

# CREATE Foundation

giving hope to children and young people who can't live at home

Children face some pretty steep learning curves as they grow up, but those lessons are tougher still for those whose parents aren't a part of their lives.

There are 29,000 children and young people in Australia who are not able to live with their birth family because of sexual, physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect or family breakdown. Instead they have to live in formal care arrangements like foster homes or residential care.

Consistency and continuity of care are not generally part of their day to day lives. And they often experience enormous shame, embarrassment and social isolation because of their status as 'kids in care'. As a result their prospects for a linear path through schooling into employment are remote unless they are exposed to positive influences and experiences.

This is where the CREATE Foundation offers a unique and powerful solution. Since its inception in 1993, its mission has been to support children and young people living in out-of-home care, a number which is rising by nine per cent annually. According to the most recent statistics, the largest proportion of children admitted to care across Australia are aged five or under. The rate of Indigenous children on care orders is six times higher than that of other children. Indigenous children are almost five times more likely than other children to be the subjects of intervention because of abuse.

These numbers make CREATE'S services aimed at connecting and empowering children in formal care arrangements even more vital. CREATE's mission is to ensure they are listened to and involved in decisions that affect their lives. It seeks to instil in those in care the belief that their past does not limit their potential for a brilliant future. And it aims to improve the care system they're in

through activities, programs, training and policy advice.

In order to reach those goals, CREATE uses the following main programs areas:

- *Young Consultants*: an initiative to train young people in care with the skills to speak for themselves and provide opportunities for them to advise government and other non-profit organisations.
- *Workplace Training*: a program that helps young people in care to gain employment and continue education. A 2005 report found that within 12 months of leaving care, 42 per cent of young people are unemployed.
- *Mission Be*: an intensive empowerment program with adventure-based activities that is designed to build confidence, life skills and enhance self-esteem in 14 to 18 year olds.
- *Show Me the Ropes*: adventure-based activities to develop team spirit, connectedness and build self confidence.
- *Be Heard*: a comprehensive individualised survey of children and young people's views on the care system.
- *Report Card*: annual publications that critique key areas such as health and education and compare government policy with the experiences of children and young people. The 2008 Report Card focuses on Young People Transitioning from Care.
- *Policy & Consulting*: an initiative that works with governments to help them improve services and relationships with young people in care.

## WHY SVA BACKS CREATE

SVA supports CREATE as it has a strong track record of innovative and effective programs. It is still the only organisation of its kind in Australia. CREATE's engagement and employment of young people within and post care also makes it a best practice youth participation program. It continues to build its reputation as an organisation with integrity, and it has a clear vision to improve the life outcomes for children and young people with a care experience.

SVA has provided portfolio management, mentoring, funding and, most recently, consulting services to conduct an organisational review to help CREATE focus its activities and outcomes.

## GROWTH

Even though CREATE has been in existence for more than 14 years, it is still today the only consumer based organisation dedicated to some of Australia's most vulnerable children and young people - those in the child protection system. Today CREATE has offices in every Australian state and territory and provides services to more than 3,000 children and young people in care.

When SVA started working with CREATE in 2004, it commissioned a review of the organisation's first 10 years of operations and its programs using SVA consultants. The aim was to determine how to most effectively deliver CREATE's offerings for the maximum impact on the lives of those in care. Using that new plan, CREATE is now well on track to fulfil its mission into the next decade.

CREATE continues to develop its position as an 'expert' in the field. It is building strong working relationships with corporate sponsors and anticipates corporate sponsorship and grant funding will continue to grow in 2008.

## PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

CREATE has had a strong track record in influencing changes in care policy and practice within the care systems of Australia, making them more responsive to the needs of children and young people in care. This is primarily achieved through the Report Cards which are research documents involving critiques of government policy compared to the real life experiences of children and young people. The reports, coupled with CREATE's policy and advocacy and consultancy work, promote the issues facing children and young people with a care experience.

CREATE's action based experiential programs facilitate personal growth, empowerment and build self-confidence. Mission Be in particular is a program well regarded within the sector and is the cornerstone of youth participation due to its innovative structure. It draws together key agencies to provide a holistic program where young people are engaged and involved with the community.

## WHAT'S AHEAD

Among CREATE's priorities is to enhance its CREATE Your Future Program for young people transitioning from care to improve their self confidence, life skills and employment prospects. The program is supported by a unique one of a kind web site, the only portal in Australia designed to provide access to resources and information to assist young people during their transition into independence. In addition, it provides opportunities for young people to connect via noticeboards and blogs.

CREATE also plans to establish a national and state Advisory Council for those with a care experience. One of CREATE's primary goals for 2008 will be to increase its profile in order to reach more children and young people.