

2026 Year in Review

Acknowledgement of Country

CREATE Foundation acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples, Traditional Owners, and Custodian caretakers of the lands, skies and waters where we live and work. We pay deep respect to Elders, knowledge holders and community leaders across all First Nations communities and Traditional Lands, and acknowledge their cultural authority.

We acknowledge that Australia is culturally rich with the oldest living cultures on earth. And we acknowledge over 60,000 years of raising kids strong, connected to Culture, Ancestors, Dreaming, Kin, Community and Country.





Acknowledgement of lived experience

CREATE acknowledges all the children and young people with lived or living experience of child protection and care systems, and all the related systems around them. CREATE acknowledges people with lived experience as the experts when it comes to understanding what's working and what needs to change in these systems. CREATE acknowledges the often-profound impacts of a care experience on children and young people and that some young people experience adversity before, during and after their time in care. CREATE also acknowledges the immense wisdom, resourcefulness and creativity of young people in finding ways to recover from adverse life experiences, have their needs met and have their voices heard. The deficit is within the systems, not the individuals.

Contents



Introduction

From the Chair 2

From the CEO 3

Child protection landscape 4

Who we are 6

Reflect. Reimagine. Rise 7

Our year in numbers 9

clubCREATE 10



Lived experience leading advocacy

The priorities shaping our advocacy 31

Advocacy in action 34

Youth Advisory 35

Voice through submissions and consultations 36

A seat at the table 37

Youth-led committees 39



Thriving beyond care

CREATE Your Future Expo 49

Transition to Adulthood Month 49

Sortli 50

Go Your Own Way (GYOW) Kit 50

CREATE Your Future Grants 50

What needs to change next 51



CREATE across Australia

Australian Capital Territory 14

New South Wales 16

Northern Territory 18

Queensland 20

South Australia 22

Tasmania 24

Victoria 26

Western Australia 28



Amplifying young voices

#SnapThatStigma 42

World Care Day: #BreakingBarriers 43

Young Consultants in the media 44

Digital reach 46



Financials

Our supporters 57

Our Board 58

The CREATE Crew 59



From the Chair

Reflecting on the last year, I'm so proud to be a part of CREATE and I'm excited for CREATE's future and the role it will continue to play in amplifying young people's voices. Over many years, I've seen first-hand the generations of young people that CREATE has supported and learnt from. And I've seen key developments over this last year.

This year, we saw the release of CREATE's Reconciliation Action Plan, strong advocacy across all jurisdictions, adaptability to emerging opportunities, and a workforce that is committed, skilled, relational and attuned to young people.

CREATE also achieved a new level of maturity and stability under our current Strategic Plan, including major progress on strategic priorities, operational projects, program innovations, organisational culture, and contemporary systems.

As Board Chair, I'm confident that CREATE is well positioned to continue making a difference for children and young people with a care experience – as their organisation and their community.

I want to thank our young members for guiding and steering CREATE, the staff working across the teams to advance children's rights and voices in meaningful and empowering ways, our strong and adaptive leadership team and CEO, my Board colleagues and all our partners across government and community. It's an honour to spend another year working with you all and serving CREATE's mission.

Jann Skinner

Chair and Treasurer
CREATE Foundation

Message from the CEO



Dear CREATE community,

It's been another big year for CREATE across our programs, advocacy and organisational settings.

Our passionate, mission-driven teams have continued to deliver unique and youth-centred community connection, empowerment and life skills programs with deeper reach into regional communities, and more accessible formats.

We made real gains in our advocacy, delivering local targeted advocacy while also growing our national reach and visibility. This included a special opportunity to take our National Experience to Action Board Youth (NEABY) to Federal Parliament in Canberra. NEABY really captured the attention and imagination of senior government leaders, presenting elegant ideas and solutions to complex social policy issues. While in Canberra, NEABY presented their call for a Passport to Success for care-experienced young people, guaranteeing priority supports and pathways to housing, education, healthcare and more.

A major highlight of this year was publishing CREATE's first Reconciliation Action Plan, to guide us in showing up as an ally, in solidarity and with cultural humility. We have the great honour of working alongside First Nations advocates, community leaders, sector organisations and researchers. And we have the deep joy of walking alongside First Nations children and young people, and their Elders, kin and communities. We know we have a lot to learn, so we will keep showing up and listening and learning. Our RAP is a really important step on this journey.

Through all our endeavours this year, CREATE has been true to our values and our paramount focus on lived experience above all else. I think CREATE is something pretty special and unique. As Australian leaders in child voice and youth participation, our entire mandate, strategy and practice are anchored around lived experience. We are a safe and affirming community, where young people can feel seen and heard and empowered, we are bold in our advocacy, and most of all, we are trusted by young people.

Thanks to all our clubCREATE members, Young Consultants, our teams and staff, and our sector and government partners. This work really matters. And CREATE stands in solidarity with care experienced children and young people. We see you and we see the boundless potential in you.

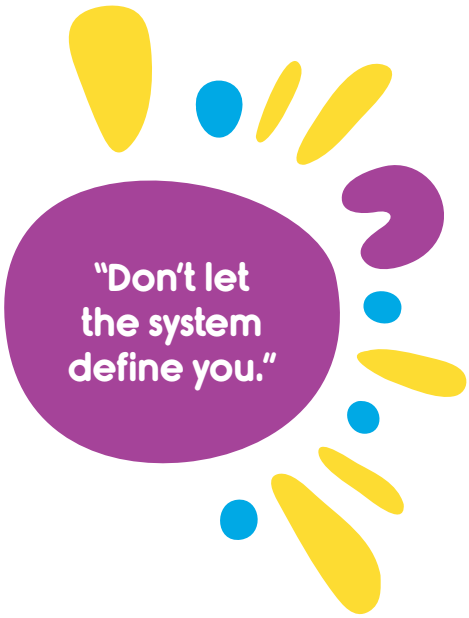
Young voices and perspectives will show us the way. We are always learning from children and young people.

Imogen Edeson

Chief Executive Officer
CREATE Foundation

Child protection landscape

Across Australia, child protection systems continue to face increasing demand, complex family circumstances and ongoing pressure to provide safe, stable and supportive care for children and young people.



System snapshot

In 2024–25, nationally excluding Queensland*:

274,944 children aged 0–17 were the subject of child protection notifications

80,897 notifications resulted in investigations

37,854 children were the subject of substantiations

45,936 children were on care and protection orders

34,594 children were living in out-of-home care

42,446 children experienced out-of-home care during the year

These figures show the scale of the system CREATE is working within and the ongoing need for safe, stable and appropriate support for children and young people.

Out-of-home care and system pressure

At 30 June 2025, **34,594** children were living in out-of-home care across Australia. A further **8,592** children were in other supported placements.

During the year, **7,969** children entered out-of-home care and **8,325** exited. Most children in out-of-home care were also on care and protection orders (92.4%).

Government spending on child protection increased by **4.1%** to around **$11.3 billion**, with **$7.2 billion** spent on care services, including out-of-home care and other supported placements.

Over-representation remains a national concern

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to be over-represented at every stage of the child protection system, and most significantly in out-of-home care. Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were in out-of-home care at a much higher rate than non-Indigenous children.

Examples of this disparity include:

Victoria: 95.8 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, compared with 4.4 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children.

South Australia: 84.7 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, compared with 7.5 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children.

Western Australia: 59.2 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, compared with 3.1 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children.

These figures highlight the urgent need for systems that support self-determination, cultural safety, family connection and accountability under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

More than a statistic

Behind every figure is a child or young person with strengths, aspirations, relationships and rights. The data helps show the size and pressure of the system, but it does not capture the full lived experience of children and young people in care, including young people over 17. CREATE's role is to ensure their voices, experiences and ideas remain central to the changes needed across child protection systems.

***Data note**

Queensland's 2024–25 out-of-home care data was not available for inclusion in the Report on Government Services due to the transition to a new child protection client management system. This affected the availability and comparability of some child protection data sets. As a result, national totals and rates for out-of-home care are not directly comparable with previous years. Data is limited to children aged 0–17 and does not include young people and young adults aged 18–25 or extended care arrangements up to age 21.

References:

Report on Government Services 2026, Section 16, Productivity Commission; The Australian Government Productivity Commission, published the Report of Government Services, for Child Protection system delivery, costs and service indicators during the 2024-2025 financial year. The data is limited to children and young people aged 0-17 years, and excludes young people and young adults aged 18-25 years. It does not report on the provision of extended care and orders in place up to the age of 21.

16 Child protection services - Report on Government Services 2026 | Productivity Commission

rogs-2026-partf-section16-child-protection-data-tables.xlsx

SNAICC, Family Matters Report (2025): Family Matters Report 2025

Who we are

CREATE Foundation is the national peak consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with experience of out-of-home care up to the age of 25.

Our vision

All children and young people with a care experience reach their full potential.

Our mission

Creating a better life for children and young people in care.



We CONNECT:

We bring children and young people together – with each other, with CREATE, and with the community.



We EMPOWER:

We help young people build confidence, skills, and voice — so they can speak up and be heard where it matters.



We CHANGE:

We support young people's advocacy and walk alongside them to influence the policies, practices and systems impacting their lives.

Reflect. Reimagine. Rise.

This year's Annual Review is guided by the theme *Reflect. Reimagine. Rise.* It captures a year of learning from what has been, imagining better ways forward, and building the foundations needed to create stronger outcomes for children and young people with a care experience.



Reflect

Across the year, CREATE took time to look closely at how we work, what young people are telling us, and where systems still need to do better. This reflection shows up throughout the pages that follow – in the voices of young people, the insights from consultations and Youth Advisory Groups, and the challenges they continue to raise.

Reimagine

We also looked at what could work differently. From new tools and systems to youth-led consultation, advocacy and co-design, this review highlights how CREATE is reimagining the way we connect, communicate and create change alongside young people.

Rise

Most importantly, the following pages show young people and CREATE rising to the challenge together; sharing experiences, leading advocacy, shaping reform and strengthening work across Australia. There is more to do and CREATE remains committed to walking alongside young people to help create the systems they deserve.

A website shaped with young people

CREATE's new website was one of the year's biggest changes, designed and built with input from young people. Rather than seeking feedback at the end, CREATE worked alongside young people throughout the process, testing ideas, reviewing layouts and listening to what worked and what needed to change.



The impact is already showing. This year, more than

106,000

people visited the CREATE website, a 114% increase on the previous year

Strengthening the systems behind connection

This year, CREATE introduced a new Customer Relationship Management (database) system to strengthen how we connect with young people, members and stakeholders. One of the largest organisational projects undertaken, the new system provides a stronger foundation for managing relationships, improving communication and creating a more connected experience across CREATE. The new system helps our teams work more efficiently, respond more effectively, and better understand and support the people we walk alongside.



'To Create Change is to Create Impact' by Wiradjuri Artist Leticia Forbes, Founder and Creative Director of Yirra Miya and past CREATE Young Consultant

Reconciliation Action Plan – Building strong foundations

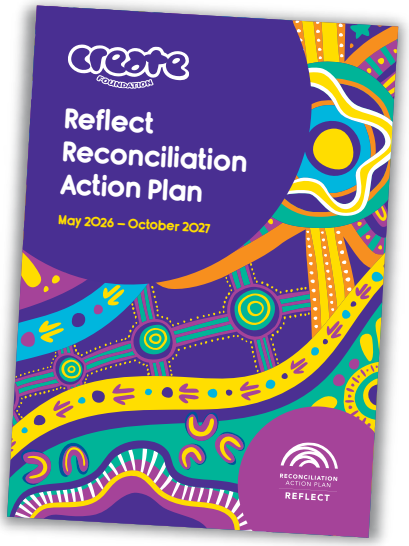
We also took an important step in building the foundations for how we show up as an organisation through the launch of our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

This RAP was shaped through deep consultation with young people across Australia.

We didn't assume, we asked.

We ran Youth Advisory Groups in every state and territory, and surveyed over 110 members to hear directly from children and young people about what reconciliation means to them and what they want to see from CREATE.

As an organisation grounded in lived experience, we have a responsibility to listen deeply, act thoughtfully, and continue building culturally safe practice across everything we do.



Our year in numbers

Every number tells a story of young people connecting, speaking up, sharing their voices, and shaping change across the year.

Reach

31,826
clubCREATE members

900+
stakeholder engagements

10,717
First Nations clubCREATE members

3,475
new members joined clubCREATE this year

Participation

100
Youth Advisory Groups held across Australia

58
Connection Events held across Australia

2,863
young people attended Connection Events

642
children and young people engaged through Youth Advisory Groups

Including:
274 First Nations young people
50 young people from CALD backgrounds
245 young people identified as living with disability

Programs

322
children and young people participated in Speak Up

Including:
171 First Nations young people
21 young people from CALD backgrounds
88 young people identified as living with disability

12
CREATE Your Future workshops delivered

64
children and young people participated in CREATE Your Future workshops

Including:
38 First Nations young people
3 young people from CALD backgrounds
23 young people identified as living with disability

1,000
GYOW Kits distributed to young people turning 17

2,663
Sortli downloads Australia-wide

114%
increase in CREATE website visitors compared with the previous year

70,699
clubCREATE magazines distributed
(note this is both print and digital)

21,500
followers across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn

106,252
unique visitors to the CREATE website



clubCREATE

For many children and young people, clubCREATE is their first connection with CREATE. As our free membership program, it opens the door to events, programs, resources, advocacy opportunities, and a community where young people know they belong.



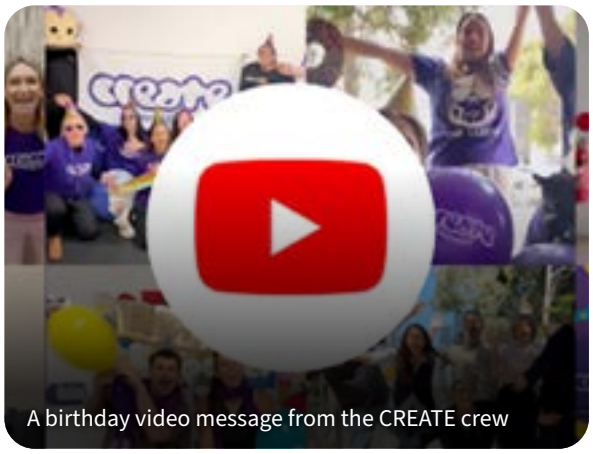


When young people join clubCREATE, they receive a Welcome Kit and ongoing emails with CREATE news, special birthday messages from the CREATE Crew, opportunities, events, activities, and ways to get involved.

clubCREATE offers something for every age. Young people can choose how involved they want to be, whether that's enjoying the fun stuff, learning new skills, connecting with others or helping create positive change for children and young people with a care experience.

"CREATE makes me feel like I'm not alone."

"It truly shows me that I'm not alone. CREATE has given me so much confidence."


A birthday video message from the CREATE crew



The CREATE welcome kit

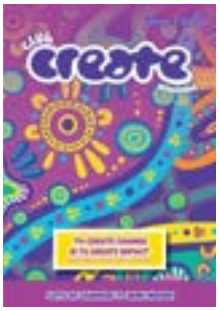
3,475
Welcome Kits
were sent to new clubCREATE members.

Over the past year, clubCREATE members enjoyed four editions of the clubCREATE magazine, with separate content created for our under 12-year-old and over 12-year-old members. Each edition was packed with activities, competitions, creative challenges, real stories, helpful information and plenty of opportunities for young people to have their say. Young people help shape each edition by sharing what they want to see, read and get involved in.

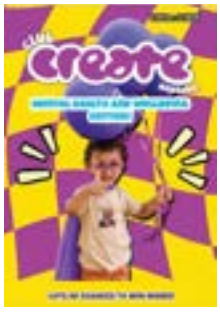
18,546
birthday messages
were sent to clubCREATE members via text and email.

















70,699
clubCREATE magazines distributed
22,474 sent by post | **48,225** sent by email.

"CREATE is an amazing space, we all get to share our thoughts and help each other out."

Connection Events

Connection Events are a chance for clubCREATE members to get together, meet other young people and do something fun. From creative activities and workshops to celebrations, outings and trying something new, there's always something different happening.



Our TAS crew enjoying a Connection Event at the Zoo

58
Connection Events were held across Australia, including **16 supported by ACCOs,** with **2,863 people attending.**

639
First Nations young people,

87
from CALD backgrounds,

340
living with disability, and

231
sibling groups.

"I love interacting with all the people in out-of-home care, and hearing everyone's stories at YAGs and just feeling connected."



Check out our Menu of Programs to explore the programs and opportunities available to members.

CREATE across Australia



Gus with CREATE Victoria

Across Australia, our state and territory teams are helping children and young people connect, grow, and have their voices heard.

The following pages celebrate the highlights from each corner of the country and the incredible people behind them. Thank you to every member of our state and territory teams for your passion, commitment, and the difference you make in the lives of young people every day.



Anne showcasing her creativity through pottery at a Speak Up event

Australian Capital Territory

Young voices shaping the ACT Youth Homelessness Strategy

CREATE in the ACT contributed to ongoing discussions and consultations on the ACT Youth Homelessness Strategy, helping ensure young people transitioning from care were recognised as a priority group.

Insights from the *This Matters to Us* report helped bring Youth Advisory Group voices into sector and political conversations, with further work planned as the strategy develops.

Young Consultants teaching future social workers

ACT Young Consultants guest lectured second-year social work students at ACU Canberra, sharing lived expertise to strengthen students' understanding of listening to young people, recognising what behaviour may be communicating, using respectful language and supporting young people with disability.

Language matters: Research led by lived experience

CREATE is partnering with ACU on ongoing research exploring how language in the out-of-home care sector impacts children and young people's participation. The project responded to priorities raised by Young Consultants and included one Connection Event, one focus group and one Youth Advisory Group to ensure lived experience shaped the research.



A Connection Event in the ACT



"The skateboard lessons were fantastic and it was nice to be able to connect with people after at the picnic."

Impact Snapshot

224
total ACT child and young person participations across CREATE programs and activities

49
First Nations young person participations across the year

6
connection activities held, attended by 133 children and young people in out-of-home care

4
CREATE Your Future modules delivered, supporting 15 young people



17
young people participated in Speak Up across Levels 1, 2 and 3

11
Youth Advisory Groups held, engaging 53 children and young people

Connection, advocacy and partnerships

Young people continued meeting with key decision-makers, including Minister Michael Pettersson and Laura Nuttall, to advocate for children and young people in care. ACT also celebrated connection through an Easter skateboarding event with Canberra Skateboarding Association, followed by a picnic, activities and an Easter egg hunt.

With thanks to our partners

Thank you to ACU, Key Assets, Canberra Skateboarding Association, Australian Childhood Foundation, Mackillop, Participation Reference Group, Barnardos and ACT sector and government partners for helping create opportunities for young people to connect, share their expertise and influence change.

New South Wales

Building connections across regional NSW

A major focus this year was strengthening CREATE's presence in Albury-Wodonga through new and growing partnerships with local organisations including the Department of Communities and Justice, Junction Support Services and VACCA.

These relationships created more opportunities for young people to connect with peers, participate in Youth Advisory Groups and access advocacy and support closer to home.



Impact Snapshot

274
total NSW child and young person participations across CREATE programs and activities

111
First Nations young person participations across the year

6
connection activities held, attended by 124 children and young people in out-of-home care

48
young people participated in Speak Up across Levels 1, 2 and 3

11
Youth Advisory Groups held, engaging 70 children and young people

6
worker training sessions delivered

Celebrating culture through connection

More than 70 children, young people, carers and sector professionals joined CREATE's Cultural Connection Cruise on Sydney Harbour in partnership with Tribal Warrior Aboriginal Cultural Cruises.

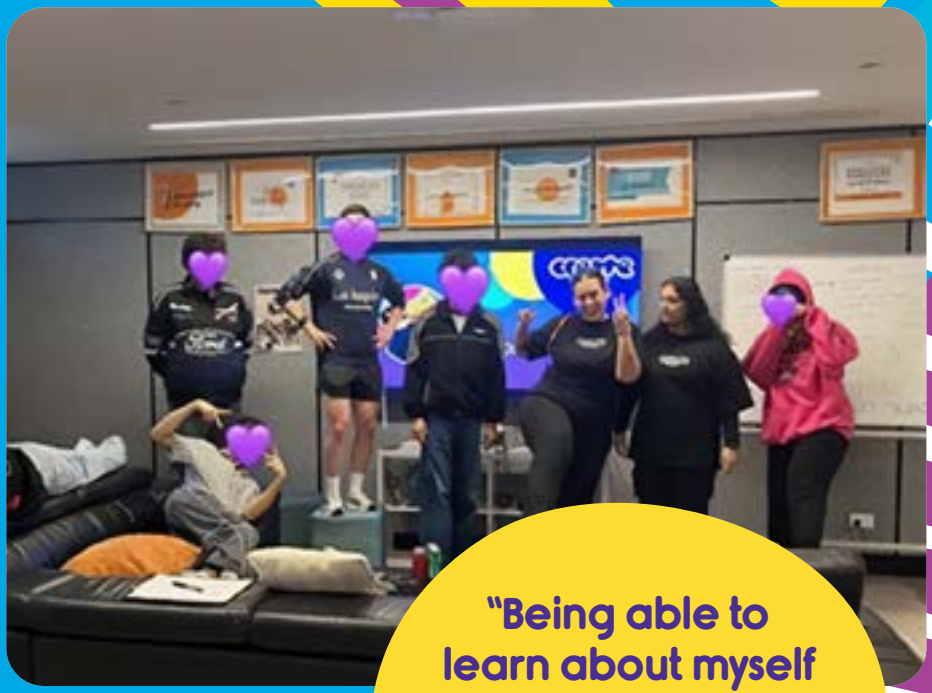
Participants explored Aboriginal culture, history and storytelling while connecting with community and celebrating culture in a unique and memorable way. The experience strengthened cultural understanding, identity and connection, reinforcing CREATE's commitment to reconciliation and culturally safe practice.



Growing the voices of Young Consultants

Through a partnership with Foyer Central, eight young people completed Speak Up Levels 1 and 2, with four progressing to become CREATE Young Consultants.

The program helped participants build confidence, strengthen advocacy skills and prepare to share their lived expertise with organisations, universities and decision-makers.



"Being able to learn about myself more and discovering how good I am at advocacy and how creative I can be!"

Young people leading change

At a Ministerial Roundtable with the Hon. Kate Washington MP, young people shared their experiences of care and highlighted priorities including housing stability, family connection, inclusion and mental health.

Young people also partnered with the Centre for Relational Care to develop a Social Compact for Relational Care, outlining what meaningful relationships and genuine connection should look like within the out-of-home care system.

"Every young person in our care deserves to grow up feeling loved, known and genuinely connected to people, community and culture."

"I have no limitations, I have no barriers, I can make anything happen. I do what I can even though the system discriminates and is unjust."

With thanks to our partners

We sincerely thank Wesley Mission, Centre for Relational Care, Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, Students of ACU, and Foyer Central for their ongoing support, valued partnerships, and shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people in New South Wales.

Northern Territory

Young voices driving reform

At the 2026 Northern Territory CREATE Roundtable, 15 young people with lived experience of out-of-home care met directly with senior decision-makers to discuss what needs to change. They highlighted gaps between previous commitments and young people's experiences, particularly in relation to housing, cultural connection and leaving-care planning.

Young people identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and the transition to independence as key priorities. Together, they shaped 12 recommendations for reform, covering cultural support plans, connection to culture, independent advocacy, housing, post-care support, leaving-care planning and practical life skills.

"Small change is still good change, no matter how small."



NT Roundtable

Impact Snapshot

523
total NT child and young person participations across CREATE programs and activities

484
First Nations young person participations across the year

6
connection activities held, attended by 251 children and young people in out-of-home care

2
CREATE Your Future modules delivered, supporting 25 young people

76
young people participated in Speak Up across Levels 1, 2 and 3

11
Youth Advisory Groups held, engaging 147 children and young people

Culture, connection and belonging

A cultural day at Lake Alexander Beach brought together 24 young people during the school holidays. Led by cultural knowledge holder Dale Austin and his family, the day included traditional weaving, pandanus painting, bush tucker and time connecting with Country and the beach.

Young people also contributed artwork to a NAIDOC Week banner representing their past, present and future journeys. The event created a relaxed and welcoming space to learn, share and strengthen connections to culture, identity and community.

"It gives you strength... it makes you feel strong."

Finding their voice through music

With support from the Northern Territory Government's Youth Vibe Holiday Grant Scheme, young people participated in two songwriting workshops with Riley P, creating music informed by their lived experiences.

In the first workshop, young people wrote individual songs exploring the challenges of growing up in care alongside messages of resilience, self-belief and perseverance. In the second, they worked together on a group rap about care experience, supportive adults and the strength of peer connection.

The workshops culminated in the song *I Won't Give Up*, giving young people a creative platform to express their experiences, strengths and hopes for the future.

Advocacy in action

CREATE contributed to consideration of the *Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026* through a formal submission to the Northern Territory Legislative Scrutiny Committee. The submission brought a child-centred and lived-experience perspective to proposed reforms, including changes relating to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, permanency pathways and Family Responsibility Agreements and Orders.

CREATE advocated for reforms that protect young people's connections to family, culture, community and identity, and reinforced the importance of children and young people having genuine opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives.

Young Consultants also took their advocacy to the media. Natasha, Tim and Malik spoke with ABC about why culture matters to young people in care, while Tim shared his care journey and experience as a CREATE Young Consultant on ABC Radio. These opportunities helped amplify young people's voices and promote greater understanding of the connection between culture, identity, belonging and aspirations for the future.



Timothy ABC Radio Interview

"You knock me down, doesn't mean I can't get back. Watch me rise, I'm gonna stand up tall."

With thanks to our partners

CREATE Northern Territory's work was strengthened through collaboration with the Office of the Children's Commissioner, the Northern Territory Government, the Department of Children and Families, Anglicare NT, and the Department of People, Sport and Culture. These partnerships helped create opportunities for children and young people with a care experience to connect, celebrate culture, share their expertise and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Queensland

Young voices shaping Queensland reform

A major focus for CREATE in Queensland was to support young people to share their experiences and recommendations through the Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry. Their voices were heard through Youth Advisory Groups, Speak Up programs, consultations and advocacy activities, helping ensure lived experience informed CREATE's submissions and remained central to reform conversations.

Lived experience at the Stewardship Table

Four Queensland Young Consultants joined the Intergenerational Stewardship Table led by the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership. Together they represented the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience alongside leaders from government, community organisations and other lived-experience groups. This ensured the perspectives of care-experienced young people were embedded in conversations about creating a thriving future for Queensland children.



Young people coming together at a regional Speak Up event in Toowoomba, proudly delivered with Outback Instincts

Connection, culture and belonging

A standout Connection Event in Cairns combined tenpin bowling with a consultation session, giving young people the chance to connect with peers while speaking about the issues that mattered to them.

Regional events also created powerful moments of family and cultural connection. At one event, a young person was introduced to family members from the Torres Strait Islands whom they had never previously met. This led to ongoing connections strengthening their sense of identity, belonging and sibling connection.

"At least for me, I can turn my care experience and those hardships and struggles into something that is empowering for others. So, I get meaning out of that, and I can get just as much out of that as getting paid."



Young Consultants celebrating at the CREATE Christmas Party at Wet'n'Wild



Dakota McSpadden, Finalist: Young Achiever Awards

Partnerships amplifying young voices

CREATE in Queensland worked with research, government and sector partners to keep lived experience at the centre of decision-making and practice. Thank you to these partners who helped create opportunities for young people to share their voices and influence change.

- **University of Queensland's Self-Placing Research Project:** Established lived-experience governance groups for young people and young adults to help shape research from the outset.
- **Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (QFKC):** Young Consultants participated in four lived-experience panels, sharing insights directly with carers to promote more child-centred care.
- **Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC):** Delivered statewide Art Competitions and Showcase events in Brisbane and Cairns, providing creative opportunities for children and young people to share their stories and celebrate their talents.

Impact Snapshot

620
total QLD child and young person participations across CREATE programs and activities

241
First Nations young person participations across the year

15
connection activities held, attended by 339 children and young people in out-of-home care

13
engagement events held across QLD

72
young people participated in Speak Up across Levels 1, 2 and 3

21
Youth Advisory Groups held, engaging 130 children and young people

South Australia

"It was great to have another way to catch up with the kids siblings."

"Seeing the siblings together enjoying the activities."



Strengthening sibling connections

One of South Australia's standout achievements this year was the Annual Sibling Connection Event at Carclew House, bringing together 65 children and young people, more than 60 carers and workers, and 20 sibling groups for a day focused on connection, belonging and shared experiences.

The event provided siblings with care experience the opportunity to spend quality time together, strengthen important family relationships and create lasting memories in a safe and welcoming environment.

"Grateful for the opportunity that is provided for us."



Impact Snapshot

408
total SA child and young person participations across CREATE programs and activities

7
connection activities held, attended by 238 children and young people in out-of-home care

22
young people participated in Speak Up across Levels 1, 2 and 3

11
Youth Advisory Groups held

Celebrating culture, connection and community

For the third consecutive year, CREATE partnered with Aboriginal Family Support Services (AFSS) to deliver a cultural event for Aboriginal children and young people, alongside their friends and families.

Held in the Adelaide Hills, the event celebrated culture, connection and community through a Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony, yarning circles and drumming sessions led by Elders.

Young people also embraced activities including high ropes, archery, bouldering and the giant swing, building confidence and encouraging one another to try something new.

Young people's voices shaping change

This year, the South Australian team delivered a consultation report to the Department for Child Protection as part of the ***Reimagining Residential Care Summit***. The consultation brought together CREATE Young Consultants, members of the Ministerial Youth Council and departmental representatives to help shape future approaches to residential care.

Young people also participated in Adelaide University's ***Better Start Project***, sharing their experiences of accessing healthcare and identifying opportunities to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in care. Their contributions will help inform the development of a national data platform aimed at improving service responses and outcomes.

"Good communication can generate a sense of trust and a sense of belonging."

"Stability is not having to worry that next week you are going to be in a completely different spot away from family."



With thanks to our partners

South Australia's impact was strengthened through collaboration with government, community organisations, carers, researchers and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. Key partnerships included the Department for Child Protection, the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, Aboriginal Family Support Services, KWY, Junction Australia, Relationships Australia SA, Uniting Communities, Nature Play SA, Child and Family Focus SA, Adelaide University and a range of regional and metropolitan partners working together to improve outcomes for children and young people with a care experience.

Tasmania

Advocating for young people with disability and neurodiversity in care

Young people with disability and neurodiversity told CREATE that navigating care systems can be particularly challenging when information, services and support are not tailored to their needs. Through a Tasmanian Youth Advisory Group, nine young people shared lived experience and identified practical opportunities for change, including better training for carers and workers, improved continuity of care and stronger transition planning around medication and support services.

Their insights are helping inform CREATE's advocacy for more inclusive, accessible and responsive systems for children and young people in care.

Sortli launch and youth-led consultation

Tasmania celebrated a major win this year with the launch of the Sortli app in June. The app gives young people practical information and support as they prepare for adulthood. Young people were central to shaping the Tasmanian version of Sortli. Through Youth Advisory Groups, they shared lived experience, tested what information would be most useful, and provided practical feedback on the realities of leaving care in Tasmania. Their input helped ensure the app reflected local needs and gave young people clear, accessible information to support their transition to independence.

Young Consultants Tatum, Lara and Ann also spoke at the launch, sharing why accessible support matters for young people as they move towards adulthood, housing, financial independence and wellbeing.



Young Consultant Lara officially launching the Sortli app in Tasmania

Impact Snapshot

356
total TAS child and young person participations across CREATE programs and activities

5
connection activities held, attended by 209 children and young people in out-of-home care

41
young people participated in Speak Up across Levels 1, 2 and 3

11
Youth Advisory Groups held

8
worker training sessions delivered

Consulting young people on the power of language

Tasmanian young people also contributed to a review of the *Way Too Serious Language* framework, originally developed by CREATE in partnership with young people and the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP). The framework encourages professionals to consider how language impacts children and young people with a care experience and promotes respectful, person-centred communication.

Young people explored how common care-system language can shape identity, belonging and wellbeing. Their feedback helped update the framework to better reflect contemporary language and lived experience, while reinforcing the importance of using respectful language and honouring each young person's preferences.



clubCREATE member dressed as a pumpkin at a Halloween Connection Event



Tatum enjoying a special encounter with kangaroos at a CREATE Christmas event



Celebrating the festive season together at the FKAT and CREATE Christmas Party

With thanks to our partners

who hosted trick-or-treat stalls and activities for young people. The event received fantastic feedback, with Rapid Relief generously providing a BBQ for attendees.

The Christmas Party at Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary brought young people and carers together for a festive afternoon of animals, connection and celebration, delivered in partnership with the Foster and Kinship Carers Association of Tasmania. Rapid Relief generously provided a BBQ, while Young Consultants Tatum and Ella helped bring the festive spirit as Santa's helpers.

Victoria

Youth Parliament: Turning lived experience into legislative change

One of Victoria's most significant achievements this year was the participation of six Young Consultants in CREATE's Youth Parliament team.

Together with the support of CREATE, young people built advocacy, policy and public speaking skills through mentoring, planning sessions, camps and parliamentary preparation. They drafted the ***Strengthening Representation for Children in Care Bill 2026***, calling for stronger representation, corporate parenting principles, and better access to education, mentorship and community support.

The team presented their Bill in Parliament, where it was unanimously passed by their peers before being formally handed to the Minister for Youth for consideration by Victorian Ministers and Members of Parliament.

"Before I thought my experience would just be my trauma, but now I can use it for something."

"I feel like I'm helping my younger self. When I was younger, I never knew anyone involved with DHS. Being part of this group means I know I can help in my way."



Young advocates from CREATE's Youth Parliament team presenting their Strengthening Representation for Children in Care Bill

Impact Snapshot

342
total VIC child and young person participations across CREATE programs and activities

72
First Nations young person participations across the year

7
connection activities held, attended by 175 children and young people in out-of-home care

36
young people participated in Speak Up across Levels 1, 2 and 3

11
Youth Advisory Groups held, engaging 45 children and young people

7
worker training sessions delivered

Influencing policy and reform

CREATE provided insights from children and young people with a care experience to support the Victorian Parliament's consideration of the ***Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Stability) Bill 2025***, contributing to discussions surrounding Victoria's historic Corporate Parent legislation.

Young Consultants also helped inform important research projects focused on improving outcomes for young people with a care experience. This included participation in La Trobe University's Suicide, Risk, Protective Factors and Interventions for *Care Experienced Young People* project, which was co-designed with one of CREATE's Young Consultants, as well as Monash University's *Improving Transition Planning in Residential Out-of-Home Care research project.*

YEAG

Victorian young people continued to shape practical resources for their peers through the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group (YEAG). A key achievement was the co-design of the *Better Futures Guide for Young People*, a resource created by young people, for young people, thanks to Brotherhood of St. Laurence. The guide helps young people better understand the Better Futures program and access information to support successful transitions from care to adulthood.



A fun Connection Event playing mini-golf during a school-holiday trip to Wodonga

With thanks to our partners

Cross-border collaboration with CREATE in NSW remained a key focus in the Albury-Wodonga region, creating greater opportunities for connection, participation and advocacy for young people. CREATE also worked alongside community partners including Junction, NESAY, VACCA, the Rapid Relief Team, Rotary Club, DFFH and Brotherhood of St Laurence to support young people and strengthen local engagement.

Western Australia

Regional voices driving change

In Western Australia, a key highlight over the past 12 months was the establishment of the Regional Reference Group (RRG), creating a dedicated space for regional young people to share their experiences, raise issues and contribute directly to advocacy priorities. This work led to an important meeting with the Director General, Assistant Director General, Chief Practitioner and Child Advocate, where five RRG members spoke about the challenges facing young people in regional areas.

Young people shared the impact of distance, limited access to support and feeling isolated in smaller communities:

"Sometimes, depending on your town, you feel so trapped. You know everyone and everything. Sometimes the carers can't travel, and they need extra help. You are even more stuck. The department does it, but not consistently and it takes a lot of effort. Sometimes it feels like you are too much effort."



CREATE Western Australia

Impact Snapshot

256
total WA child and young person participations across CREATE programs and activities

6
connection activities held, attended by 144 children and young people in out-of-home care

4
CREATE Your Future modules delivered, supporting seven young people

16
young people participated in Speak Up across Levels 1, 2 and 3

11
Youth Advisory Groups held

Advocacy, events and allyship

CREATE in Western Australia continued to support advocacy and connection through key events and programs, including the August Roundtable, the Signs of Safety Gathering, Christmas connection activities, and the development of a Guide to Allyship for Carers and Workers. These initiatives helped strengthen understanding of what meaningful support looks like for young people and how adults, carers and workers can better walk alongside them.



CREATE Signs of Safety Gathering

Connecting through culture

Culture, identity and connection were also strong themes throughout the year. During a NAIDOC Youth Advisory Group, young people reflected on the importance of cultural connection and the need for stronger support to explore identity:

"It's important because young people need more support in exploring their culture and identity. Without that, they risk losing their connection to culture, which impacts future generations."



NAIDOC Youth Advisory Group

With thanks to our partners

CREATE in Western Australia is proud of the partnerships that helped make this work possible, including collaborations with Uplyft, Life Without Barriers, the Department of Communities Metro and Regional District Directors, CAFAWA, YACWA and Wungening.



Lived experience leading advocacy

Young people don't just inspire our advocacy, they lead it. Their voices shape CREATE's priorities and drive change for children and young people with a care experience.



The priorities shaping our advocacy

CREATE's Advocacy Priorities continued to guide our efforts to influence policy, legislation, systems and practice throughout 2025–26. Across Youth Advisory Groups, consultations, roundtables, and co-design initiatives, children and young people shared their experiences and expertise on the issues that matter most to them.

These insights informed CREATE's advocacy with governments, decision-makers and sector partners across Australia and continue to shape our vision for child protection systems where all children and young people are safe, supported and empowered to thrive.

Relationships

Young people have consistently told CREATE that strong relationships are fundamental to safety, wellbeing and belonging. CREATE continued to advocate for systems that value and invest in facilitating and maintaining meaningful relationships with carers, siblings, family, culture, community and workers. This focus was reflected across our submissions, Youth Advisory Groups, consultations and co-design initiatives, including work to advance relational approaches to care.

"There are enough workers – but not enough good workers who care about us."

Sibling, Kin and Family Connection

Maintaining connections to siblings, family, culture and community remained a key priority for CREATE as raised by children and young people. CREATE advocated for stronger policies and practices that preserve family relationships wherever safe and possible, recognising the lifelong importance of connection, identity and belonging.

"Being raised as an Indigenous person in a white family, it makes it hard to know your identity and your culture."

Health and Wellbeing

Young people highlighted the importance of timely and accessible physical, mental health and disability supports that recognise the impact of trauma and respond to individual needs. CREATE continued to advocate for earlier intervention, coordinated support and improved access to services for children and young people in care, particularly those living with disability or who are neurodivergent.

"Being a disabled person – getting diagnosed in care is ridiculously hard. I went through ten different houses, and nobody picked up on I have an intellectual disability."

"Workers should be our cheerleaders and cheer us on no matter what."

"When you turn 18 they just kick you out and say good luck."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Self-Determination

CREATE continued to advocate alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, organisations and communities for culturally safe systems that support self-determination and strengthen connection to family, culture and Country.

Throughout the year, young people emphasised the importance of culture, identity and belonging, and the harm caused when those connections are not supported.

"I was very disconnected from my culture growing up. When I finally got to do cultural things, it gave me a sense of belonging I'd never felt before."

Safety and Stability in Care

Young people continue to identify safety, stability and meaningful participation in decision-making as critical to positive experiences in care. CREATE advocated for care systems that prioritise stable placements, genuine participation, and environments where children and young people feel safe, heard and supported.

"When a child is moved placements, they feel disposable in a sense."

Residential Care

CREATE continued to advocate for residential care reform, informed directly by children and young people who shared their experiences of growing up in group homes around the country. Young people emphasised the importance of relationships, connection and environments that help them thrive rather than simply meet minimum standards of care. CREATE advocated for residential care homes to feel like 'homes' and for family-based care to be prioritised, especially for primary school aged children and younger.

"The more people there are looking after you, it feels less like a family."

"Stability is not having to worry that next week you are going to be in a completely different spot away from family."

"My caseworker didn't want to believe I was Aboriginal and didn't want to connect me to my culture."

Education

CREATE advocated for inclusive, supportive and trauma-informed education systems that help young people achieve their goals and aspirations. Young people highlighted the need for greater support to remain engaged in learning and for educators to be trained to better understand trauma and create safe spaces for young people with care experience.

"I wish my teachers knew what it is like to be a young person in out-of-home care and how to help me."

Youth Justice and Raising the Age

CREATE continued to advocate for responses that uphold children's rights, invest in early intervention, prevention and rehabilitation, and interrupt the care to custody pipeline.

Young people's experiences reinforced the importance of early support and connection and not criminalising disadvantage.

"Their brain hasn't fully developed, and you're putting an undeveloped brain in a very hostile environment and then thinking that they're not going to become a product of that environment, and that they're going to do the opposite."

Transitions to Independence

Greater support for the transition from care remained one of the strongest and most consistent themes raised by young people throughout the year and was described as a complex and often stressful experience, highlighting the need for earlier planning, practical support, and ongoing assistance to achieve stable and positive outcomes. CREATE advocated for increased post-care supports including housing guarantees for care leavers and an increase to the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) from $1,500 to $10,000 to better support young people transitioning from care.

"No matter how much support you have around you, transitioning out of care is very scary and very frightening. You go from someone taking responsibility for you and making sure your needs are being met, and now you're that person."

Rights, Diversity and Inclusion

Throughout the year, CREATE advocated for systems that uphold the rights of children and young people, respect diverse identities and backgrounds, and ensure young people are meaningfully involved in decisions that affect their lives. At CREATE Youth Advisory Groups, Roundtables and other events throughout the year, young people highlighted the importance of inclusion and recognition of their individual experiences. Their insights informed CREATE's advocacy relating to child participation, disability reform, cultural safety and identity across jurisdictions.

"I was told I was too confusing, I needed to pick a gender and go with it. The resi said it was too hard and I need to choose a gender or get kicked out."

Advocacy in action

Young people's experiences and expertise don't just shape CREATE's advocacy priorities, they directly inform the submissions, consultations, reports and policy contributions we make throughout the year. Together, these advocacy outputs help ensure lived experience remains at the centre of decisions affecting children and young people in care.



Youth Advisory

Youth Advisory Groups are one of the primary ways CREATE gathers insights, identifies emerging issues and creates opportunities for young people to influence change.

In 2025-26, **100 Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs)** were held across Australia, engaging **642 children and young people,** including **274 First Nations young people, 50 from CALD backgrounds, and 245 living with disability**.

The impact of YAGs

"It helps us create stable relationships, as we never learned how. YAG connections help teach us."

"YAGs helped me find long-term friendships."

"Kids who initially start connecting with CREATE and YAGs might come in feeling really disempowered, invalidated, lonely, and maybe not very knowledgeable about the alternatives in handling things, or ways to exercise their voice. People hopefully leave here feeling more empowered in their experiences."

CREATE's Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs) provide children and young people with lived experience of care a safe and supportive space to share their expertise and influence the policies, practices and systems that affect their lives. The impact of YAGs extends far beyond a single conversation. Across Australia, young people are shaping policy, influencing practice and helping design better systems for children and young people with a care experience. One example of this impact is the co-design of a Social Compact for relational care.

In partnership with the Centre for Relational Care (CRC), CREATE delivered a three-part NSW Relational Care YAG series, bringing the same group of young people together to co-design a Social Compact for relational care.

Young people described what relational care means to them — understanding, empathy, participation, belonging, sense of self, empowerment, trust, respect and connection — and shared what children and young people need to feel genuinely known, supported and valued. They challenged systems to move beyond the minimum standard of care and instead build relationships that help young people thrive.

"Know me well enough to know what I need and how you can help me."

The Social Compact is only the beginning. CREATE and the Centre for Relational Care will continue advocating for a Child Connection System, informed by lived experience, alongside a commitment to embed relational care across policy and practice, establish a Relational Care Taskforce and create ongoing opportunities for young people to influence reform.

This is the power of CREATE's Youth Advisory Groups in creating meaningful opportunities for young people to influence the systems that shape their lives.

The Four Pillars of the Social Compact

1	2	3	4
Above the minimum	Lived values, not stated values	Relationships goes both ways	Relational care: defined by how it feels

Voice through submissions and consultations

CREATE's *This Matters to Us* report contributed to discussions in the ACT Legislative Assembly during debate on youth homelessness. The motion, which received unanimous support, recognised young people transitioning from care as a priority cohort and committed to the development of a dedicated ACT Youth Homelessness Strategy, including co-design with young people with lived experience.

CREATE also contributed to national discussions on child participation through an interview with the Australian Childhood Foundation, highlighting the importance of moving beyond tokenistic consultation to genuine participation. Drawing on the expertise of children and young people with lived experience, CREATE reinforced that meaningful engagement requires listening in ways that are safe and empowering, acting on what young people share, and remaining accountable for the outcomes.



Throughout Queensland's Child Safety Commission of Inquiry, CREATE advocated for children and young people with lived experience to be at the centre of reform.

Through submissions to the Inquiry, media engagement and social media, CREATE amplified the voices of children and young people with care experience, ensuring their insights informed public discussion about the future of Queensland's child protection system.

Following the release of the Inquiry's findings, CREATE CEO Imogen Edeson and Young Consultant Jayden met with Queensland Government portfolio ministers to discuss the recommendations and the importance of embedding lived experience in their implementation.

"The data shows that the number of young people with a disability or who are neurodivergent are higher in the out-of-home care system, so it should be built for us, but it isn't."

CREATE provided a submission to inform the development of Tasmania's first Disability Inclusion Plan, ensuring the voices and experiences of children and young people with lived experience of out-of-home care were represented in the consultation process.

Drawing on lived experience, the submission called for children and young people in care with disability to be recognised as a priority cohort and advocated for earlier intervention, trauma-informed practice, coordinated supports and stronger transitions to independence. CREATE looks forward to continuing to engage with the Tasmanian Government as disability reform progresses.

A seat at the table

CREATE Foundation's Policy Roundtables bring together young experts by experience and decision-makers in safe, respectful, youth-led and collaborative settings to discuss ways to improve systems impacting children and young people.

In 2025–26, CREATE hosted Roundtables in Western Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory, ensuring young people had a seat at the table in conversations about reform. We also partnered with governments and the sector on innovative co-design initiatives that put children and young people at the centre of decision-making.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, including connection to culture in care, was a key focus of this year's Northern Territory Roundtable. Young people shared powerful reflections, including:

"I was very disconnected from my culture growing up. I never had guidance towards my culture. When I finally got to do cultural things, it felt strange at first, but it gave me a sense of belonging I'd never felt before."

Better supporting young people as they transition to independence was another key priority. The NT Children's Commissioner at the time, Shahleena Musk, attended the Roundtable and later took what she heard from young people directly to a hearing of the NT Legislative Scrutiny Committee considering the *Every Child Matters Bill*. It was a powerful example of lived experience influencing decision-makers and ensuring young people's perspectives were represented where it mattered most.

The influence of young people's contributions continued after the event, with findings and recommendations from the Northern Territory Roundtable Report 2026 presented to the Out-of-Home Care Steering Committee. In response, the Committee agreed to establish a Working Group subcommittee to consider and progress CREATE's recommendations. This commitment demonstrated how young people's voices are not only being heard but are helping to shape the policies and systems that affect their lives.

Western Australia's 2025 Ministerial Roundtable brought young people and decision-makers together to discuss areas for improvement across the child protection system, including practice reform, the value of peer support in complaints processes, training recommendations and more. It reinforced that lived experience isn't an extra – it's essential and should be embedded throughout the system.

Building on this momentum, CREATE is partnering with the Department of Communities in WA to ensure young people's voices are central to the Government's Child Engagement Framework, helping shape how government listens to children and young people in care.



Key Takeaways

Young people aren't being heard...

Too many report feeling ignored when they speak up. When concerns go nowhere, trust in the system breaks down.

Young people want people not just services...

Real relationships with workers make the biggest difference. We're more likely to speak up when we trust the person listening.

Many young people don't know their rights or where to get help...

Information is hard to access, poorly explained, or not offered at all. Rights should be everyone's priority, not buried in a pamphlet.

Lived experience isn't extra, it's essential...

Peer support should be in every part of the system, from training to complaints to decision-making.

Workers need more training...

We are more likely to raise concerns when we feel safe, respected, and known. That starts with workers who understand what we've been through and see beyond files.



CREATE partnered with the Department for Child Protection in South Australia to co-host the Ministerial Reimagining Residential Care Youth Summit. This ongoing partnership ensures young people with lived experience are at the heart of redesigning South Australia's residential care system. Rather than simply being consulted, young people are being recognised as genuine design partners, sharing their expertise to shape future policy, service models and decision-making. The summit marked the beginning of an ongoing co-design partnership with government and the sector, as South Australia's new child protection legislation is being implemented: reinforcing that children and young people should help create the systems designed to support them.

Youth-led committees

NEABY

National Experience to Action Board (Youth)

CREATE's 2024–26 National Experience to Action Board (Youth), NEABY, brought together young people from every state and territory with lived experience of out-of-home care to influence CREATE's work, shape advocacy priorities and drive meaningful change.

Over two years, NEABY informed CREATE's Strategic Plan and Reconciliation Action Plan, contributed to national advocacy, responded to policy reform including changes to the NDIS, and shared their experiences directly with decision-makers at Parliament House in Canberra.

During their visit to Parliament House, NEABY members presented the Passport to Success and Australia's first Charter for Young Parents in Care — two major projects designed and led by young people to improve support and outcomes for children, young people and young parents with care experience.

A special acknowledgement goes to Cheyenne, CREATE Young Consultant and WA NEABY representative, whose leadership helped bring the Charter to life. Drawing on her own lived experience and international learnings, Cheyenne led the development of the Charter, ensuring the voices and experiences of young parents in care were at the centre of this important work.

The Charter has since informed conversations with government leaders across Australia, helping build understanding of the experiences of young parents in care and encouraging greater consideration of their needs in policy and practice.

As the 2024–26 NEABY cohort concluded their term, CREATE celebrated their achievements and the lasting impact of their leadership. Their work demonstrates the power of genuine youth participation and will continue to influence CREATE's advocacy and programs into the future.



Extended Post Care Support (EPCS) Oversight Group

Over two years, Queensland's EPCS Oversight Group contributed to a major research project at the University of Queensland, assisted with improvements to the Department's website and communications with young people, and met with sector professionals to share their insights for supporting the rollout of the EPCS support package for care leavers. At their last meeting, they recorded a series of social media videos on what they wish they knew when leaving care, to help other young people with their transitions to independence.

Youth Expert Advisory Group (YEAG)

CREATE supported Victoria's YEAG members to share their expertise on the international stage. At Kōkiri: The Future Speaks, hosted by VOYCE in Aotearoa New Zealand, our Young Consultants presented *Thriving, Not Surviving: Embedding Lived Experience, Transitioning from Care in Victoria*. They shared their insights on transitioning from care and what authentic youth participation looks like in practice, while exchanging learnings with young people, advocates and sector leaders from around the world. The opportunity recognised young people as experts in their own experiences, ensuring their voices and expertise contributed to global conversations about improving outcomes for young people transitioning from care.





SHIFT Ministerial Youth Advisory Network

Queensland's SHIFT Ministerial Youth Advisory Network wrapped up two years of contributions to the Queensland Government's proposed reforms to out-of-home care. Highlights included a session focused on in-home supports to help young people stay at home safely, with a summary report to be presented to the Minister and the Parliament House BBQ where SHIFT members sat across from the Minister and Department Executives to share their priorities for residential care reform.



Amplifying young voices

Advocacy doesn't end when a consultation concludes or a report is published. Throughout the year, CREATE worked to amplify the voices, experiences and expertise of children and young people with a care experience through campaigns, digital storytelling, media and community engagement. By sharing real stories, challenging misconceptions and celebrating strengths, we helped build understanding, inspire action and keep young people's voices at the centre of conversations about change.



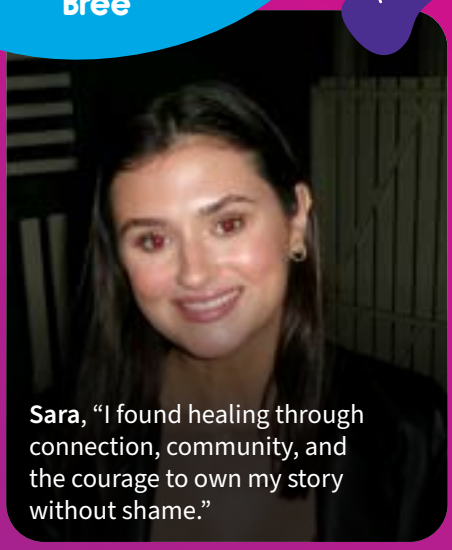
#SnapThatStigma

Too often, stereotypes and stigma can reduce young people to their care experience rather than recognising who they are and what they can achieve.

"Kids in care could change the whole world if they had the chance to – never underestimate kids in the care system."
Bree

CREATE's **#SnapThatStigma** campaign challenges these perceptions by sharing the real stories of young people with a care experience. Their stories challenge assumptions, celebrate individuality and remind us that young people with a care experience are more than the labels placed on them.

Throughout the year, CREATE featured seven young people with a care experience through the #SnapThatStigma campaign. By sharing their stories in their own words, they challenged stereotypes, celebrated their strengths and experiences, and helped build greater understanding of what it means to grow up in and beyond care.



Sara, "I found healing through connection, community, and the courage to own my story without shame."

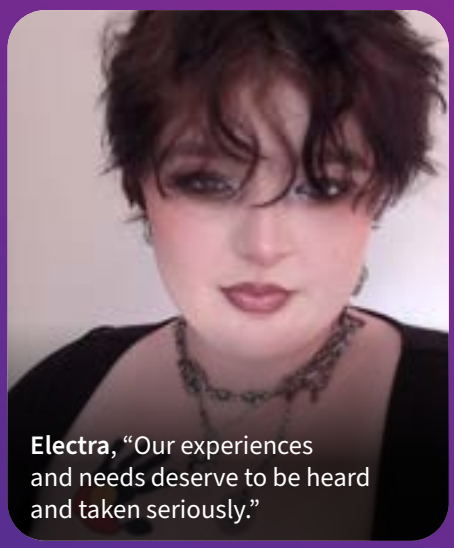
7 stories. 7 young people. One powerful message: young people with a care experience are more than a label.



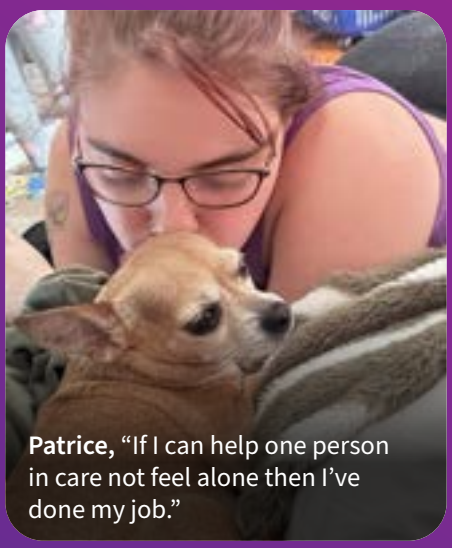
Ethan, "Don't let the system define you."



Chey-Anne, "By owning my story. For years, I tried to hide it, but when I stopped being ashamed and started sharing it, the stigma lost its power. I used the negativity as motivation to do everything I was told I couldn't do."



Electra, "Our experiences and needs deserve to be heard and taken seriously."



Patrice, "If I can help one person in care not feel alone then I've done my job."



Ashleigh, "People assumed I would end up like my biological mother and never amount to anything in life."

World Care Day 2026: #BreakingBarriers

World Care Day 2026 was one of the biggest yet! CREATE invited young people and supporters across Australia to take part in **#BreakingBarriers** for children and young people with a care experience. Through the *Barrier Balloon Smash Challenge*, young people shared the barriers they had overcome, while supporters were invited to take a pledge to help break down barriers for children and young people in care.





This year, CREATE also had its first-ever **World Care Day Ambassador, Emily Hikaiti** – a CREATE Board Member, passionate advocate and leader in out-of-home care reform. Emily shared videos and messages of support encouraging young people to share the barriers they had smashed, while helping build momentum and celebrate the care community in the lead-up to and on World Care Day.

Impact snapshot

- **40,145 LinkedIn impressions** — more than four times the previous year
- **8,928 video views**
- **6,242 email opens**
- CREATE's World Care Day webpage became our **most visited page of 2026,** with **2,113 views**, while **622 people downloaded the World Care Day pledge** directly from a LinkedIn ad.
- **2FM radio interview with CREATE CEO Imogen Edeson.**

#Snap that Stigma



Young Consultants in the media

Young people's voices are a powerful driver of systemic advocacy because they give insight into how systems affect children and young people in care, in real life. When young people are supported to safely speak out about their experiences, they expose gaps and harms that adults may overlook, and help ensure systems are reformed in ways that better protect, support and empower the children who come after them.

Last year, CREATE supported 20 Young Consultants to share their stories with the media. They spoke on issues including the transition to independence, youth justice, the worries of young Australians, residential care, safety in care, World Care Day and more. Their contributions reinforced a simple but important message: when systems affecting young people are discussed, young people must be part of the conversation.

20
CREATE Young Consultants supported to share their stories with the media

12
Online Articles

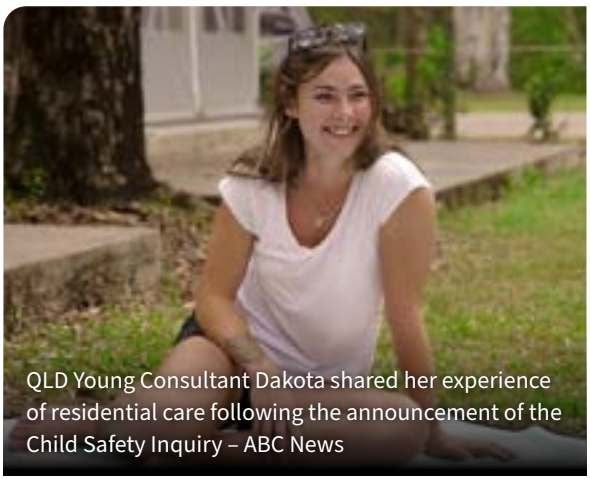
3
Radio Interviews

4
TV Segments

10
Media Releases sent



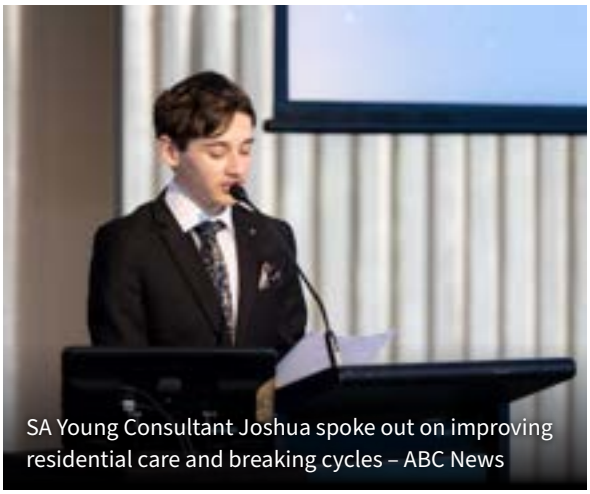
NT Young Consultant Natasha was interviewed on connection to culture for young people in care – ABC News



QLD Young Consultant Dakota shared her experience of residential care following the announcement of the Child Safety Inquiry – ABC News



QLD Young Consultant Jayden was interviewed on the worries of young Australians in 2025 – SBS News



SA Young Consultant Joshua spoke out on improving residential care and breaking cycles – ABC News



QLD Young Consultant Georgie shared her story and advocated for young people to be heard in the Child Safety Inquiry – ABC News



CREATE CEO Imogen Edeson responded to the Final Report of Queensland's Child Safety Inquiry – ABC News



NT Young Consultants Malik and Timothy spoke about their experiences of connecting to culture – ABC News



SA Young Consultants Ethan and Allie spoke about how CREATE's CYF Expo supports young people leaving care – We Are SA News



WA Young Consultant Annabell was interviewed on the need for more foster carers – Perth Now

Digital reach

CREATE's digital channels help young people, families, supporters and sector stakeholders stay connected to our information, advocacy, programs and opportunities. Throughout the year, our websites, social media and email communications extended the reach of young people's voices, shared important updates and helped more people engage with CREATE's work.

More than **106,000 people visited the CREATE website during the year — over double the previous year and more than twice our annual target.** The CREATE Your Future website also reached more than **17,400 unique visitors**, demonstrating continued demand for accessible information to support young people preparing to transition from care.

Our monthly Advocacy Wrap Ups remained an important way to keep young people and supporters informed about CREATE's advocacy, opportunities and resources. Together, these emails reached more than **13,000 subscribers**, with open rates of up to **59.7%** and click-through rates of up to **51.1%**.

Across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, CREATE's community grew to **21,500 followers**. Our social media content generated more than **75,700 engagements** and almost **640,000 views and impressions**.

Importantly, these results were achieved while publishing fewer posts than the previous year. This reflects a continued focus on creating timely, relevant and purposeful content that elevates the voices and experiences of children and young people with a care experience.



106,252

unique visitors to the CREATE website

114% more than the previous year

17,416

unique visitors to the CREATE Your Future website

21,500

followers across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn

75,717

social media engagements

68% above our annual target

639,176

social media views and impressions

1,574

new social media followers

777

social media posts sharing CREATE's work, opportunities and advocacy

13,000+

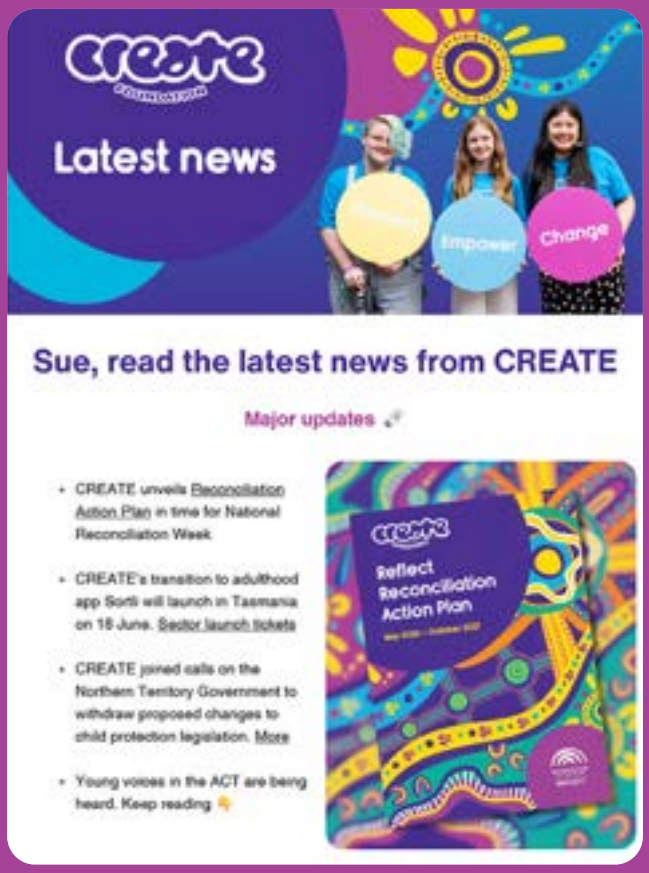
Advocacy Wrap Up subscribers reached

51%

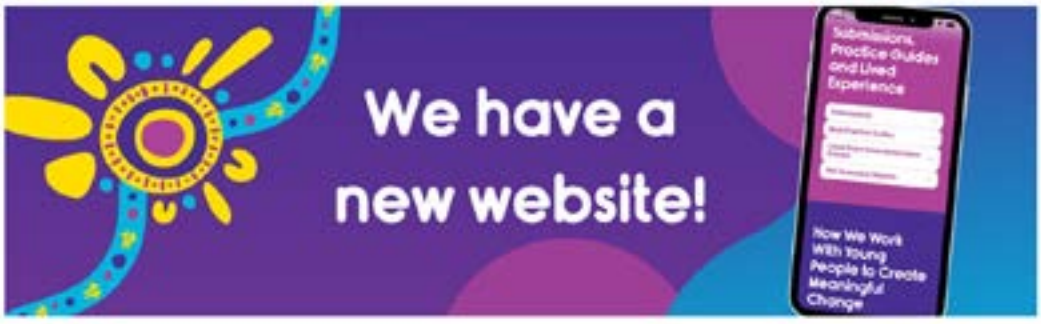
highest Advocacy Wrap Up click-through rate

60%

highest Advocacy Wrap Up open rate







CREATE's new website is live!

Explore our updated look, improved navigation and fresh content.

We'll have more developments soon as our team works hard in the background to add an exciting new feature for clubCREATE. Stay tuned.

create.org.au



Thriving beyond care

Every young person deserves the opportunity to transition from care with confidence, connection and the support they need to thrive. Throughout the year, CREATE continued to work alongside young people to develop practical resources, programs and opportunities that support successful transitions to adulthood. From planning for the future and building life skills to accessing information, grants and peer support, this work helps young people navigate life beyond care and create the futures they want for themselves.



CREATE Your Future



CREATE Your Future Expo

The CREATE Your Future Expo returned to South Australia in 2025 with the theme #MyPathMyFuture, bringing young people together for a fun and interactive day focused on their future. The Expo connected young people with support services, activities, workshops and information to help plan their next steps.





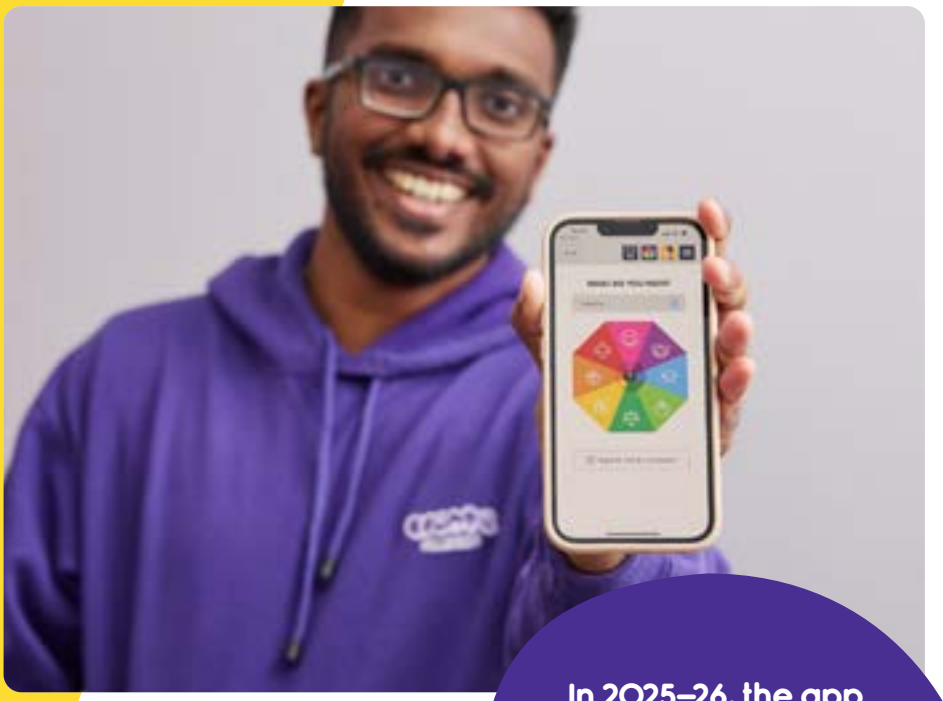
Transition to Adulthood Month

Under the theme #ThrivingBeyondCare, Transition to Adulthood Month (T2A Month) in Queensland celebrated the possibilities beyond care and explored what it means for young people to thrive as they move into adulthood. The month launched at SeaWorld on the Gold Coast and the sector came together across Queensland to help support young people.

Sortli

Sortli continued to grow as a practical tool supporting young people in South Australia, Queensland, Victoria and now Tasmania.

The successful launch of the new Sortli Content Management System (CMS) marked an exciting new phase for the app. The new system creates a stronger foundation for future growth and makes it easier for CREATE to keep Sortli content relevant and responsive to what young people need.



In 2025–26, the app was downloaded

2,663

times.



Go Your Own Way (GYOW) Kit

More than 1,000 young people across Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory received a GYOW Kit as they approached their 17th birthday.

CREATE Your Future Grants

Transitioning from care to independence can come with significant financial challenges. The CREATE Your Future Grant Scheme helps remove some of these barriers by providing practical support to young people with a care experience as they work towards their goals.

CREATE provided grants to support young people with:

- **4 Laptops for study**, work and staying connected
- **2 Education and training grants** of up to $1,500
- **5 Clothing vouchers** of up to $500 for interview attire and workwear
- **6 White goods vouchers** of up to $500 to help establish a home

"I received the CREATE Your Future clothing grant and I am truly honoured to be receiving this. It's really gonna help me now that I have self-placed with my father and it's really put me in a better step forward."

What needs to change next

This year has reinforced what we already know: when children and young people are listened to, valued and empowered, they help create better outcomes for everyone. Thank you for being part of that journey.

We're excited about the next frontier in CREATE's work over the coming year. This will include work on an Impact Framework to better understand CREATE's social value, impact and outcomes for young people. This will help us to:

- Be accountable to our members – children and young people – as their consumer body.
- Make informed decisions and set strong directions.
- Be adaptive and evolving to what young people want and need from us.
- Grow, innovate and keep trying new things.
- Keep track of the difference we are making for children and young people.

Like everything we do at CREATE, young voices and perspectives will show us the way. We are always learning from children and young people.



Financial reports



Financial overview 2026

The table shows an increase in funding of 8% over the past year with CREATE's expenditure on programs and services increasing by 14%.

The increase in funding and in expenditure is mainly due to additional government and grant funding.

Fee for service work and project funding remains integral to state and national budgets, with several projects being funded in ACT, QLD, SA, VIC and WA. The projects ranged from consulting with young people, running workshops and art competitions.

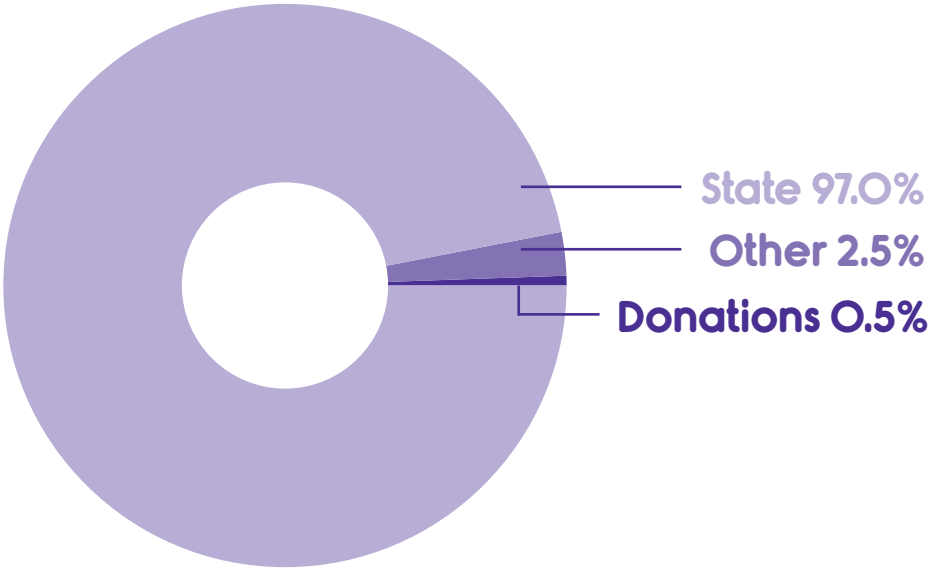
In 2026 there was a surplus of $80,727 (2025 surplus of $405,343) increasing the retained earnings to $1,364,394. CREATE was able to increase its level of funding and control its level of expenditure throughout the 2026 financial year to be able to provide a surplus to add to the retained earnings and support the sustainability of the organisation into the future.

CREATE would like to acknowledge and thank all its supporters during the last financial year. The support received has enabled CREATE to continue to improve the care systems and provide quality services to children and young people with a care experience.

CREATE looks forward to continued support from its corporate partners, the community, government and stakeholders.

	2026	2025	2024	2023
Total funding	7,126,893	6,608,495	7,356,951	6,612,164
Percentage increase	8%	(10%)	11%	(2%)
Total expenses	7,046,166	6,203,152	7,357,784	6,524,398
Percentage increase	14%	(16%)	13%	2%
Retained earnings	1,364,394	1,283,667	878,324	879,157
Percentage increase	6%	46%	(0.1%)	11%

Income Stream



Jill Chambers

National Finance and People Director

Statement of financial performance

For the year ended 30 June 2026

	2026$	2025$
Services revenue		
State and territory grants	6,905,369	6,264,204
Donations	45,273	56,065
Consultancy and licensing	80,614	189,690
Other revenue		
Interest revenue	88,046	53,669
Profit on sale of plant and equipment	-	19,225
Sundry revenue	7,591	25,642
TOTAL revenue	**7,126,893**	**6,608,495**
Expenditure		
Accommodation and travel expense	251,706	178,671
Consultancy fees	167,864	194,595
Depreciation and amortisation	353,040	336,463
Employee benefits expense	5,057,426	4,366,137
Insurance	47,021	47,779
Lease finance charges	89,199	73,020
Payments to young people	148,767	139,821
Postage and courier expense	43,930	38,387
Printing and stationery expense	88,454	71,185
Rent and outgoings	267,812	164,003
Resources	35,323	39,967
Telephone and internet expense	53,207	53,314
Venue, event and food costs	196,184	163,915
Other expenses	246,233	335,895
TOTAL expenditure	**7,046,166**	**6,203,152**
PROFIT before income tax	**80,727**	**405,343**
INCOME tax expense	**-**	**-**
PROFIT for the year	**80,727**	**405,343**

The above information has been extracted from the audited financial statements, a copy of which is available on request.

Statement of financial position

As at 30 June 2026

	2026$	2025$
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	2,449,966	2,431,779
Receivables	58,584	65,243
Prepayments	29,018	51,232
	2,537,568	**2,548,254**
Non-current assets		
Cash on deposit	211,568	145,789
Plant and equipment	69,653	77,345
Right-of-use lease assets	832,391	473,217
	1,113,612	**696,351**
TOTAL assets	**3,651,180**	**3,244,605**
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Payables	1,251,091	1,294,607
Lease liabilities	339,622	242,576
Provisions	18,050	21,803
	1,608,763	**1,558,986**
Non-current liabilities		
Lease liabilities	597,219	345,424
Provisions	80,804	56,528
	678,023	**401,952**
TOTAL liabilities	**2,286,786**	**1,960,938**
NET assets	**1,364,394**	**1,283,667**
EQUITY		
Retained profits	1,364,394	1,283,667
TOTAL equity	**1,364,394**	**1,283,667**

The above information has been extracted from the audited financial statements, a copy of which is available on request.

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 30 June 2026

	2026$	2025$
Cash flows from operating activities		
Receipts from grants and customers	7,691,333	7,274,774
Interest received	94,222	10,683
Finance charges on lease liabilities	(89,199)	(73,020)
Payments to suppliers and employees	(7,256,709)	(6,598,973)
Net cash inflow from operating activities	**439,647**	**613,464**
Cash flows from investing activities		
(Increase)/decrease in cash on deposit	(65,779)	9,599
Purchases of plant and equipment	(63,569)	(34,371)
Proceeds from disposal of plant and equipment	–	24,318
Net cash outflow from investing activities	**(129,348)**	**(454)**
Cash flows from financing activities		
Payments relating to principal element of lease liabilities	(292,112)	(306,215)
Net cash outflow from financing activities	**(292,112)**	**(306,215)**
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	18,187	306,795
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	2,431,779	2,124,984
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	**2,449,966**	**2,431,779**

The above information has been extracted from the audited financial statements, a copy of which is available on request.

Supporters

Australian Government

Australian Government
Department of Social Services

State and Territory Governments

Supported by

ACT Government

Health and Community Services Directorate

NSW GOVERNMENT

Department of Communities and Justice (NSW)

VICTORIA State Government

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Funded by

Queensland Government

Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety

Government of South Australia
Department for Child Protection

Department for Child Protection (SA)

Tasmanian Government

Department for Education, Children and Young People (TAS)

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Department of Children and Families

Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**

Department of Communities (WA)

CREATE Supporters

Snow Foundation

Jann Skinner

Perpetual

JBWere Charitable Endowment

Magistrates Court of Victoria

Richard Lea

Susanne E McCoy

Israel Dunk

Stephen Miller

Leonie Tate

Lisa Slinger

Laura Alatsas

John Cloney

Kirstin Gebhard

Isaak Derksen

Daniel Conifer

Rodney Collins

Robin Low

Joanna Zhou

Strive Community

Grill'd

Octavia Simmons

Foster and Kinship Carers Association Tasmania

Compass Leaving Care

Anglicare VIC & NT

Our Board



Imogen Edeson

(Chief Executive Officer)



Jann Skinner

(Chair and Treasurer)



Emily Hikaiti/Paul



Rachael Trihey



Vanessa Knight



Martin Greller



With thanks to our departing Board member:

Andy Parton



The CREATE Crew

Aarthi Sriskandarajah
Ace Thomson
Aidan Coate
Alma Signal
Amy Gill
Angela Baddour
Arabella Stravolemos
Ashlee Anderson
Blair Struthers
Brandon Martin
Brenda Sharpe
Caelin-Jane Weir
Christopher Braddock
Cieesca McCavana
Cindy Nguyen
Catherine Pellegrino
Dot Foley
Elizabeth Dickinson
Ella Guildea
Erin Laing
Fabian McPhee
Gary Mamotte
Georgie Mumford
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Jane Sliwka
Jesse Grigg
Jessica Talbot
Jonathon Barnett
Karly Diewald
Kate Zahnleiter
Kathrine Bryan
Katie Pollard
Kristyn Stapleton
Laura Hooper
Lauren Shephard
Madeleine Summers-Stuart
Madeline Carney
Matthew Newkirk
Megan Davenport
Melissa Miras
Monia Maamer
Nina Natasya
Olivia Nicholson
Paul Holgate
Paula Smith
Peter Kilgour
Polly Phillips
Rachel Metz
Rebecca Godfrey
Roxxanne MacDonald
Samantha Brigden
Samantha Cotton
Shane Brown
Sheng Shao
Sofia Guglieri
Tasha Reynolds
Taylor Toovey
Tenielle Moore
Tenneil Ross

Executive Team

Imogen Edeson
Chief Executive Officer

Jill Chambers
National Finance and People Director

Stef Coles
National Marketing and Communications Manager

Jen Hyatt
National Advocacy Director

Tameika Joy
Operations Manager

Hannah Kelly
National Business Administration Manager

Our locations

NSW Office (National) – Burramattagal Land

Suite 6.01, Level 6, 80 George Street
Parramatta, NSW – 2150

ACT Office – Ngunnawal

Cnr Cooyong Street & Scotts Crossing
Civic Square, ACT – 2601

NT Office – Larrakia Land

11/16 Malak Crescent
Malak, NT – 0812

QLD Office – Yugerra & Turrbal Country

247 Saint Pauls Terrace
Fortitude Valley, QLD – 4006

SA Office – Kaurna Land

Level 1, Unit 6, 725 Port Road
Woodville South, SA – 5011

TAS Office – Nipaluna

32 Church Street
North Hobart, TAS – 7000

VIC Office – Wrundjeri Land

325-327 Queensbury Street
North Melbourne, VIC – 3051

WA Office – Whadjuk Nyoongar Boodja

158 Newcastle Street
Northbridge, WA – 6003




SPEAK UP


FOUNDATION



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CREATE Foundation

1800 655 105 is a free-call number that young people in care and their carers can use. However, there may be fees charged if calling from a mobile.