

## MEDIA RELEASE

16 August 2022

creating a better life  
for children and young  
people in care

# WHAT PART OF THE EVIDENCE CAN NSW GOV NOT SEE? SUPPORT IS NEEDED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO TRANSITION CONFIDENTLY

In 2022, the NSW Premier vowed to review foster care, with respect to the foster carer allowance. Many foster carers rely on receiving this extra allowance to contribute towards expenses of housing and caring for a young person and since NSW is the only jurisdiction which does not give the option for housing and supports beyond 18, the allowance to carers and a safe and stable place to live ends too.

CREATE's direct consultations with young people revealed the shocking figure of over 1/3\* of young people leaving care at 18 experience homelessness within the first year. Some young people are able to stay with carers, but for 30% of care leavers, HOMELESSNESS becomes their reality!

When it comes to trying to find how to access support, the care system is very hard to navigate, and entitlements for young people are hard to find and are often discretionary, with a lot of 'ifs' and 'maybes'.

Care leavers face poorer life outcomes and often enter care due to neglect or abuse. While growing up in care, 35% of young people have 5 or more caseworkers, so there is an absence of a stable positive adult influence in their lives, increasing risk amongst a vulnerable cohort. In fact, 67% of NSW young people leave care without a leaving care plan which is required.

## Wake up and read the data NSW!

What's it going to take for the NSW government to wake up and read the same evidence which has informed every other state and territory to catch up to the rest of the world where care beyond 18 is normal, and is up to 25 in many developed nations.

Today CREATE Foundation representatives and Young Consultants will meet with Minister Natasha Maclaren-Jones, *NSW Minister for Families and Communities, Minister for Disability Services* and Mr Michael Tidball, *Secretary, NSW Department Communities and Justice (DCJ)* to delve into reframing the out-dated concepts of leaving care.

CREATE Chief Executive Officer, Ms Jacqui Reed shared that CREATE is asking for options to be made available for young people from all care types to remain with carers.

*"No politician would give their child a non-negotiable one-way exit from their own home at 18 because it is too young. Vulnerable young people with a care experience are incredibly vulnerable and have no safety net at 18. The option to stay in appropriate housing is life-changing,"* said Ms Reed.

*"It's time for the NSW government to adhere to informing young people of support services in a cohesive manner, rather than the current online maze, which is difficult to make sense of"*

*and in reality, is the only avenue a young person has to fight their way through today in search of simple information. This information should be readily and easily accessible.”*

The ongoing housing crisis further exacerbates the risk of homelessness for young care leavers, who find it challenging to enter the rental market or find adequate housing at the best of times. Care leavers can be challenged applying or meeting the rental application requirements and are without a traditional support network, placing them at greater risk.

## **Further to this, can you imagine your own child looking for housing at 18 in their final year of school? What parent would do that?!**

The Australian care system requires a modern approach to keep children and young people housed and with access to supports rather than a sudden exit at 18, often during their final year of their education.

Today’s meetings with the NSW government will be an opportunity to listen the lived experiences of young people and for the government to take action and do the right thing. Now is time for action.

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.

**AMPLIFY THE VOICES** - Raising the age of support to 21 in NSW is overdue, so the more every person shares the message online, the more we amplify the voice of young people. Young people in care deserve better and our community’s job is to support them. speak up, share the voices and add hashtags #itsyourturnNSW #makeit21 <https://create.org.au/make-it-21/>

Read CREATE Foundation position papers on support to 21 and other key issues for young people in care <https://create.org.au/position-papers/> or at [www.create.org.au](http://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](mailto:leigh.white@create.org.au)**

### **Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:**

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- 46,212 children and young people were reported in 2020-21 as living in out-of-home care across Australia (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2022).
- Young people in out-of-home care are 16 times more likely to be under a youth justice order than the general population.
- 30% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care. (McDowall, 2020).
- 38% of young people have been involved with the justice system.
- 30% 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*. CREATE Foundation.

McDowall, J. J. (2020). *Transitioning to adulthood from out-of-home care: Independence or interdependence?* CREATE Foundation.

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