

MEDIA RELEASE

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creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

Young people in care fear backlash for speaking up CREATE Foundation brings their concerns to the Child Safety Commission of Inquiry

As part of a recent submission to the [Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry](#), CREATE Foundation shared confronting insights from children and young people in state care who report fear of consequences and lack of follow-through when raising complaints.

“Sometimes young people tell us that they’ve experienced really troubling things while living in residential care,” said Imogen Edeson, CEO of CREATE Foundation.

“They’ve told us they’ve experienced abuse, coercive practices, critical incidents where they haven’t felt safe, and that they fear being punished for speaking up. The fear of reprisal is very real for kids growing up in out-of-home care.”



Imogen Edeson, CEO CREATE Foundation

CREATE's submission to the Commission of Inquiry highlights that without trusted adults and independent complaints avenues, young people are left feeling powerless and invisible, while their safety may be at risk. CREATE holds particular concern for children living in residential care, where staff turnover and lack of oversight may exacerbate vulnerabilities.

"Children and young people need to know that when they raise a complaint, someone will listen, something will happen, and they won't be punished for telling the truth," Ms Edeson said.

Nel, a CREATE Young Consultant with lived experience in care shared, *"When I was younger, when I was still in the system, I was so stuck in survival mode that I couldn't really voice my opinions because I was already trying to cope with the changes day to day."*

"I want to speak up now for the young people who can't. They [kids living in care] are so confined to what they can say, because they're scared of people using that against them and maybe treating them differently because they have spoken up and they've shared their opinions."



Nel, CREATE Young Consultant

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"We're the ones actually living it," said Destiny, another CREATE Young Consultant.

"To them, we're a case number on a piece of paper. But to us, it's our life. I do worry about some of my siblings who are still in care."



Destiny, CREATE Young Consultant

The following quotes from a CREATE Foundation Youth Advisory Group in 2024 went into CREATE's submission to the Commission of Inquiry:

- *"[When a complaint is made] youth workers get angry and turn it against you and lash out at you."*
- *"I'm Aboriginal myself, and going through the complaints line, black people get picked on the most and you get judged for being black... It would be better if my culture was more okay and I could talk to similar people."*
- *"I feel like a lot of complaints don't get followed through by a lot of people. I was in resi care myself and every time I made a complaint, it wouldn't go to Child Safety – it would just go to the General Manager of the resi house."*
- *"I felt like I wasn't heard. Every time I made a complaint, they would believe the workers over me."*
- *"They did not take me seriously. It got to the point where I had to nearly take my own life before they took me seriously."*

In response to these concerns, CREATE has developed a **Child-Friendly Complaints Process Guide and Toolkit**, designed *by* young people *for* young people. The toolkit was commissioned by the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety and is currently under review before its full implementation across Queensland's out-of-home care system.

CREATE's submission to the Commission of Inquiry includes practical recommendations for improving complaints systems, including:

- The establishment of an **independent, external complaints body** to manage complaints that cannot be addressed and must be escalated beyond the service provider/government department where the complaint originated. This would support young people, as well as workers and other parties, to raise serious complaints without fear of retaliation.
- A complaints process that provides information in **simple and age-appropriate language** and that is available through a range of youth friendly formats as well as being **culturally safe and trauma informed**.
- Boosting the Community Visitor program and bolstering the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Practice Advisors and Child Safety Support Officers to **build trust, provide young people with information about their rights and address concerns and complaints in the early stages**.
- Consider a **peer navigator model** to enable young people with lived experience to support others in navigating complaints processes. This could enhance feelings of being understood and provide relational continuity where staff turnover is high.

"Children and young people growing up in out-of-home care have the right to be heard and to have their complaints taken seriously from the get-go. We're urging the Commission of Inquiry and the Queensland Government to take bold, decisive action.

The safety, dignity and wellbeing of young people in care depends on it," Ms Edeson said.

CREATE Foundation is the Australian national consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience. We provide programs to children and young people with an out-of-home care experience. We listen to what those with lived experience tell us, and advocate with and for them to achieve systemic change. CREATE is a national leader in child and youth participation in Australia, bringing 25 years of child voice and participation expertise.

ENDS

For further comment from CREATE Foundation's CEO, Imogen Edeson, contact Taylor Toovey, Communications and Media Specialist via (m) 0478 814 752 or taylor.toovey@create.org.au

Key statistics on out-of-home care in Australia

- 12,500 children and young people are currently living in out-of-home care in Queensland (Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety, 2025).
- There are currently around 44,900 children and young people in out-of-home (OOHC) care nationally (AIHW, 2024).
- As of 30 June 2024, of the 44,900 people in out-of-home care, 20,000 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children (AIHW, 2024).

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). Child protection Australia 2023–24. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2023-24/contents/about>

Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. (2025). Children in Care Census 2024. <https://performance.dcssds.qld.gov.au/improving-care-and-post-care-support/who-we-work-with/2024-census-of-children-in-care>

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