

MEDIA RELEASE

1 July 2025

Lived experience must lead: CREATE Foundation urges Inquiry to prioritise voices of children and young people in care

As the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland's child protection system begins today, CREATE Foundation is calling for children and young people with lived experience to be front and centre over the next 17 months.

Imogen Edeson, CEO of CREATE Foundation, welcomed the Inquiry and reaffirmed CREATE's commitment to ensuring that children and young people with a care experience are heard.

"CREATE represents the 12,500 children and young people currently in care in Queensland and we will work tirelessly to ensure their voices are central to this Inquiry."

"Too often children's voices are ignored. Many young people tell us they don't get to have a say about their care and that they are not taken seriously."

Ms Edeson also highlighted how the public narrative around residential care in Queensland has sidelined the real-life experiences of young people.

"When residential care is in the media, it's often talked about in the context of youth crime. But what's often missing is the real story — that many children in care are being criminalised because we've failed to meet their most basic needs."

"These are kids who have likely faced childhood trauma, racism, poverty, unstable housing, family violence, mental health challenges or unmet disability needs. Instead of getting the support they need to heal and grow, they're being let down by a system that doesn't promote their right to a safe and healthy childhood."

"And in all of this, the voices of children and young people themselves often go unheard — even though they have a lot to say about what it's really like to grow up in residential care in Queensland," she said.

What young people have told CREATE about their experiences of residential care

- *“... moving into a new house is very daunting and it’s hard because you know it’s not your family and you don’t know how long you’re going to be there for.”* (Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2024)
- *“Make it less like a prison. Every resi was sort of the same. The lounge room was never set up. A lot of them did not have a kitchen table. It was uncomfortable with all of the posters such as fire escape signs. This made it feel like less of a home.”* (Young person, CREATE Consultation 2025)
- *“They did not take me seriously. It got to the point where I had to nearly take my life before they took me seriously.”* (Young person, Youth Advisory Group 2024)
- *“I kept being placed with boys who had a criminal history, who were dabbling in substances and were very violent. I was put in the house to straighten them out and ‘be a good role model’, even though I myself was dealing with things such as poor mental health.”* (Young person, CREATE Consultation 2025)

Residential care settings that feel institutional rather than homelike, use of coercive practices, and issues with the quality and consistency of care are commonly discussed in CREATE Foundation’s Youth Advisory Groups.

CREATE advocates for lived experience to lead during the Inquiry.

Children and young people in care are the experts on their care experience — it’s time we listen.

If you are a young person with experience of Queensland’s care system and you would like to be contacted by CREATE Foundation over the next 17 months about opportunities to share your experience or thoughts with the Inquiry, complete our confidential EOI form: <https://forms.office.com/r/fnbTAP8PQL>

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CREATE Foundation is the 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 a statutory care experience. We listen to what those with a lived experience of the care system 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'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 children and young people in out of home care, 20,000 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (AIHW, 2024).
- Nationwide, only 67.5% of children and young people in care feel they could have a say 'reasonably often' and 15.7% reported that they rarely or never had a say (McDowall, 2018).

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). Child protection Australia 2023–24. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2021-22>

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>

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

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