

Review of TILA Survey Questions and Landing Pages

Review conducted on Friday 1st of April over Zoom by:

- Ben McMullin, National Influencing Officer, CREATE
- Kate Martin, National Influencing Manager, CREATE

Survey review conducted by:

- Dr Joseph J McDowall, Executive Director (Research), CREATE

Participants:

- Youth Consultant 1: F, 21, NSW
- Youth Consultant 2: M, 23, Vic
- Youth Consultant 3: F, 19, Vic

The CREATE Foundation is a national consumer peak body advocating for children and young people with an out-of-home care experience. CREATE Foundation's mission is to create a better life for children and young people in care (CYPIC). CREATE does this through: Connecting children and young people to each other, to CREATE, and to their Community; Empowering children and young people to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and skills that enable them to have a voice and be heard; Changing the care system, in consultation with children and young people, through advocacy to improve policies, practices, and services, and increase community awareness.


The Federal Government's Department of Social Services Indigenous Policy Unit and TILA, Children's Policy Branch requested CREATE Foundation's assistance in reviewing two question sets on the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA). This survey is designed to capture young people's voices as part of an investigation into access to TILA that is planned to take place and will be led by the Department of Social Services.

The scope of the proposal and the focus of the review by young people included the following:

- proposed landing pages (2-4 pages) for the survey, (child appropriate language and tone).
- The language and tone of the survey questions.
- Any questions that should be removed or rephrased.
- Any missed opportunities or lines of questioning that could be included.

CREATE Young People Respondents

Three young people who had been through CREATE empowerment programs participated in stage 1 of the survey review. Two of the young people were from Victoria and one from NSW, with one of




the Victorian young people advising that they had been in care and transitioned to independence in QLD. Initially five young people were interested in participating; however, the three chosen were the ones available within the required timeframe. All young people had experience of applying for or using TILA. They were aged 19 – 23 years of age with one female, one male and one non-gender specific respondent who also identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Of the others, one young person identified as Fijian/Indian/Australian and one as Maori. The young people were selected by State Coordinators and not by the Policy and Advocacy Team at CREATE. One young person participated in the review on their own with CREATE staff support and the other two were interviewed together. Prior to the interview the young people were contacted by the National Influencing Officer and provided with verbal information followed by an email outlining the purpose of the consultation and the Landing Page and Question Sets to review. More time was provided within the interview to review each section and the interviewers led each young person through the information to gather their feedback.

Landing Page

Two versions of the Landing Page were provided for review. Overall, the view was that Option 1 was the preferred Landing Page with clearer structure, content, and better use of imagery and colour (yet still with improvements to be made). Feedback on the landing pages included:

- Take the additional language in the introduction from landing page 2 and use it with improved icons on landing page 1.
- Add more colour to make it more visually engaging – the young people reflected that it reminded them of schoolwork and was likely to turn young people off completing the survey.
- Avoid stock icons. Suggestion from CREATE staff is to use icons from the noun project (<https://thenounproject.com/>) which do a good job of using established iconography that also engages with young audiences. The idea that young people shared was that the look and feel of the icons was not engaging – use icons yes but add colour and a sense of fun to more deeply engage a young audience.
- Young people suggested the questions sets and landing page would have benefited from a co-design process from the beginning; it is challenging to become involved in a project when a structure is already established.
- The information that starts on page 2 “What you can expect” was confusing and difficult for young people to understand. Suggestions to improve this were to break up the paragraph and to use more young people friendly language (i.e., clear and simple language). For instance, the second sentence in that section could be broken up by listing what the questions will cover in dot points. Additionally, remove the language after the comma in the last sentence.
- This confusion increased in the “Did you know?” section as the language was not clear for the young people and could benefit from placing it in a better place for doing the survey. Suggestions were made to improve this by including this at the top of the survey rather than on the landing page and that a process map or flow chart might help to explain this better. It is also important to use simpler language than ‘anonymous’. Could be something like, “we



won't ask for your name or personal details". Also, the submission ID idea is unclear, could you provide more information about how it will be sent and why it is useful for the survey?

- The “If you need assistance” information was poorly worded particularly the section on not sharing sensitive language. It gave the impression to the young people of distance from the writer of the survey to the participant and didn't sound like the department wanted real honest feedback and insights from young people. This section also felt to the young people that it was going to be about support to complete the actual survey, but it was about emotional/psychological help. It made one of the participants in our review worried about the kinds of questions that would be asked if you need to offer psychological support. A suggestion to overcome this is to include emotional support cues as well as admin assistance within the survey and to add a phone number for young people to call while completing the survey. Split up the sections for one that says “if you need assistance with the survey” and one that says “supports available” for people that are distressed and need to speak with someone.
- Ensure that the support information goes at end of survey; this appears to be in the survey question sets so it is assumed that this will occur.
- Young people reflected that the tone of the language was very formal and intimidating. It sounded robotic and lacking in warmth. A suggestion put by the young people was for a warmer tone to be employed by the writers of the survey. (Some suggestions by CREATE staff to do this include connecting the voices of young people to this review like: “We've heard from young people that... <insert quote>....” or sharing more of a narrative about why we are in this position. Include elements that show authentic engagement with young people is a must. “We asked, we listened, we heard, we did...” frameworks can really help with this.
- Literacy issues may also be exacerbated by overly formal or technical language. In particular in sections like the “if you need assistance” section. The intent of the second paragraph is not clear, it could be reworked. Structure the sentences as simply as possible, don't add words without a purpose and clarity of language. For instance, in the “help” section refer to “support” when talking about emotional/psychological issues, and “assistance” when referring to help completing the survey. Also, the second paragraph in that section which asks for participants to not share any sensitive information should better deal with the problem of the department assuming a duty of care. If young people disclose experiences within the survey or via email, there should be a better follow up procedure for the safety of participants as well as decreasing risk for the department.
- It was also suggested that there should be a contact for people who needed practical assistance to complete the survey; for example, to explain the Submission ID number, a help desk contact would be useful, and this should be a phone contact. Again, literacy issues impact some individuals' capacity to seek information and they may need to actually talk to someone to get practical help.

Questions: Group 1 Applicant

Question 3: This was a very long list. But if it needs to stay this long- please include whitegoods as one young person listed that as something they spent part of their money on. Also, the character limit needs to be larger—at least 50 characters.

Question 6: This question was confusing for young people because it's not clear who the "other people" are that the question is referring to. Is it extending Q 4; e.g., is this additional to caseworkers/friends/family/teachers/etc.; maybe we can make this clearer for this question as most young people spoke with friends/family/caseworkers.

Question 7: All reflected that this was a good question and well worded. CREATE staff wondered whether we are trying to assess support or involvement – a double barrelled question makes it unclear for someone to answer it accurately. Could we also make another question specifically about the making the application for TILA – whether the young person felt involved in the making the application?

The "don't know" section should be clearer – "I don't know about my care plan"

Question 8: Should be reworded to something like "Was TILA used to maintain cultural connections and relationships?" Also consider asking "Did you have the choice to use TILA to support your cultural needs?"

Question 9a: Young people felt that they could not really answer this as the caseworker completed the application for them.

Question 9b: this whole Question 9 a – f was found to be really confusing. They also assume young people were involved in consultation process or in the application for TILA. 9a and 9b also have a chance of being confused – very similar questions – maybe separate or ask more clearly the difference between them?

Question 9d: Measure should be helpful not easy – in line with the statement.

Question 9e: the options do not make sense against the statement – helpful, not easy.

Question 9f: the options do not make sense against the statement.


Question 9g: should be a "yes" or "no" answer option.

Question 10: needs to be reworded as actually two different questions.

Question 11: What if you did not know when or if your worker applied for TILA? For one young person, they did not know where the funds were as their worker had not told them. No young person was aware of the card as an option. The question also assumes you had a caseworker. Suggestion: should be a scale – how helpful was your caseworker?

Question 12: There is content under question 12 that is odd and disrupts the flow of the survey – suggest making this a question with a text box.

Question 13: Text boxes in all cases were seen as limiting feedback. 25 or 30 characters is very short and does not allow for good feedback. The young people were very clear that this was unsatisfactory and seen as limiting opportunities to respond properly.



Question 16: felt there was some repetition of questions and demographic section could be. Simplified. For instance, Q2 about when you applied for it and what age you are can be clarified – maybe have all the demographic questions together?

Question 18: Same comment as question 16. Could simplify this with question 8 – link them or ask this question just before question 8. Seems out of place here.

Question 21: and Question 27: Asking same question.

Question 24: Add year 6, 7, and 8 – don't assume that any young person has completed minimum of year 9. This was picked up by all young people in the review. The options need to be clarified further too around whether it's been completed or whether they are still going. Including both options in the one question is confusing. An option is to make one question about what you have completed and what you are still working towards.

Question 25: Young people felt if you ask how much work they are doing you should also ask are they studying full-time or part-time.

Also, this should direct YP to question 28 not 29 if they answer “no.”

Question 27: This should be covered in the earlier question about government support (in Q 21).

General feedback

- The end of the survey just reiterates same support options that are at beginning of survey and not sure this is needed. Maybe this could be noted within the language – “as we said earlier if anything within this survey has raised distressing things, please seek support at the following...”
- Formatting and relevance of answer options needs attention.
- In some cases, questions could be worded more positively; for example, “What would be a positive strategy to support young people to apply for TILA to support their transition to independence?”


Question Set – Group 2 Young Person Non-recipient

Question 7: Young people felt that this question should be asked of the young people who received TILA as well.

Question 9: Again, the limited character size of the text boxes was seen as a problem.

Additional feedback

The young people involved in this consultation learnt more about TILA from the survey questions than they had been told during their transition process. One young person reflected that; “I was told you could only use TILA for whitegoods. So that was all I applied for. I have TILA funds in my account and I have only spent \$300 as I did not know I could use it for these other items in the list in Question 3. I have been worrying about how to pay for my motorbike registration and now I find I can use my TILA funds for this.” (Young person, Aged 21 – also currently unable to work as recovering from surgery)



All three young people were given incorrect or very limited information about TILA by their caseworker. One YP knew they had it but was completely unaware what it had been spent on. One YP was told if they moved interstate they could not take their TILA with them. The caseworker then used the remaining \$1000 of TILA and purchased COLES Essential Cards. This young person advised they were not asked if this would be suitable and in fact, they found that the COLES Essentials Cards were of very limited use. The initial \$500 of TILA that had been spent was used to purchase a bed and other furniture. When the young person moved interstate to be with family they were not aware they could use their TILA to support this move. The same young person also reflected that as they are Maori it appeared, after looking at the list at question 3, that they potentially could have used these funds to visit family in New Zealand that they have not seen since they were a child.

TILA Application should be an online application completed by the young person. The online application should include drop boxes that outline what TILA can be used for and who approves the purchases. Young People should not have to rely on information provision from caseworkers. Caseworkers must seek the approval of the young person around what can and cannot be purchased.

Other feedback included sending a link or text directly to young people with a link to TILA information and application.

Consideration must be given to increasing the amount of TILA available for young people. The \$1500 has not changed for over a decade. A comparable amount in the UK is over \$4000.00. TILA should be increased and its amount indexed so it increases with the cost of living. Questions could be included in the survey about this.

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