

MEDIA RELEASE

21 June 2022

creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

NEW SOUTH WALES, IT'S YOUR TURN TO LISTEN UP & MAKE IT 21 FOR ALL CARE LEAVERS!

NSW young people in out-of-home care are at risk of homelessness at their 18th birthday. The largest care community nationally, NSW young people remain the only cohort that are unable to access adequate supports and care to 21.

In stark contrast, the Queensland Government's weekend announcement of care and supports to 21 was met with an emotional welcome by QLD young people with a care experience, many of whom have invested years of advocating and speaking up leading to this outcome.

CREATE Foundation's Chief Executive Officer, Ms Jacqui Reed, shared that she feels buoyed by the QLD Government's historic decision by introducing a more modern approach, in keeping with appropriate support for young care leavers. After years of young people having to leave the care system at 19, there now exists an option to remain with their current placement, or for young people in residential care to access a range of holistic supports during their transition from care to adulthood.

In NSW young people have no formalised support past the age of 18, and many young people are in their final year of high school at the same time. NSW is the last state to recognise and act upon the fact that young people transitioning from the care system to independence are already facing significant challenges and deserve to be supported till 21. All other jurisdictions support young people to 21 in some form.

An indicator of urgent change needed is in excess of 16,160 children and young people did not sleep in their own home last night and are currently growing up in out-of-home care. NSW young people are becoming increasingly agitated, knowing nobody is listening, and the urgency for their voices to be heard and listened to by the Perrottet Government.

"It's a no brainer, from an economic, moral and social perspective young people in the care system are vulnerable and need the support of the system to transition to adulthood," stated Ms Reed.

"It's 2022 and for NSW to be a civil society it's time to pay attention. All that the sixteen thousand plus NSW young people want is to be heard, and to know that their government, their state parent, will support them as they enter adulthood," continued Ms Jacqui Reed.

CREATE Foundation urges the Perrottet Government to listen and support young people till they reach the age of 21, regardless of if they are in foster, kinship or residential care.

Further to the lack of consistent care and support in NSW, the Perrottet Government holds that it provides support services to (age), yet through CREATE's direct consultations with young people, they found the services to be inconsistent or absent. This result is disappointing, particularly to young people who have already experienced neglect or abuse, leading to being placed in care in the first place.

A big issue for many care leavers is that they don't have a transition plan as they leave the care system.

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.

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

For further comment from CREATE's Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed, and/or a young person with care experience contact Leigh White, CREATE Communications Advisor, via (m) 0431 932 122 or leigh.white@create.org.au

Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

- 30% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care. (McDowall, J. J. (2020).
- 46% of males have been involved with the justice system since leaving care.
- 29% of young people who have left care or preparing to leave care are unemployed.
- 36% children and young people in care do not live with any of their siblings.
- 35% of young people in care have five or more caseworkers during their time in care.
- 67% of young people in care over the age of 15 are not aware of having a leaving care plan.

McDowall, J. J. (2018). Out-of-home care in Australia: Children and young people's views after five years of National Standards. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

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