

# CREATE Foundation

Australia's national peak consumer body for children and young people in out-of-home care

**Connection. Empowerment. Systems change.**  
**Led by lived experience**



# Who we are

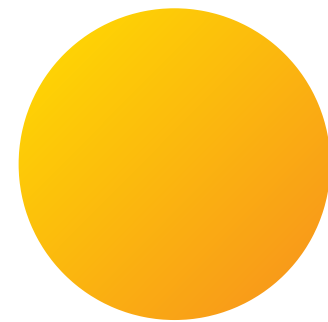
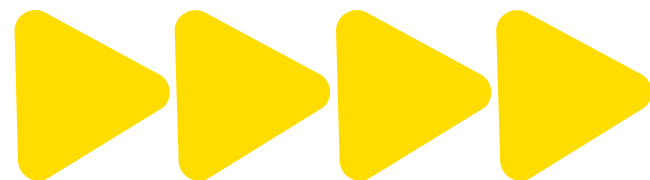
CREATE Foundation exists to create better lives for children and young people with experience of out-of-home care.

We work so that children and young people are:

- Connected to community and belonging
- Empowered to have a voice and be heard
- Changing the systems that impact their lives

Established in 1999, CREATE is:

- Australia's only national, member-based organisation for children and young people in care
- The national peak consumer body, representing 30,000+ members
- Present in every state and territory



# Our members & reach



## We are:

- Independent from government and service providers
- Accountable directly to children and young people
- Governed and guided by lived experience at every level

- 30,000+ children and young people with lived experience of care
- 30% of members nationally identify as First Nations
- 90% of Northern Territory members identify as First Nations



# Why CREATE exists

## The crisis in out-of-home care

**Children and young people in care face deep adversity, disadvantage and lifelong impacts. These are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in our community, but they have boundless potential to thrive when given a chance.**

In Australia today:

- 45,000 children and young people live in out-of-home care
- Many experience 10+ moves (different houses, different people)
- Education disruption is common, affecting literacy and attainment
- Deep loss, grief, fear, and loneliness are ongoing realities

The system outcomes are stark:

- 1,200 children experienced substantiated abuse while in care (2022–23)
- 65% of young people in youth justice had prior child protection involvement
- 30% of young people leaving care experience homelessness within 12 months



# What's missing from the system

Despite significant investment in services:

- Children's voices are often consulted too late - or not at all
- Support is fragmented and time-limited
- Relationships are disrupted as placements and workers change
- Young people age out of care without long-term connection or advocacy and frequently end up homeless

**CREATE** exists to fill these gaps -  
and stay for the long term.



# Our practice approach

## **CREATE's work is grounded in:**

- Lived experience leadership and advocacy
- Trauma-informed, relational practice
- Child-safe and culturally responsive programs

We are often the only consistent presence across a young person's care journey.

## **Our approach ensures:**

- Safety, trust and dignity
- Meaningful participation
- Skills, confidence and agency
- Long-term connection beyond care



# Our theory of change

When children and young people are connected, empowered and heard, both lives and systems change.



## CONNECT

**We bring children and young people together to build community and belonging.**

- Safe, meaningful connection with peers
- Reduced isolation and increased trust
- Stronger, more supportive care communities



## EMPOWER

**We support children and young people to have a voice and develop skills.**

- Increased confidence and self-belief
- Access to advocacy and leadership opportunities
- Skills to navigate care, transition and adulthood



## CHANGE

**We ensure young people's voices influence systems, policies and practice.**

- Lived experience informs decision-making
- Improved services and protections
- Better long-term outcomes for children in care and beyond

At the centre of everything - kids and young people feel safe, heard, valued, and supported - and the system becomes better equipped to support them.



# Our value and impact

CREATE Foundation works alongside children and young people with lived experience of care to drive individual wellbeing and system change.

**Our value can be understood at different levels:**

## **Systemic: Advocacy**

- Driving system change from the grassroots up
- Lived-experience governance through NEABY and youth-led advocacy
- Elevating children and young people's voices to decision-makers

## **Group: Peer Engagement**

- Creating safe and affirming spaces for connection, community and belonging
- Children and young people advocating with and for each other
- Building confidence through youth participation and leadership

## **Individual: Member Support**

- Supporting the wellbeing and rights of children and young people
- Connection and validation via magazines, events and anti-stigma campaigns
- Life skills, leadership opportunities and self-advocacy training



# What we do and don't do



CREATE has a clear, defined role.

**We do not:**

- Do casework
- Deliver out-of-home care
- Provide legal or counselling services
- Make individual care or protection decisions
- Replace government or service-provider responsibilities

**Instead, we:**

- Create connection, community and belonging for kids and young people
- Advance children's rights, safety, wellbeing and participation
- Strengthen children's voices and make others accountable for listening to them
- Advocate for better systems, services and outcomes

CREATE is often the only constant in a young person's care journey – connecting them to community, empowering their voice, and changing the systems around them.

# What our members tell us

**Our members consistently describe CREATE as life-changing:**

“CREATE saved my life.”

“CREATE sees me for who I am, not just someone in care.”

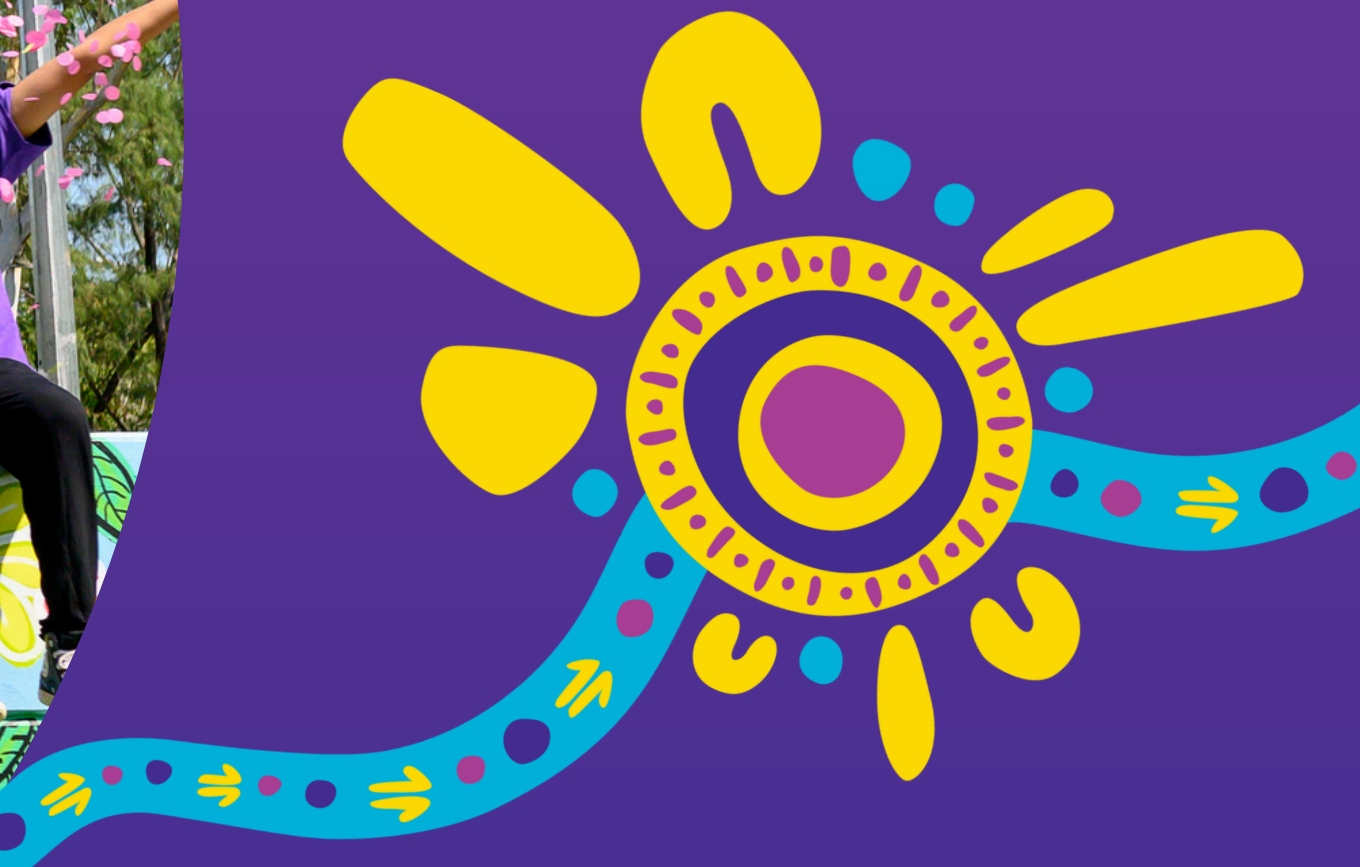
“It helped me find my voice.”

“I felt safe, heard and supported.”

“I feel included - like I belong.”

“It gives me hope to connect with others like me.”

**Member feedback, CREATE surveys 2024–2025**



# Our engagement & reach

CREATE delivers deep engagement at national scale.  
In 2024-2025 we delivered:

## 55 Connection Events

- 3,560 total attendees
- 2,026 children and young people with care experience
- 1,134 First Nations participants

## Youth governance and leadership

- **100 Young Advisory Group (YAG) sessions**
  - 685 young people participated
  - 310 First Nations participants



# Demand is growing

Children and young people are asking for more access, more inclusion, and more opportunities.

## We are seeing increasing demand from:

- Younger children seeking age-appropriate connection
- Regional and remote communities
- Gender diverse and LGBTQIA+SB young people
- Neurodivergent young people
- Children with disability
- Culturally diverse communities
- First Nations young people seeking connection to culture

Our challenge is not relevance – it's capacity.



# Strategic Priority 1

## Program expansion

### Key focus areas:

- Delivering more programs to reach more children and young people
- Junior models designed specifically for younger children
- Adapting programs for gender diversity, neurodiversity, disability, and culture
- Designing new programs, based on emergent member needs and aspirations
- Technology uplift and membership systems
- Workforce systems to sustain high-quality services
- Youth grants enabling participation in Voices in Action conference



We are expanding proven programs and developing new models to meet emerging needs.



# Strategic Priority 2

## Regional reach & advocacy

### This includes:

- Standing up regional outreach teams
- Permanent presence in rural and regional communities
- Travel and vehicles to reach remote locations
- Dedicated advocacy staff in every jurisdiction
- Locally-tailored advocacy responses

Ensuring children and young people are supported wherever they live.

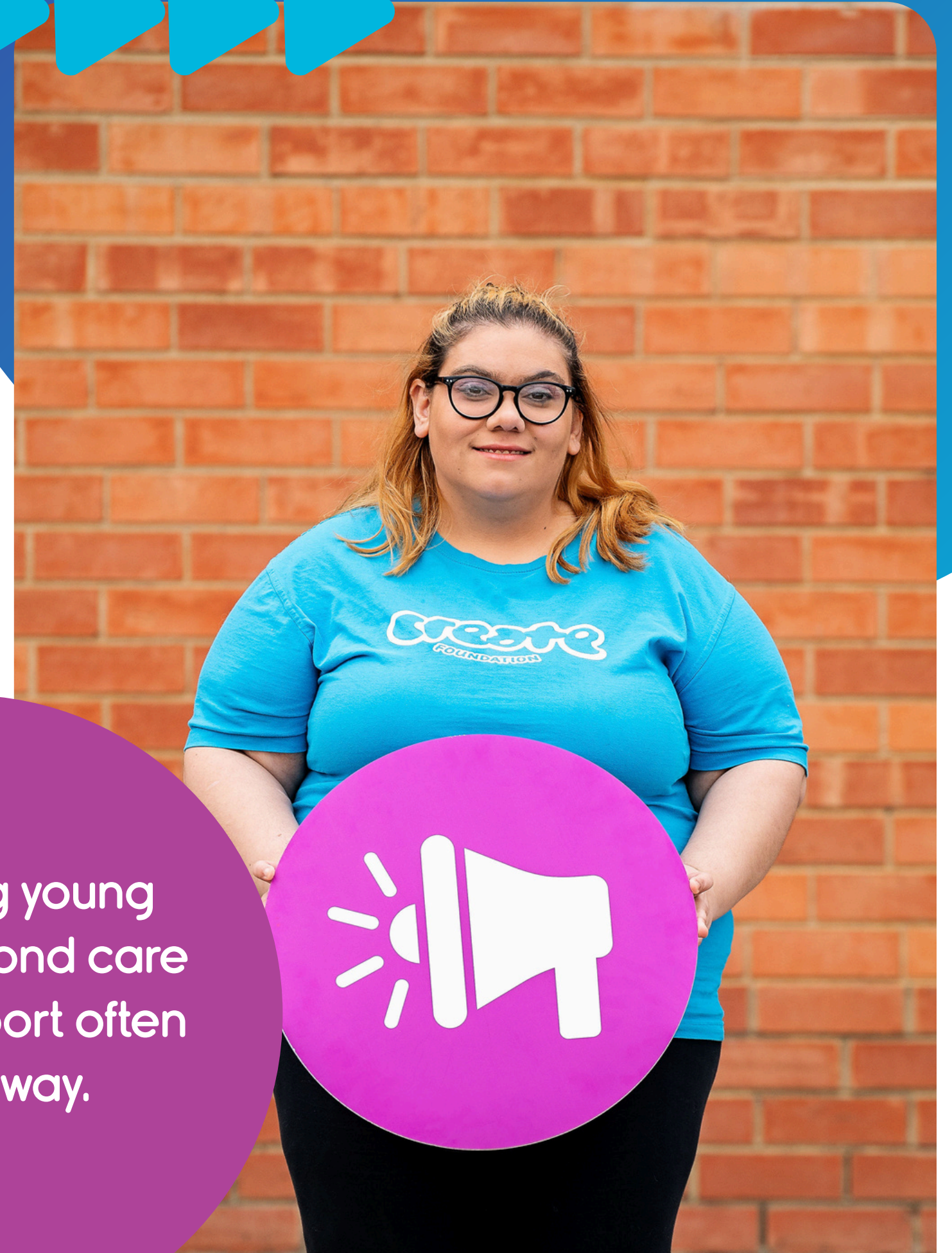
# Strategic Priority 3

## Transition & alumni support

### Key initiatives:

- CREATE Your Future Grants (TAFE fees, laptops, white goods)
- Practical support for adulting and independent living
- Scaling our Sort Your Life Out phone app
- Expanding our CREATE Your Future life skills program
- Peer mentoring and support networks
- Education and employment pathways for people with lived experience
- Alumni community for care-experienced adults over 25

Supporting young people beyond care - when support often drops away.



# What makes CREATE unique

## **CREATE is unlike any other organisation in Australia.**

- The only organisation whose membership is solely children and young people with a care experience
- Australian leaders in child voice and youth participation
- Entire mandate, strategy and practice are anchored in lived experience
- Children and young people control their stories - how, when and why they share - and how to do this safely
- National scale with deep local relationships
- Trusted by young people, sector, and government - while remaining independent





# Why funders partner with CREATE

**Funders invest in CREATE because we deliver:**

- Proven impact with hard-to-reach communities
- Authentic, ethical lived-experience leadership
- National reach with local delivery
- Strong governance and accountability
- System change and individual outcomes

Your investment directly strengthens the voices, experiences and outcomes of children and young people - and improves the systems that shape their lives.



**Together, we can ensure children and young people in care are:**

- Seen and heard
- Connected
- Empowered
- Supported to change the systems getting in the way of their ability to thrive.

**Thank you for walking  
alongside CREATE.**