

# Submission to the Independent Review into the Tasmanian Education System

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*“I think on like days like Mother's Day, Father's Day [its hard]. Even like in my in my genetics class when we were learning about genetics and how traits are passed down, we were asked hey, go ask your mum, go ask your dad, look at them, that kind of thing. I'm like well, I don't live with my family, I can't ask them those questions. You know, sometimes young people don't have contact with their biological family, so even in little ways like that young people can feel isolated or like triggered by topics.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

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## About CREATE Foundation

The 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 care system, in consultation with children and young people, 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 developing policy and research to advocate for a better care system.

## Introduction


CREATE Foundation welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the [Independent Review into the Tasmanian Education System](#) (the Review). We are pleased to see that the Review incorporates a process of gathering direct feedback from children and young people on their educational experiences. CREATE is delighted to see that the Review celebrates creativity with the option to provide this feedback in innovative ways through artwork, poetry or written reflections.

Internationally, children's rights to obtain and access education on the basis of equal opportunity and for that education to nurture children's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential are enshrined in the [Convention on the Rights of the Child \(1989\)](#) (see Article 28 and Article 29). These rights are reflected at the domestic level in the [National Standards for Out-of-Home Care](#) (see Standard 4) and the [Tasmanian Out of Home Care Standards](#) (see Standard 4). Despite this the literature nationally (and internationally) consistently points to a disparity in educational outcomes for children in care to their non-care experienced counterparts (Musgrave et al., 2024). This includes lower academic achievement levels, disrupted school attendance patterns, higher rates of school suspension, reduced presence in post school educational pathways and poorer completion rates for higher education (Harvey et al., 2022; Harvey, McNamara, et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2019 in Musgrave et al., 2024).

As at June 2023, there were 975 children and young people in out-of-home care in Tasmania (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2024). Of which 395 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people (AIHW, 2024). CREATE advocates to improve educational attainment and participation of children and young people in out-of-home care during their school years and increase the number of young people with a care background going on to achieve their self-defined goals including engagement in further education or a higher degree. We recognise that education is an important gateway to health and emotional wellbeing, a sense of purpose and agency, economic wellbeing and independence. As such, barriers to engaging in education contribute to enduring disadvantage across life domains and beyond the care years.

## Summary of CREATE's recommendations:

1. The Independent Reviewer urge the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) to better map-out transition from care planning and processes to ensure this period of upheaval does not fully coincide and overlap with finishing Year 12.
2. The Independent Reviewer urge the DECYP to provide support to young people with a care experience to 21 years in recognition that the current model negatively intersects with the completion of Year 12. This would support those choosing to complete Year 12 to opt for a more gradual transition that does not coincide with their educational pursuits.
3. The Independent Reviewer consider the role that life skill programs (including [CREATE Your Future](#)) can play as electives in secondary school curriculums for student with a care experience.
4. At a systemic level, the Independent Reviewer establish a Youth Expert Advisory Group comprised of young people with a care experience to guide reforms and policy responses that seek to ensure young people with a care experience can achieve self-defined goals.
5. At an individual level, the Independent Reviewer recommend that DECYP ensure that every child and young person in care is provided with an individualised Learning Plan and supported to take an active role in shaping self-defined goals (see recommendations under section titled '[Theme 2](#)' for further details). At a minimum, the approach must be child-centred, flexible, transparent, and respect privacy.
6. To build a culture of higher expectations around young people with a care experience the Independent Reviewer recommend that the Tasmanian Government consider commissioning and funding CREATE:
  - a. to develop a bespoke series of [#SnapthatStigma](#) stories with care experienced young people in Tasmania.
  - b. host a series of Expos across schools with an enrolment of students with a care experience. CREATE's Expo is a dynamic and interactive event designed to empower young people with the tools, knowledge, and connections they need to shape their futures.
7. In recognition of the need to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people with a care experience are supported to self-define their educational aspirations in culturally rich and self-determined ways, the Independent Reviewer should urge the Tasmanian Government to fund and build capacity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector to lead the development of Learning Plans in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
8. The Independent Reviewer recommend that the Tasmanian Government appoint a cultural liaison officer in every Tasmanian school to ensure young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are supported to connect to culture, Country, kin and community as part of their formal education.
9. The Independent Reviewer urge the Tasmanian Government to develop a mandatory training package for all teaching staff in Tasmanian schools that provides a baseline understanding of the care system and its impact on educational engagement.
10. The Independent Reviewer urge DECYP to commission the development of a 'quick guide' resource for teachers on the care system including information on permissions for school-based activities and excursions and upholding children and young people's rights in care.
11. The Independent Reviewer consider the feasibility of replicating models currently operating in Victoria that seek to supporting the educational engagement of children and young people with a care experience via [LOOKOUT Education Support Centres](#).
12. The Independent Reviewer consider models currently operating in some Victorian-based that allocate a '[designated teacher](#)' to each school, that has an enrolment of students with a care experience, to be the advocate for and champion of out-of-home care students at their school.

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13. To address barriers to engagement created by contact with the care system (including lack of access to funding for activities and additional scaffolding support), the Independent Reviewer recommend that DECYP implement an Education Equity Funding Program.
  14. The Independent Reviewer urge DECYP to commission CREATE to support young people to conduct a youth-led forum focused exploring the ways teachers can effectively support them through in the education system.
  15. The Independent Reviewer urge DECYP to strengthen its data capture and monitoring processes to better understand how entry to care impacts on children and young people's school performance via assessing national minimum standards in reading and numeracy (i.e., NAPLAN) relative to all children.
  16. Once baseline data points are established and policy reforms are initiated, evaluation, monitoring and reporting should occur after an initial one-year phase of embedding. The voices of children and young people with a care experience must be included and valued as providing expertise by experience to better understand if education reforms have created safer spaces for them to achieve their self-defined goals.

## Detailed recommendations

### Theme 1 - Defining educational success


#### What do you think are the reasons for finishing Year 12 and how best can students be supported to successfully complete and achieve by the end of Year 12 (Theme 3)?

*"Year 12 [is when] they're just turning 18. Carers and staff are trying to transition them [young people] from care and they've already got enough on their plate with year 12." (Young person, Tas)  
(CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

The realities facing young people transitioning from care are vastly different to their non-care experienced counterparts. This period is characterised by upheaval and often deep feeling of uncertainty that can be reminiscent of their experiences when first entering care. Young people leaving care are faced with multiple processes, application forms and bureaucratic systems as they navigate the supports delivered by both state and federal governments, often without support from an extended family network. This means they have to understand and find their way through multiple touch points, including: Services Australia to access Centrelink payments such as Youth Allowance or Rent Assistance; state-based agencies to access the Commonwealth's Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA); and the Tasmanian Government and/or non-government agencies to access the Transition to Independence Program (T2i), After Care Support Program or Y2I. Ultimately, the onus is put on young people leaving care to ensure they access the supports, if and where they are available. This occurs all while they are theoretically navigating their final year of high school. It is clear that young people with a care experience face additional pressures that their non-care experiences counterparts do not a time of already heightened stress and burdens related to the completion of Year 12.

#### In this context CREATE recommends:

- The Independent Reviewer urge DECYP to better map-out transition from care planning and processes to ensure this period of upheaval does not fully coincide and overlap with finishing Year 12. This must involve reviewing T2i to incorporate the following:
  - Planning for transitions from care to begin at 15 years (at the latest) with the aim having a completed plan 12 months prior to leaving care. This process should actively involve young people in the decision-making process.
  - A comprehensive transition plan that assesses the young person's individual need for support across all life domains, including
    - educational needs at the time of planning for transition with particular attention paid to the direction of the young person's educational aspirations.



Should the young person decide to pursue completion of Year 12 case worker must map out in consultation with the young person key examination dates and ensure that other planning points around housing do not interrupt examination and/or assessment periods. Taking such proactive actions should help to ease the burden of concurrently managing their transition from care and completing Year 12 for those young people who choose to do so.

- Given the pressure that concurrently completing Year 12 and transitioning from care, young people should be provided with access to ongoing in school counselling to help build coping strategies that prioritise their wellbeing throughout both life milestones.
- the provision of some form of individual mentor (e.g., transition coach or personal advisor).
- The Independent Reviewer urge the DECYP to provide support to young people with a care experience to 21 years in recognition that the current model negatively intersects with the completion of Year 12. This would support those choosing to complete Year 12 to opt for a more gradual transition that does not coincide with their educational pursuits.
- The Independent Reviewer consider the role that life skill programs can play as electives in secondary school curriculums for student with a care experience. Such programs could play a two-fold benefit of supporting students with a care experience to gain critical skills to aid in their transition that if credited as an elective could support their completion of Year 12. CREATE Your Future (CYF) is a life-skills program for young people transitioning from out-of-home care. As a youth program targeted at young people aged 15 to 25, CREATE Your Future provides valuable skills and knowledge to effectively transition from care into adulthood. The resources are designed to help all children with out-of-home care experience – coming from kinship care, foster care or residential care.


### **What do you think success looks like during and after the formal years of schooling in Tasmania?**

Conceptualisations of success during and after the formal years of schooling for young people with a care experience must be self-defined. This need is reflected in the [Convention on the Rights of the Child \(1989\)](#) (see Article 28 and Article 29), [National Standards for Out-of-Home Care](#) (see Standard 4) and the [Tasmanian Out of Home Care Standards](#) (see Standard 4). Young people with a care experience must navigate a myriad of complexities simply as a result of being within the care system. To then add additional expectations of what success *should* look like in general terms is unhelpful. Rather than discrete definitions of success what is needed is providing young people with encouragement and creating a culture of high expectations for what they can achieve and build in their future is essential. This should be in recognition that this cohort of young people are likely to have experienced numerous forms of disadvantage and adversity, they may lack the natural familial and community supports and opportunities that sit around their peers, experience placement changes that disrupt educational engagement, and must navigate stigma and bullying related to being in care.

Young people have spoken to CREATE about their desires to dismantle stigma in all its forms:

*“[There could be] anti stigma school workshops potentially, I think that would be quite good for both teachers and students.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

As such, they need the adults around them to believe in them and build the conditions conducive to meeting their developmental needs across health, mental health, wellbeing, cultural, social, kinship and educational domains.



Self-defined measures of success and achievement are particularly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care. The final report of the [Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings](#) (the Commission of Inquiry) shone a light on the unacceptable over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in a range of high-risk settings, particularly out-of-home care. Entry into the care system often interrupts connections to culture, Country, kin, and community; perpetuating continued harms associated with colonisation, land dispossession, intergenerational trauma, systemic racism and child removal practices.

While CREATE acknowledges the role that Aboriginal Education Services play in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners in schools more must be done to ensure that educational avenues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care provide them with opportunities to rebuild and re-connect to culture, Country, kin, and community in self-determined ways.

**In this context CREATE recommends:**

- At a systemic level, the Independent Reviewer establish a Youth Expert Advisory Group comprised of young people with a care experience to guide reforms and policy responses that seek to ensure young people with a care experience can achieve self-defined goals. CREATE would be well positioned to support this group.
- At an individual level, the Independent Reviewer recommend that DECYP ensure that every child and young person in care is provided with an individualised Learning Plan and supported to take an active role in shaping self-defined goals (see recommendations under section titled [‘Theme 2’](#) for further details).
- To build a culture of higher expectations around young people with a care experience the Independent Reviewer recommend that the Tasmanian Government consider commissioning and funding CREATE to:
  - develop a bespoke series of [#SnapthatStigma](#) stories with care experienced young people in Tasmania to help to dismantle stigma and redefine what it means to be a young person with a care experience by showcasing their individual talents, stories and how they have translated their experiences into advocacy and self-defined achievements.
  - host a series of Expos across schools with an enrolment of students with a care experience. CREATE’s Expo is a dynamic and interactive event designed to empower young people with the tools, knowledge, and connections they need to shape their futures. Whether eager to learn something new, connect with local organisations, or simply explore what's available to them, the Expo is a one-stop-shop for everything related to education, jobs, health, and more.
- In recognition of the need to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people with a care experience are supported to self-define their educational aspirations in culturally rich and self-determined ways, the Independent Reviewer should urge the Tasmanian Government to fund and build capacity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sector to lead the development of Learning Plans in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- The Independent Reviewer recommend that the Tasmanian Government appoint a cultural liaison officer in every Tasmanian school to ensure young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are supported to connect to culture, Country, kin and community as part of their formal education.



## How can we better encourage young people to aspire to achieve their ambitions?

Young people in Tasmania have told CREATE about the ways they have been left feeling unsupported, misunderstood and stigmatised by the education system:

*“I wasn't very protected in a sense when I was in those primary years. I think I was about six or seven when I moved in with carers, those formative years where I needed to be most protected from the bullies and stuff.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“I think they [schools] should have more awareness of people in care, because I suppose people don't know much about it, so they always think it's a negative thing.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“I think that schools, when it comes to out-of-home care, need to be more informed about what it is and the challenges that we face which are unique and different to children and young people who live with their parents.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“Teachers being trauma informed, and informed of any significant stuff that's happened to the kid.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“In certain situations, you might want the teachers to know [your history] but in others situations you might not.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*


*“My school was going on a trip to Melbourne or something and they [Child Safety] refused to sign for that, so I didn't end up going.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“Forms [could be improved] they don't include carers, they just say parents or whatever, and then you can't get it signed cause they're not your parents. That was really annoying because you had to go to child protection and then they won't do it until it's [the activity] over. Like they won't sign something for a month or something. I had like an excursion that was short notice and they couldn't sign it in time, so I didn't go.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

One young person in Tasmania spoke to CREATE about the importance of teachers even having a clear understanding of the difference between caseworkers and carers:

*“Caseworkers are the person that they will go to for things like signing a permission form for a school trip or for access with a family member. I like to say that carers are the love parent and caseworkers are the official parent. To add to this, I think it's very important to note that these case workers and carers can often change, and that change can happen rapidly and frequently.” (Young person, Tasmania) (CREATE Foundation, 2024b)*

Young people's comments speak to the need for a strong culture of safety and understanding to exist in the education system in the first instance. Children and young people with a care experience deserve to feel the same sense of safety and understanding coming from the adults in their life especially teacher to then be able to thrive. A deep understanding of the care system equips the teachers in their lives to better respond to trauma triggers, barriers to engagement in school work and activities (e.g., placement changes/breakdowns, restricted access to the internet in residential care setting; lack of access to funding for uniforms, textbooks, activities and camps; and complex processes to obtain consent for school excursions) and bullying and stigma.



Young people in Tasmania considered the role that teacher training/workshops could play in supporting teaching staff in Tasmania to develop a deep understanding of the care system:


*“[Workshops could be about] not necessarily sharing any information so much, but proving things false. You know, like the idea that young people are in care are more likely to be criminals or be at risk. Obviously, you're at risk to an extent, but not to the point where it requires being treated like you've done something wrong. Or you know, when it comes to other kids, trying to explain the situation.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“I think it would help if there was some sort of awareness around for teachers about how the procedures for us to get things signed worked. So that they understand I can't give this to you the day before, I have to give this to you a month in advance.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

**Based on the voices of young people with a care experience and their desire to be better understood by teachers and education system, CREATE recommends:**

- the Independent Reviewer urge the Tasmanian Government to develop a mandatory training package for all teaching staff in Tasmanian schools that provides a baseline understanding of the care system. CREATE is well placed with appropriate funding to develop this in consultation with care experienced young people. At a minimum the training package should outline and map the key intersections between the care and education systems; barriers to engagement in education as defined by young people (including experiences of trauma, placement changes/breakdowns and their impact, challenges in completing homework for example restricted access to the internet in residential care setting; lack of access to funding for uniforms, textbooks, activities and camps; and complex processes to obtain consent for school excursions; mechanism to uphold young people’s rights as outlined in the [National Standards for Out-of-Home Care](#) and the [Tasmanian Out of Home Care Standards](#); and provide practice advice on what supports young people need during their schooling years to achieve their ambitions and self-defined goals.
- The Independent Reviewer urge DECYP to commission the development of a ‘quick guide’ resource for teachers on the care system including information on permissions for school-based activities and excursions and supporting children and young people rights in care as outlined in the [National Standards for Out-of-Home Care](#) and the [Tasmanian Out of Home Care Standards](#). This resource could complement *“Who can say OK in Tasmania?”* (a Reference Guide for Carers) to build a suite of quick resources and build a more comprehensive picture of the care landscape for the adults in the lives of children and young people in care.
- The Independent Reviewer consider the feasibility of replicating models currently operating in Victoria that seek to supporting the educational engagement of children and young people with a care experience via [LOOKOUT Education Support Centres](#). These Centres seek to support children and young people to address some of the key barriers to engagement in education by:
  - Providing professional development to teaching staff,
  - reviewing enrolment decisions to better understand if they are in the best interest of children and young people, and
  - facilitating opportunities for children and young people with a care experience to participate fully in school activities (including camps, excursions and extracurricular activities).
- The Independent Reviewer consider models currently operating in some Victorian-based that allocate a ‘[designated teacher](#)’ to each school, that has an enrolment of students with a care experience, to be the advocate for and champion of out-of-home care students at their school. A designated teacher is nominated by their principal and trained by [LOOKOUT](#)





[Education Support Centre](#)<sup>1</sup> staff to be the advocate for and champion of out-of-home care students at their school.

- To address barriers to engagement created by contact with the care system (including lack of access to funding for activities and additional scaffolding support required because of experiences of trauma and/or placement changes/breakdowns) and to improve educational outcomes for children and young people with a care, the Independent Reviewer recommend that DECYP implement an Education Equity Funding Program. This could mirror and build off programs currently in existence in other jurisdictions including the Queensland Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services' [Education Support Funding Program \(ESFP\)](#) or the Victorian Department of Education [Equity \(Catch Up\) funding](#).

### What is working well and why?

Young people's educational experiences significantly improve when they received tailored and individualised supports that meet them where they are at in their educational journey:

*"When I was at [primary] school they were giving me year two work I believe, because I just wasn't caught up with the rest of the class. So, I suppose that helped me in the in the long run. They must have had me assessed by someone."* (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)

*"Some children and young people need a little bit more extra help for those intensive learning areas. I was a part of that group [with additional support] and they were pretty good for young people who needed to learn differently or need a little bit extra support"* (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)

*"I think there's a really good sense of creating community through school programs, sports, leadership roles, that kind of thing. I like that about schools."* (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)

Young people's comments highlight the benefits that intensive and personalised support plays in ensuring young people achieve self-defined goals; and the need for active involvement in developing individualised Learning Plans.

Theme 2 - Strengthening supports and engagement for all learners at all stages of their education


### What can be done to better support students who are struggling or at risk of falling behind to get back on track & how can we ensure all Tasmanian learners get the most out of their education and reach their full potential?

As outlined earlier in this submission, young people with a care experience must be supported to self-define their educational goals and aspirations for the future. A key tool in supporting young people to achieve this is access and active involvement in the development of an individualised Learning Plan. Young people in Tasmania have reflected deeply on their experiences of this planning process:

*"What could be improved is if young people have learning plans or special learning needs, teachers can't just be like, no, you can't [do that because] that's not on your learning plan. If their learning plan is strict and put in place then I think it needs to be looked at regularly, to know what's going on [for the young person]."* (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)

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<sup>1</sup> LOOKOUT Education Support Centres are designed to boost the capability of early childhood services, schools, carers, child protection practitioners and out-of-home care services to improve educational outcomes for children and young people living in out-of-home care.



*“I think it's really important for young people, especially young people who are in care, to have those learning plans because the way they learn, or the things that affect their learning are very different to a young person who is with their biological family.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“I think it's [Individual Learning Plan] important because you know, it would be great to say that young people in care have exactly the same learning opportunities and things that everyone else does, but that's just not the case. Trauma and family circumstances and things all play a massive part in how a young person performs at school, so it's important to have those plans in place.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“[Individual Learning Plans are important for] lenience in cases where they [young people] are not able to match performance expectations, or in the case where they're switching between schools and things like that. There needs to be a laid-out plan of catch up.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“In the case of learning plans, I think that they are one hundred percent great and one hundred percent necessary, just confidentiality must be emphasised and participation.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

Young people's reflections highlight the value they place on these Learning Plans and the need for improvements to be made to better utilise this resource both for teaching staff and children and young people.

#### **Based on young people reflections and experiences related to the Learning Plans, CREATE recommends:**


- The Independent Reviewer to urge the Tasmanian Government to review and reform the manner in which Learning Plans are developed. At a minimum, the approach must be:
  - **Child-centred:** children and young people must be supported to actively engage in the development of their Learning Plans. This must include explaining the process in developmentally appropriate ways; wrapping in cultural considerations including the desire to incorporate cultural learning into their plans; tailoring the plan to meet the individual talents, needs and learning styles of the child or young person; and noting any barriers to engagement in education and work shopping individualised solutions to address these barriers.
  - **Flexible:** children and young people should be actively involved in reviewing the Learning Plan at key milestones including but not limited to – the transition from primary school to secondary school; the transition from junior secondary school to senior secondary school; and after a placement change or breakdown (especially where this has resulted in changing schools), and
  - **Transparent:** children and young people must be provided with access to a copy of their Learning Plan.
  - **Respect privacy:** children and young people should have a say in how and with whom the information documented in Learning Plan is shared with.

#### Theme 3 - Outcomes at the conclusion of the formal years of schooling

#### **What are the top 2 or 3 priorities or changes you believe are needed so all Tasmanian young people can complete Year 12 or an equivalent?**

##### Understanding the impacts of trauma within the context of the care system

CREATE acknowledges that DECYP has partnered with the Australian Childhood Foundation and the University of Tasmania to deliver a Trauma Informed Practice in Schools Professional Learning



Program. And that this is available for all principals, school leaders, teachers, teacher assistants and school staff. Despite this being in place, children and young people in Tasmania continue to speak to the need for the adults in their life especially teachers to understand and situate their experiences of trauma within the context of contact with the child protection and care systems:

*“I think specific understanding about how trauma presents itself when it comes to out of home care [could be improved]. A lot of the time in out of home care, the trauma is still happening, I suppose. You know, like, if we move, that could be a really disruptive, trauma sort of triggering environment. So, it's almost like we have continuous shifts and changes that can set off our alarm. This might be a little bit different to a young person that has a stable placement or a young person that lives with their parents.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“I think there needs to be training around awareness and how to spot if something's going on [if] that child young person is in out of home care and that's why they're getting triggered.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“A child could have trauma and a teacher could like set it off without knowing. And then the child was really upset and distressed.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“I think on like days like Mother's Day, Father's Day [its hard]. Even like in my in my genetics class when we were learning about genetics and how traits are passed down, we were asked hey, go ask your mum, go ask your dad, look at them, that kind of thing. I'm like well, I don't live with my family, I can't ask them those questions. You know, sometimes young people don't have contact with their biological family, so even in little ways like that young people can feel isolated or like triggered by topics.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

Young people's comments demonstrate their own sense of acute awareness of how trauma permeates their everyday lives and their own ability to see how and where the education system can trigger trauma responses. Their words paint a worrying picture of how the education system creates an environment of isolation, othering, and perpetuates differences between those with a care experience and their non-care experienced peers.

### Safeguarding young people's rights to privacy

The [National Standards for Out-of-Home Care](#) (see Standard 2) and the [Tasmanian Out of Home Care Standards](#) (see Standard 5) enshrines young people's right to have a say in decisions that affect. Despite these rights being in place young people have also spoken to CREATE about their concerns in relation to information sharing practices and not having a say in when and how this information is shared with their peers:

*“It was weird to show up in, like, semester one and find out everyone knew that I no longer lived with a certain carer or things like that. I think it's because my teachers were given a briefing and they told my peers to be nice, I think. But like, I still should have been asked whether or not that was information that is fair to share and same goes for other things.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*“I know that a lot of time that I was at school like there was often a thing where the teacher and somehow everyone in the class knew that my case worker was here or picking me up and I was like, how do you even know that? So, I just think, you know, confidentiality needs to be prioritised.” (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

It is clear from their comments that while information sharing has a role to play in safeguarding young people's experiences and wellbeing in school this cannot come at the cost of their privacy.

## To create an educational environment where children and young people with a care experience feel safe and supported to engage:

- As outlined earlier in this submission, the Independent Reviewer urge the Tasmanian Government to develop a mandatory training package for all teaching staff in Tasmanian schools that provides a baseline understanding of the care system. CREATE is well placed with appropriate funding to develop this in consultation with care experienced young people. At a minimum the training package should outline and map the key intersections between the care and education systems; barriers to engagement in education as defined by young people; mechanisms to uphold young people's rights as outlined in the [National Standards for Out-of-Home Care](#) and the [Tasmanian Out of Home Care Standards](#); and provide practice advice on what supports young people need during their schooling years to achieve their ambitions and self-defined goals.
- As outlined earlier in this submission, at a systemic level, the Independent Reviewer establish a Youth Expert Advisory Group comprised of young people with a care experience to guide reforms and policy responses, especially in relation to what support young people need to feel and be safe in educational environments.

## What are the most important ways to support choice for students?

One of the key enabling factors that can help to build and foster a choice-centred culture is listening to the voices of children and young people. Young people in Tasmania have also told CREATE about the importance of not just having their voices heard but actually being listened to and having their self-defined aspirations considered:

*"Making sure that the young person is involved with where the learning plan is going [who is seeing it] and how it's changing or why it's changing. Just making sure the young person is involved." (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*"I just think it needs to be handled correctly [Individual Learning Plans]. I have always felt that the young person needs to be involved in the meetings with the school and the caseworkers and things, and I find often times that's not prioritised." (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*"I haven't even read my learning plan. I have no idea if I even have one or not, so I'll probably say make young people more aware and make sure every child has one." (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

*"I would say learning plans would be important. Even if I did have a learning plan when I was still in school, I didn't get to see it. So once again, just making sure the young person is involved." (Young person, Tas) (CREATE Foundation, 2024a)*

Young people comments speak to the need for voice, choice, and agency for young people in relation to their Learning Plans. The comments also highlight critical accountability issues that demonstrate the need for young people to be able access their Learning Plan when and wherever they need to.

## To better safeguard and uphold the rights of children and young people in care, CREATE recommends:

- The Independent Reviewer urge DECYP to commission CREATE to support young people to conduct a youth-led forum focused exploring the ways teachers can effectively support them through in the education system. This should include –
  - exploring positive experiences in which the teachers and adults in their life have supported them to achieve their own self-defined goals and play an active role in developing their Learning Plans, supported them to workshop ideas to break down

- the barriers they faced when trying to engage in their education, and to navigate stigma and bullying related to their experiences in care,
- the benefits of actively engaging in the development of the Learning Plans and why/how they should access to it,
- the impact of experiences where they felt isolated in the education system and what could have been done in that moment to change their educational trajectories, and
- adopting youth-led approach to ensure young people can design the program and develop presentations to translate their lived experience into tangible practice advice for teachers and education staff.

## Theme 5 - Accountability for improved outcomes

### How do we ensure that policy initiatives are effectively implemented and that resources are used to improve learning outcomes?

In Tasmania only 44.8% of children in care had a documented case plan in 2023 (Productivity Commission, 2024). This represents a significant reduction on numbers in 2014 (71.2%) and a decade long downward trend (Productivity Commission, 2024). This is particularly concerning given that as per the Productivity Commission indicators, the percentage of children with current documented case plans operates as a key indicator of a governments' ability to provide services that meet the needs including educational needs of individual children and young people in the child protection system. Further, there is a considerable lack of transparency around available National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data for children in care in Tasmania.

### In the context data ambiguity and the need for clear data point to build a baseline from which to measure policy impact, CREATE recommends:

- In the first instance that the Independent Reviewer urge DECYP strengthen its data capture and monitoring processes to better understand how entry to care impacts on children and young people's school performance via assessing national minimum standards in reading and numeracy (i.e., NAPLAN) relative to all children. Such data would help to establish baseline performance that could be mapped to existing DECYP data around placement stability (including number of placement changes) and additional wellbeing and satisfaction data currently capture via the Advocate's Youth Voice Survey.
- Once a data baseline is established and policy reforms are initiated, evaluation, monitoring and reporting should occur after an initial one-year phase of embedding. The voices of children and young people with a care experience must be included and valued as providing expertise by experience to better understand if education reforms have created safer spaces for them to achieve their self-defined goals. This could be achieved by standing up a series youth advisory panels spanning across a range of age cohorts including:
  - Children and young people who have recently entered care (with developmentally appropriate support provided to ensure children and young people are able to actively and meaningfully participate in discussion);
  - Children and young people who have experienced multiple placements to understand how additional supports/planning have aided in the continuity of education; and
  - Young people preparing to transition from care.



## Conclusion

Thank-you again for the opportunity to provide feedback to the [\*Independent Review into the Tasmanian Education System\*](#) (the Review). CREATE keenly awaits the final report and hopes to see strong reforms proposed to the Tasmanian Government to interrupt the cycles of disadvantage that lack of engagement in education can create for young people with a care experience. We hope to see concerted efforts made to address and dismantle the barriers that the care system in and of itself creates for this cohort of young people. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jazmin Ealden, National Advocacy and Influencing Manager, CREATE Foundation. E: [advocacy@create.org.au](mailto:advocacy@create.org.au)



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