



creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

Submission for the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland's Child Safety System with a focus on young people's experiences and perceptions of being raised by a corporate parent

"They're meant to be corporate parenting but what parenting is actually happening."
Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

"I feel like we are being raised by paperwork instead of people."
Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

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About CREATE Foundation

CREATE Foundation is the national consumer peak body for children and young people with an out-of-home care experience. We represent the voices of over 45,000 children and young people currently in care, and those who have transitioned from care, up to the age of 25. Our vision is that all children and young people with a care experience reach their full potential. 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 systems impacting children and young people, in consultation with them, through advocacy to improve policies, practices and services and increase community awareness.

We achieve our mission by facilitating a variety of programs and services for children and young people with a statutory care experience and advocating for policy and systems change that will improve young people's experiences and outcomes.

Introduction

The CREATE Foundation is providing this submission on young people's experiences and perceptions of being raised by a corporate parent following the Commission's call for submissions on this topic in January 2026. Through recent youth advisory groups, CREATE has engaged in discussions with young people around what this topic means to them. We have explored and sought insights from young people on how this impacts their day-to-day lives, long-term wellbeing and how the government could work to improve experiences for young people. Key themes identified by young people include:

- Relationships being overshadowed by administrative processes that prioritise paperwork, compliance and written records over meaningful relationships and conversations geared at understanding their lived experience.
- Limitations to young people's autonomy and every day decision making, creating barriers to experiencing 'normal' aspects of childhood and community life.
- Government systems operating in silos.
- Carrying the burden of navigating complex systems themselves.
- Experiences of stigma and exclusion within the education system.
- Barriers to accessing timely, flexible and appropriate mental health supports and trauma informed care.
- Transitions to adulthood are often insufficiently planned and supported and require a coordinated government approach.

These themes will be expanded upon in the sections that follow.



The relational impacts of growing up with a 'corporate parent'

Young people shared that when being raised by a corporate parent, it often felt like paperwork was prioritised over relationships and human interaction.

"I feel like they have read what's happened in our lives but they haven't actually understood what we've been through. Child Safety is looking at us like we're case notes and not actual people. Everything has to be in writing and nobody will sit down and have a conversation with us and try and understand the behaviours and the pain behind the behaviours."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

Young people also highlighted the impact of frequent changes of carers and workers on their ability to feel 'known', and found it particularly difficult when assigned a carer from a different cultural background.

"When I was in care it was weird having people looking after you that you didn't know. Workers come on shift and then leave. If I was at school, if someone saw me getting picked up by a worker, they would think 'why is that white dude picking up that black boy?'"

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

Young people gave examples of how the lack of consistent, trusting relationships can impact upon different areas of their development. Key examples provided by young people related to missed opportunities to receive support and guidance with learning about reproductive health, general self-care and emotional regulation.

"The night I got my period for the first time, there were two men on shift and they just laughed at me."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

"It's so hard for the youth workers. If you start talking to young people about sex education you can overstep the boundary and get fired."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

"A lot of the education we don't get on the important things, like how to keep hygienic, how to make a healthy meal, even how to look after a car and simple things that [other young people] have their parents to guide them through or they can pick up the phone and ask them."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

"Emotional regulation isn't something that's taught either, so how can they be emotionally regulated and deal with life situations when they weren't taught that in the first place."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

Young people have described being directed to services or even electronic databases to obtain guidance, rather than receiving this in a supported, relational manner by a trusted adult or parent figure.

"When I reach out to services they say Ask Izzy but we're not robots, we need someone to connect and help you through that."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026



How having a corporate parent impacts on young people's daily life

Young people expressed that growing up with a corporate parent has impacted their experiences of being able to exercise autonomy over daily decisions made by themselves or their carers, which can have far reaching impacts.

"It's more control than guardianship."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

"I couldn't do anything without approval. I wanted to get my passport before I left high school, but I didn't get my passport."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

"I couldn't see my friends on the weekend because everything is governed. If you want to go to the creek you need to get permission, to get a job you need permission. Every part of your life is governed by Child Safety, which is why when I was in foster care, I couldn't go and play with my friends."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

These impacts extended to affecting young people's ability to feel 'normal' at school.

"There are a lot of kids in foster and resi that are blurred out in photos. A lot of young people feel they are being left out where other normal kids don't have to be blurred out. Young people shouldn't have to be blurred out because Child Safety doesn't want them to be in photos. That's letting the young person down."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

"I've gone on a school trip and I've had to be off to the side when they take photos because the department never signed the form on time. So in those instances the government feels more like the carer. Sometimes on my report cards it wouldn't say the carers name it'd say the department of family safety."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

Young people have also described confusion and sometimes conflict between their carers and the department in regards to who is responsible for certain costs and that as a result, the young person had to bear the burden of decision making and any associated consequences.

"The department and my carers had an interesting relationship on who had to pay for things, because neither of them wanted to pay for it. My siblings and I had to jump the train because whoever we asked said 'it's not my responsibility'. We were lucky we weren't caught. You tell the department or carers and they say 'I don't know, just figure it out.'"

- Young person, youth advisory group 2026

"The young person is not meant to have all that responsibility but you don't get things done or get that support unless you keep chasing."

- Young person, youth advisory group 2026

As a result of these experiences of feeling 'controlled' or 'governed', some young people described a sense of hopelessness that resulted in them 'giving up' on trying to exercise autonomy and self-determination within their own lives.

"Eventually you just lock yourself in the room and don't do anything."

- Young person, youth advisory group 2026



Young people's holistic feedback on Queensland's child protection system and corporate parenting model

Young people shared their view that the overall funding model, where non-government organisations compete for funding and short-term contracts contributes to a system that doesn't work together in the best interest of young people.

"If all of the orgs were to come together and think about what's best for the YP and not about getting the money, it would be beneficial to the YP."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

Upon hearing about the term 'community parenting' which is used in the UK in contrast with Queensland's 'corporate parenting', young people expressed a desire to see similar language and an accompanying model adopted in Australia, quoting the proverb 'it takes a village to raise a child.'

"It takes a village to raise a child."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

"When you're naughty at school, you're looked at as a problematic child but if the school, even the system, were to be a better system that works together... That's how the Community Parent to me brings the idea of everyone coming together. No matter if you're a teacher or whoever you are, just coming together. Australia really lacks that."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

Young people also acknowledged that for the average young person growing up with their biological parents, a parent figure can serve as an advocate and support young people to access necessary support in relation to health, mental health, disability, education, training and transition to adulthood supports including housing. Young people in out-of-home care, particularly those in non-family-based placements such as residential care, are less likely to have access to the same amount of support. Young people also report that there needs to be greater cohesion and communication between different government systems.

"Most of the systems don't communicate with each other."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

Young people also shared their experiences with other government departments and how a whole of government approach is needed to support young people growing up in out of home care. These insights are shared in the following sections of this submission.

Young people's perspectives on the education system

Young people expressed their desire for teachers and other staff within the education system to be adequately trained on the trauma and other unique experiences faced by young people growing up in out of home care, so that responses and approaches can be tailored accordingly.

"Their behaviour is because they've been taken away from country and culture and the teachers just pick on them, more so kids in foster care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander because they think we're more naughty."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026



"I feel they either judge us more harshly or baby us because they don't know what to do with us as they aren't trained."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

"Schools pull away because they don't know how to handle the situations we're in and to us this feels like rejection and then it leads to more behaviours and then a hate for the school and a hate for education. It creates a merry go round in a way and you can never get off it. You have to get angry for them to listen – you have to yell, you have to throw hands. You're trying to explain to them what they're doing isn't working."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

Some young people who had experiences in other jurisdictions suggested that other states such as Victoria provide better wrap-around care such as through wellbeing hubs in schools.

"In Vic, in schools, there was a wellbeing hub. There were counsellors and a safe place that included everyone. I came to Qld and the wellbeing centre was a detention centre"

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

Young people's perspectives of the mental health system

Young people emphasised the importance of early intervention when it comes to supporting the emotional development and mental health needs of young people who have experienced separation from family and a range of other traumas through contact with the child protection system.

"They need to start giving the little one's therapy right away rather than waiting until they have all of these big behaviours they want to sort out."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

"I was not diagnosed with depression as soon as I could have been because I was male and they thought that I was just an angry young boy."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

Young people also emphasised that young people within the out-of-home care system need to be prioritised and financially supported to access specialist mental health support.

"It's a lot of money to get diagnosed and people are already financially stressed. And wait times, you can be waiting forever."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

"You need someone to help you know what things aren't in your control. It plays into your situation, which plays into your mental health. Most of my mental health issues were because of my situation and it affected the way I was acting. It's like being on the top of the hill and trying to hold a snowball from falling down the mountain."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

Young people also highlighted that as choice is a trauma-informed principle, it is essential that young people with a trauma background have choice over who and how they engage in therapeutic support, as well as access to a wide range of therapeutic modalities.



“No workers are the same and everyone offers something different. It’s just finding someone you align with, and who understands the way your brain works, otherwise you’ll just clash.”

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

“The [therapy] setting makes a big impact about what you’re going to get out of someone.”

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

“I tried equine therapy. There were options to do other types of therapy when you got older, but as a younger person, it was just in a room. Something fun out in nature would make you want to open up more.”

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

Young people also highlighted the importance of confidential support that would enable them to open up about their true feelings and experiences.

“I felt restricted with what I could say because my foster father was in my therapy session. In my childhood there was a lot of domestic abuse and as a child being in a room with him, I couldn’t openly express what was going on. You didn’t get space to express what you wanted.”

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

Young people’s perspectives on risks associated with coming into contact with the youth justice system

Young people described how the impacts of trauma and inadequate support from the mental health and education systems put them at increased risk of coming into contact with the youth justice system.

“I was a very angry child, if I didn’t have control over something, it made me angry and I had no control over myself.”

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

Young people expressed that greater communication between the child protection system and youth justice system would ensure that their histories and support needs are taken into account.

“There wasn’t much communication between the child safety system and the youth justice system given a lot of the children and youth that do have some type of record.”

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

Upon learning about the ‘restorative justice model,’ young people expressed that a model such as this was most appropriate to responding to young people with an out of home care experience and trauma background.

“Understanding that it’s not just a physical punishment that can happen, I think that’s where it can sometimes get in the way. It’s like, oh, if I do this, I’ll get physically punished. But it’s not actually understanding that it’s actually a consequence to your own soul. It’s a consequence to the people around you. It’s a consequence to your future.”

- Young person, youth advisory group 2025

“I think definitely having a conversation about things instead of having to come to your own conclusions or have to deal with things on your own. No one should be alone”

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025



Young people's experiences with other government departments, including those associated with transition to adulthood

Young people believe that the government, as their guardian, also has a responsibility to support them with housing after they make their transition to adulthood, particularly in the context of the current cost of living and housing crisis.

"I feel like it is their obligation, their responsibility actually. Figure out what's going on with that individual and try and help them out as much as they can before things do worsen because they might not actually have the support around them."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

Young people have consistently provided feedback on the fact that transition planning is not commencing early enough to support them to feel prepared and safe.

"A housing application has to be done when you're 16 so that there is time to find a place. They should make it a priority to get it done."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

"I transitioned into a homeless shelter because there were no proper housing options..."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

Young people expressed that contact with Centrelink during their transition to adulthood was also difficult because staff lacked an understanding and forms did not align with their unique experiences as a young person who grew up in out-of-home care.

"I went to Centrelink and applied for an independent living allowance and didn't hit all of the boxes. They said why can't you just live with your parents and I said I just aged out of foster care. They talked about it and ended up giving it to me, but there wasn't a box to tick in that scenario."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2026

Some young people shared positive experiences with the 'youth foyer model' and advocated that a similar model should be scaled throughout Queensland and be available for all young people exiting care.

"When I first saw the Foyer model, I thought, 'oh, you've got a whole community right here.' You live in your own living space, but you also have neighbours... On the board I saw like film night and stuff and I thought 'that's incredible.' That solved like a big part of the issue I had when leaving care. Other people your age, most of them get to live with their parents still. They don't have to worry about that background community."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025

"It's definitely a beautiful environment, beautiful community and just understanding, you know, like who you are as a person and your own boundaries and just, yeah, bringing, you know, fun and hope and joy into situations."

- Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2025



CREATE recommends

Based on the experiences and insights shared by children and young people, CREATE provides the following recommendations which are shared with the goal of improving young people's experiences in relation to corporate parenting.

- 1. Prioritise relational practice within the corporate parenting model.** The Queensland Government should embed relational practice as a core principle of the corporate parenting model, ensuring that legislation, policies and practice frameworks prioritise meaningful relationships between young people and trusted adults, rather than administrative compliance alone.
- 2. Improve workforce stability and continuity of relationships.** The Queensland government should invest in a workforce model that aims to reduce worker turnover and placement instability, including initiatives to support workforce retention and minimise the number of carers and workers a young person must interact with during their time in care.
- 3. Increase cultural safety.** Decision-making should prioritise cultural safety, including investing in the delegated authority model, culturally appropriate placements and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to maintain connection to culture, community and identity.
- 4. Increase decision-making autonomy for young people in care and their carers.** The Queensland Government should review approval policies and processes that unnecessarily restrict young people's autonomy in everyday activities such as school, extracurricular activities, employment, travel and social participation. Where appropriate, decision making authority should be delegated to carers and young people to fully participate in community life without unnecessary restrictions.
- 5. Implement a whole-of-government 'community parenting' approach.** The Queensland Government should adopt a whole-of-government approach to corporate parenting that requires coordinated responsibility across departments including child protection, education, health, youth justice and housing. Consideration should also be given to reframing the concept of 'corporate parenting' to 'community parenting' which reflects collective responsibility.
- 6. Strengthen trauma-informed training for staff in the education system.** Teachers, school leaders and other education staff should receive mandatory and ongoing training on trauma-informed practice and the unique experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care with the goal of ensuring that practices and responses are supportive rather than punitive.
- 7. Improve access to early and flexible mental health support.** Children and young people in out-of-home care should have timely access to funded mental health support, including early intervention services and a range of therapeutic modalities. Young people and their carers should have choice in selecting practitioners and approaches that align with their needs.
- 8. Improve cross-department communication and cohesion.** Information sharing and coordination between child protection, education, health, youth justice and housing systems should be strengthened to ensure that young people's needs are recognised and responded to appropriately.
- 9. Prioritise funding models that optimise long-term, consistent support for young people.** When outsourcing corporate parent functions and funding non-government organisations, prioritise long-term contracts with models that optimise consistency and wrap-around support for young people.
- 10. Strengthen transition-to-adulthood supports for young people leaving care.** Transition planning should commence earlier and include co-ordinated cross-department support with a particular focus on housing, training, employment and income support. Supportive housing models such as the Youth Foyer model should be considered.



Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback as part of the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland's Child Safety System, with this submission being focussed on young people's experiences and perspectives on being raised by a corporate parent. Through the insights shared it is clear that many young people experience the current system as one that prioritises paperwork and processes over relationships, and control over autonomy.

Young people consistently emphasised the importance of stable, trusting relationships with adults who genuinely know them and understand their experiences. They described how fragmented systems, complex approval processes and inconsistent support can create barriers to living a normal childhood and transitioning to adulthood. Young people highlighted the significant role that schools, mental health services, housing providers and other government systems can play in shaping their experiences and outcomes and that room for improvement exists within these systems and the relationship between them.

Overall, the insights shared highlight the need for a stronger whole-of-government approach to corporate parenting – one that extends beyond the child protection system and requires a co-ordinated and relational approach across government and the broader community.

By implementing the recommendations outlined in this submission, the Queensland Government has the opportunity to strengthen the current model and ensure that children and young people in care are supported not only through legislation and policy, but through relationships and community.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact the CREATE Foundation's Advocacy team at advocacy@create.org.au