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TEENS IN CARE SHARE IDEAS AT *OUT OF THE BOX* FORUM

CREATE Foundation recently held a forum for young people with an out of home care experience to bring their most creative ideas to a special forum titled 'Out of the Box' in south Brisbane.

The *Out of the Box Sexuality and Relationships Forum* was a creative brainstorming session about the best ways to get sexual health information materials to the children and young people that need it.

Over 34,000 children and young people live in out of home care (i.e. foster, residential or kinship care) in Australia today, with over 7,000 living in QLD alone. These numbers increase by 10% per annum.

Without sexuality and relationships education resources how can young people get to know their stuff? Unfortunately the information exists but doesn't always get through to where it's most needed. This leads to children in care being disadvantaged and having increased adverse outcomes (when compared with other young people) such as:

- Higher rates of earlier onset of sexual activity;
- Higher rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and earlier pregnancy;
- Higher rates of sexual abuse; and
- Less recorded access to sexual health services and information.

A representative group of young people with an out of home care experience, between 12 and 25 years of age attended CREATE Foundation's special forum. The forum provided a platform to develop innovative ways to promote existing sexuality and relationships education material to children and young people in care.

The winning idea is based on the concept of the whispers game, where one person tells another a story and the story changes and loses its intended meaning. The campaign will utilise video to get the idea across that the correct information is needed to improve sexual health outcomes for young people with a care experience. The end message is "Know your stuff" and there will be links to appropriate information online.

The video will be **distributed online and through existing networks of carers, workers and child safety** officers to assist them in their important role of helping children and young people in care receive appropriate information in this area.

Jacqui Reed, Chief Executive Officer at CREATE Foundation said the forum enabled young people with a care experience to share their ideas and have a say in improving the lives of today's children young people growing up in out of home care.

"This is a very positive event and there were good vibes amongst the attendees. They had lots of fun getting their creativity out onto the whiteboards and the funding we have enables CREATE to implement their ideas."

FPQ's Manager of Research and Program Development, Holly Brennan, asserts her support for this forum and what's still to come. *"FPQ is proud to support CREATE Foundation's initiatives to improve access to sexual health information and services to young people who need it most. We were inspired by the young attendees' creativity and look forward to helping distribute the campaign widely when it is complete."*

The Out of the Box Sexuality and Relationships Forum is sponsored and funded by Family Planning Queensland.

Media Enquiries: Leigh White | leigh@whitemarketing.com.au | 0431 932 122