



By Sasha Kiessling

In 1993 the Australian Association of Young People In Care (AAYPIC) was established as the first-ever voice of children and young people in care. AAYPIC became CREATE Foundation in July 1999, and since that time has gone from strength to strength establishing offices in every capital city, delivering innovative services and programs to children and young people in rural and regional Australia and effecting changes in the care system as a whole.

CREATE Foundation exists to provide opportunities for the 20,000 children and young people in foster and out of home care in Australia. CREATE is an organisation with and for children and young people, and is their voice in the child welfare sector. CREATE works with all stakeholders in the child and family welfare system – Federal and all State governments, service providers, foster carers, community organisations, indigenous groups, church agencies and others to achieve *participation of young people* – in their lives and in their communities.

CREATE works to build community– to fulfil its purpose:

- to ensure all young people in care are respected, listened to and as early as possible in their lives actively participating in all decisions which affect their lives
- to provide all young people in care with opportunities to expand and enhance their life outcomes
- to empower all young people in care through a range of original programs and services to be their best and grow and develop to fulfil their individual talents and potential
- to effect on-going comprehensive changes to State care systems of Australia for the benefit of all young people in care into the future.

Earlier this year, CREATE delivered **mission:be** – a powerful personal development and leadership program in Victoria’s Gippsland Region. A program with a difference, **mission:be** was last year awarded an Australian Drug Foundation award for Excellence in Community Initiatives. **mission:be** is a 3 month journey for 14 -18 year olds in care that allows participants to discover their true potential, gain new skills in areas they are passionate about, build motivation and self esteem, and develop lasting relationships within their lives and their local communities. **mission:be** achieves this through focusing on leadership, self advocacy, goal setting, presentation skills and building a sense of self through taking community action. All achieved while having an extreme dose of fun and adventure!

“mission:be is about creating a fun and friendly environment in which young people in care can really shine, a space that reflects their strengths, a place that inspires, supports and encourages them to achieve amazing things.”

Sasha
mission:be facilitator
CREATE Victoria

mission:be is a 7-module strengths-based program that has been delivered in rural and urban communities right across Australia over the past 3 years. The program includes a series of weekend camps, one day workshops and a period where participants work with the support of mentors to achieve a personal goal or project. A celebration and evaluation signify the end of **mission:be** but not their journey!

“Not everyday normal stuff – they were different experiences to keep you cool”

Natalie
mission:be participant
Gippsland, Victoria

A strong sense of community ownership is important to the success of **mission:be** and contributes to the long term sustainability of the program's outcomes – to empower young people in care to make decisions and create opportunities in their own lives.

“Stronger networks and relationships with community and agencies, and most importantly the young people – the feedback from young people was most valuable”.

Cindy
mission:be Community Action Team
Gippsland, Victoria

This is achieved through CREATE facilitating community stakeholders to resource, promote, develop and deliver the program. The training and participation of local volunteers and youth workers in delivering **mission:be** also serves to strengthen relationships and promote positive representation of young people in care within the local community.

“She has changed so much in the past month, a lot more positive, confident, open to hugs and showing affection, and more aware of others”

Jenna
Youth Worker
Gippsland, Victoria

CREATE works with and for children and young people in care in all states and territories, building pathways for the future through offering opportunities both within CREATE and the wider community. CREATE's Young Consultants program is an opportunity for young people in or ex care to share their experiences and help improve the care system from the inside out. All services and programs delivered by CREATE (including **mission:be**) are developed and delivered by Young Consultants with the support of CREATE staff.

mission:be and the range of services and programs offered by CREATE Foundation successfully connect, empower and create change in the lives of children and young people in care – arguably the most vulnerable and disempowered young people in our society. CREATE works with optimism, vision, creativity and fun alongside all stakeholders to ensure that children and young people in state care are afforded the same life opportunities as all young Australians.



CREATE is a highly participatory, strengths-based learning organisation. For more information call your local CREATE Centre on 1800 655 105 or check us out in cyberspace www.create.org.au !!