

# Submission to Homes Tasmania on the Exposure Draft of the Tasmanian Housing Strategy

There is no clear pathway to leave care. There is no possible way to plan a secure, safe exit from care [when] you have no idea where you're going until your birthday! Unless you go back to the family you were removed from in the first place. I have not been eligible to apply for accommodation through [name of service], and when I finally was allowed the week before I turned 18, I had to sit through three hours of interviews at three different agencies saying the same stuff and then ended in a refuge. I want to go to university in a few weeks but now I'm homeless. (Female, 18 years)  
(McDowall, 2020)

More care support until you are 25 years; this includes more help with housing, job security, [and] support with family connections. There are so many problems in the OOHC system. (Female, 22 years) (McDowall, 2020)

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## About the CREATE Foundation

The CREATE Foundation is the national consumer body for children and young people with an out-of-home care experience. We represent the voices of over 45,000 children and young people currently in care, and those who have transitioned from care up to the age of 25. Our vision is that all children and young people with a care experience reach their full potential. Our mission is to create a better life for children and young people in care.

To do this we:

- **CONNECT** children and young people to each other, CREATE and their community to
- **EMPOWER** children and young people to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and skills that enable them to have a voice and be heard to
- **CHANGE** the care system, in consultation with children and young people, through advocacy to improve policies, practices and services and increase community awareness.

We achieve our mission by facilitating a variety of programs and services for children and young people with a statutory care experience and developing policy and research to advocate for a better care system.

## Introduction


Thank you for the opportunity to review the Exposure Draft of the Tasmanian Housing Strategy (the Exposure Draft). We are pleased to see young people exiting care cited among groups whose needs should be met by the housing system in the Exposure Draft.

Safe, secure and affordable housing is crucial for a successful transition out of care and into independent living. It is linked to better health and wellbeing outcomes and provides a secure base for social and economic participation. Young people with a care experience, however, are vulnerable to homelessness once they exit state care. This is due to ineffective care planning, limited supply and diversity of suitable housing, long waiting lists for social housing, and a lack of financial, material, and emotional resources, as a result of young people's life experiences.

CREATE strongly believes that young people with a care experience deserve the same life opportunities to thrive as their peers. Exits into homelessness and inappropriate housing are unacceptable. Recent research in Australia has shown that 30%, of the young people with a care experience surveyed, reported they had been homeless at some stage within their first year after leaving care (37% of these for 6 months or more) (McDowall, 2020).

CREATE is deeply concerned by data released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) in relation to children on care and protection orders in 2014–17 which indicated that over two-thirds (67% or 10,700) experienced homelessness at least once during their Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) support period (AIHW, 2022). In the Tasmanian context, 231 children on care and protection orders in 2014–17 indicated that they experienced homelessness at least once (AIHW, 2022). Moreover, these statistics are set against a background of rising rates of homelessness in Tasmania. In 2021, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data indicated that the rate of people experiencing homeless in Tasmania was 42 people per 10,000. This represents a significant increase from the 2016 figure of 32 people per 10,000 (ABS, 2021).

Access to adequate housing is a basic human right enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Article 11. Australia is a party to this international treaty, having signed and ratified the Covenant. The right to adequate housing involves measures that are needed to prevent homelessness, focus on supporting the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, ensure security of tenure to all, and ensure that everyone's housing is adequate (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2009).



Homelessness is a significant violation of the right to adequate housing. As such, the CREATE Foundation emphasises the need to engage in concerted action to address the rising rates of homelessness, particularly the need to provide appropriate support to young people with a care experience or young people transitioning from care.

Please find below CREATE's responses to relevant discussion questions.

**Question 4: Theme three places “people at the centre” of the draft Strategy. Are there additional or alternative objectives you recommend for consideration?**

The CREATE Foundation supports the Tasmanian Government's commitment to respond to unique and varied needs by delivering targeted actions. We are also pleased to see the Exposure Draft acknowledges the importance of engaging the voices of people with lived experience.

However, we seek further clarification in regards to the policy of “no exits into homelessness for people who are discharged from care and institutional settings” outlined in the “Housing Support for Tasmanians in Need” factsheet. While a policy setting of “no exits into homelessness” would ensure that young people transitioning from care have a place to go upon initial exit, it does not necessarily add to the long-term prospects of securing permanent housing. Recent research in Australia has shown that of the 30% of the young people with a care experience who reported they had been homeless at some stage within their first year after leaving care, 23% had five or more homeless episodes (McDowall, 2020).

**CREATE recommends:**

- The Tasmanian Government expand their policy objectives in relation to young people exiting care beyond that of “no exits into homelessness” to better acknowledge the experiences of young people transitioning from care to independence. In doing so the Tasmanian Government would be able to better understand and address the cycle in and out of homelessness that some young people transitioning from care experience.
- The Tasmanian Government ensure concerted efforts are made to align all policies, strategic plans, and support services affecting young people with a care experience to optimise their impact and support, including alignment of housing supports with T2i program supports.

**Question 6: Are there other ways the government could make its actions and progress to meet the proposed objectives more transparent and accessible?**

The CREATE Foundation awaits the release of the supporting action plans and highlights the importance of ongoing consultation with people who have lived through or who live with homelessness, especially young people transitioning from care. Genuine consultation and timely implementation will support more targeted and effective action plans for these priority groups.

In order to meet the proposed objectives around building workforce capability, specific consideration should be given in the action plans to planning that addresses workforce pressures as well as professional development related to trauma-informed practice to ensure the sector is better able to recognise and respond to people who have experienced complex trauma prior to becoming homeless, also noting that homelessness is itself traumatic and increases the likelihood of traumatic experiences.

CREATE also shares concerns highlighted by Shelter Tasmania that highlighted the importance of having detailed information about the impacts of short stay accommodation on the rental sector and its compounding impact on access to housing for the most vulnerable groups (Shelter Tasmania, 2022). Committing to regular reviews of short-term housing, including analysis of surges in demand for housing driven by tourism and its effect on housing shortages, will support the Tasmanian Government to achieve its objectives under Theme Four.

### CREATE recommends:

- The Tasmanian Government engage in a deliberate process to interrupt adverse trajectories by developing tailored action plans that meet the needs of young people with a care experience (especially those who are transitioning from care to independence), and vulnerable young families, including young parents exiting care, to mitigate the risk of homelessness. Robust monitoring of implementation and measurement of outcomes of the action plans will be critical.
- The housing and homelessness workforce engage with service users in a trauma-informed way that acknowledges the prevalence of complex trauma among people experiencing homelessness and housing instability.
- Commit to regular reviews of short-term housing arrangements to better balance the impacts and opportunities of the short stay accommodation sector on housing and local economic prosperity.

### Question 7: Do you have any comment on what this draft Strategy does well?

The CREATE Foundation welcomes the approach taken by the Tasmanian Government in the Exposure Draft of adopting a person-centred approach and await the release of supporting action plans to better understand how diverse housing models, including social housing and co-housing initiatives, will meet the needs of different groups of Tasmanians.

CREATE is also supportive of the proposed review of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* to increase rights and protections of renters. Recent research in Australia has shown that one quarter of young people with a care experience surveyed had lost a tenancy or had been forced to leave their accommodation (McDowall, 2020). The CREATE Foundation reiterates the need for policy and planning that attends to the relative disadvantage of care leavers, given the critical importance of finding and maintaining stable accommodation for young people transitioning from care (Martin et al., 2021).

### CREATE recommends:


- The review of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* incorporate the views and be directly informed by experiences of young people transitioning from care.

### Question 8: Is there anything you think the draft Strategy does not cover but should, or that it mentions but could be highlighted more?

While the Exposure Draft cites young people exiting care among groups whose needs should be met by the housing system, CREATE urges the Tasmanian Government to elevate the voices and needs of young people with a care experience (and those leaving care) as a priority cohort. Finding suitable accommodation is fundamental for young people transitioning from care to support improved life outcomes. Addressing fundamental needs such as stable and affordable housing has the potential to offset long-term demand on health and social services systems for this group, delivering avoided costs for Government, as well as improved health and social outcomes for individuals and families.

Research suggests that throughout the transition to adulthood, young people may make several attempts towards independence, with many having the option to return to their family homes in the face of adversity or when they face major problems (Campo & Commerford, 2016). This is not the case for young people leaving care and transitioning to independence, as they do not always have access to a parental/family safety net (Mendes et al., 2011). This cohort therefore faces an increased risk of homelessness and requires targeted actions that meet their needs.

CREATE also strongly advocates for considered effort to be directed to meet the specific housing needs of Aboriginal young people, young people with disabilities, and young parents leaving care. In doing so the Tasmanian Government should develop early intervention strategies to divert families



from patterns of intergenerational disadvantage. Addressing fundamental needs including stable and affordable housing will offset other long-term costs on the health and social services systems, amounting to avoided cost as well as improved trajectories and life outcomes.

**CREATE recommends:**

- A specialist mix of housing supports (as part of Tasmania’s T2i Transition to Independence Program) be provided to this cohort to divert young people who are exiting care from homelessness. This should include:
  - increased supported accommodation options for young people who are unable to remain in their current placement or prefer to live independently but still require support
  - access to specialist homelessness services for emergency and transitional accommodation support.
- Consideration is given to ensure housing models include young people exiting care, and that any planning for public transport infrastructure aligns to and meet needs of young people.
- Housing models and services that are designed for young parents leaving care and that meet their specific needs.
- Addressing the needs of Aboriginal young people as a priority, guided by and in collaboration with the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.
- Housing models that adequately address the needs of young people with a disability.

## Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the Exposure Draft of the Tasmanian Housing Strategy. Young people preparing to transition into independence from within the care system are among the most vulnerable groups in our society. Finding suitable, stable accommodation is essential for a successful transition. CREATE welcomes the leadership demonstrated by the Tasmanian Government to address the existing challenges in the housing system but emphasises the need for timely action, supported by strong implementation monitoring and outcome measures to understand the impact of the strategy over time.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Imogen Edeson, National Advocacy and Influencing Manager, CREATE Foundation.  
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