



creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

CREATE FOUNDATION

ACT GOVERNMENT BUDGET SUBMISSION

2020 - 2021

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About CREATE Foundation

CREATE Foundation (CREATE) is a national peak consumer body for over 48,000 children and young people in care across Australia. We are committed to ensuring that children and young people are at the centre of what we do, and that their voices inform our advocacy through evidence based consultation and research. Our mission is to create a better life for children and young people in care. 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, and increase community awareness.

Priorities for Children and Young People with a Care Experience in the ACT

CREATE Foundation has captured the voices of children and young people with a care experience to identify key priorities to influence systemic change in the ACT to ensure the out of home care sector is reflective of their needs.

Key priorities include:

Expansion of core services to maintain and build upon systems and frameworks that ensure that children and young people are placed at the centre of decision making in all aspects of their life, and within the Out of Home Care system.

‘A Step Up for Our Kids: One Step Can Make a Lifetime of Difference. ACT Out of Home Care Strategy 2015-2020’ identifies in Domain 1.4 that participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their life is an integral component of establishing a therapeutic and responsive Out of Home Care system. This strategy supports system capability through policy, workforce training and development and accountability work towards improving the Out of Home Care experience for children and young people, while a robust and well-funded advocacy platform for family, carers and particularly children and young people will develop a sustainable framework for people who intersect with the child protection system to have a powerful and valued voice that informs current and future practice.

For many years, CREATE in the ACT has been a conduit of information from children and young people through to decision-makers, and vice versa. CREATE has a proven track record working with the sector to ensure children and young people are provided with opportunities to participate in crucial discussions to ensure that their views are respected and heard. To facilitate this communication, CREATE provides opportunities, support and training for children and young people up to 25 years of age to feel confident to express their views and understand mechanisms for briefing and de-briefing post participation in research, speaking engagements and presentations. Our advocacy is informed by the express views of children and young people, which informs CREATE’s evidence base. CREATE also works alongside government as a critical partner to provide a valuable evidence base determined through our direct research with children and young people.

CREATE continues to be a valuable and powerful advocate for child and young people, providing high quality support, research and feedback to and in partnership with the ACT Government and key sector stakeholders. The capacity of the ACT CREATE team is greatly impacted by the current core funding



which only provides for 1.3 FTE staff. These staff are entrusted with responsibility to develop connections with children and young people and relevant stakeholders; provide opportunities which empower young people through our established programs; and promote the issues raised by the care population in the ACT. Currently, there is disparity with the level of funding offered in ACT to ensure that CREATE, the funded consumer body (Peak), is adequately funded to deliver commensurate services to those offered in other jurisdictions. This disparity is due to the number of children and young people that CREATE supports increasing by 55% over the last two years (from 168 clubCREATE members at 30th June 2016 to 361 clubCREATE members at 30th September 2019, which is far greater than the annual CPI increase. Additionally, it is evident that the number of children and young people in care in the ACT continues to grow each year, which is not reflected within CREATE's Service Agreement.

Recommendation: Investment to Support 2 FTE Positions within Current Contract: \$45,000

Support for young people transitioning to adulthood

To complement transition support until 25 years, CREATE has developed and produced 'Go Your Own Way'(GYOW) Kits that are a practical tool that service providers and young people can use in planning to make the transition from the child protection system to adulthood.

All young people, aged 15-17 years who are in care in every State and Territory should have a 'Transition from Care Plan'. However, CREATE has found when developing the GYOW resource, that many young people said that no-one had spoken to them about a Transition from Care Plan. 'Go Your Own Way' kits are designed to assist young people to feel more prepared for their transition and to have a plan in place that covers things like where they want to live, who they will live with, how they will manage their money and where they can find the right help and support.

Over the last three years we have received positive feedback from caseworkers and young people from across the nation who value the GYOW Kits as key resource to improve the transition outcomes of young care leavers. CREATE would like to encourage the government to provide an opportunity for young people in care aged between 16-17 years to receive GYOW Kits to support their transition planning during the 2019 – 2020 financial year.

Investment for 50 Young People to Receive GYOW Kits to Support Independence: \$3,000

CREATEs advocacy contributes to systemic change

In 2019-2020 the ACT Government provided funding for 5 Caseworker Training workshops in the ACT. Caseworker feedback from the initial session held in August 2019 overwhelmingly highlighted the value of the training and the importance of hearing directly from children and young people about their experiences in the Out of Home Care system. Both locally and nationally, caseworkers have consistently indicated that they would like to regularly hear from children and young people in the case system, as it supports and improves their work.

Caseworker Training is co-facilitated by CREATE staff and Young Consultants, who are young people with a care experience, to allow workers to understand the care system from the young person's perspective. It also helps workers to engage in a positive and constructive way to generate new ideas to ensure case planning and case support effectively engages and meets the needs of young people.



CREATE is in a unique position to support children and young people to advocate for positive system change that reflects their needs and experiences. CREATE is seeking the opportunity to continue to support change within the out-of-home care sector with on-going funding for a Caseworker Training in the ACT.

Recommendation: Investment in 5 Case Worker Training Sessions: \$7,500

Investment in Young People Participating & Attending the CREATE Foundation Conference

CREATE Foundation would like to acknowledge the support of the ACT Government in funding four (4) young people to attend the fourth biennial conference, 'Voices in Action: Nothing About Us, Without Us', at Melbourne Zoo on the 12-14th November 2019".

The CREATE Foundation Conference:

- Provides an opportunity for young people in the ACT to have a voice at a national level;
- Is enjoyed by young people and assists to build their self-confidence, enhance their participation and make them feel valued; and
- Provides a national forum for sector workers and carers to share practice wisdom and learn from the experience of children and young people.

CREATE Foundation will be seeking funds in the 2021 budget to assist young people with an Out of Home Care experience to participate in the 2021 CREATE biennial Conference.

Conclusion

CREATE Foundation continues to advocate for inclusive systems that create a better life for children and young people in all out-of-home care settings. The work of the ACT Team supports and progresses the work of the Community Services Directorate and the key strategies of the "Step Up for Our Kids" agenda. Central to CREATE's work is ensuring that the voices of children and young people in the Out of Home Care system are meaningfully heard across all levels of their involvement with the system. Children and young people would like to see positive change and feel reassured that everything is being done to provide them with a greater opportunity to meaningfully participate in system decisions that impact their lives. It's vital that they don't fall through the gaps by being financially supported, especially when leaving residential care, and that Case Workers have time to understand the child protection system from a young person's perspective. CREATE's work ensures that children and young people are aware of their rights as an individual and within the larger system, know what resources and supports are available to them and reinforces that their voice is valued within a system and bureaucracy that can be challenging to navigate. CREATE is seeking an additional investment of \$55,000 by the ACT Government to create a lasting impact on the lives of children and young people in the ACT.

Please feel free to contact me if you require anything further information, and thank you for the opportunity to submit to the ACT Budget Process.

Kind regards,

Susan Pellegrino

ACT State Coordinator

CREATE Foundation

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