
- 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 who are also in care
- Most young people will have between 3 and 6 caseworkers
- 76% of young people in care over the age of 15 don't have or are unsure if they have a leaving care plan

McDowall, J. J. (2018). Out of Home Care Children and Young People's Views After Five Years of National Standards