

C2.4

10:50am - 11:20am

WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE TO DEVELOP A NETWORK OF SUPPORT
BELINDA CASHMAN, PLATFORM 89

Belinda has been working in partnership with young people and practitioners from a Local Authority in the north of England with a view to improving support to young people making the transition from care.

The aims of the presentation are to discuss young people's involvement with specific project work around three key components, including research, practical support and peer mentoring.

Young people participated in ethnological research looking at the type of support they received as they made the transition from care, identifying not only what made the difference, but identifying barriers that continue to make this transition difficult. The findings of the research raise give cause for concern, as young people have had the benefit of leaving care legislation since 2001, with support being offered up to the age of at least 21. The research poses the question - Are we getting this right?

Following on from this, young people have been involved in the development of the service, producing information for other young people about their entitlements, benchmarking expectations of practitioners and working alongside practitioners about how we support young people to move into their own accommodation. Young people have developed a peer mentoring scheme using a social marketing model which has provided additional support to looked after young people as they make the transition from care to living independently in the community whilst raising their confidence, self-esteem and resilience

11:35am - 12:20pm

MIND BLANK: WHAT IS FORUM THEATRE?
JASMIN CHILL, MIND BLANK

Mind Blank is a charity that generates awareness and innovative education of mental health topics in youth across Australia. Mind Blank builds confidence in young people from all walks of life and empowers them to speak up in a time of need and seek help if needed.

To date Mind Blank have hosted more than 100 similar forum theatre workshops around Australia. We have directly impacted over 20,000 young people on mental health and wellbeing topics.

Our programs are aims to:

- Provide a socially inclusive event to young people and their peers focusing on mental health, stigma and help seeking/ peer support.
- Both the performance and the following interactive discussions will help to remove the stigma of mental health challenges held by young people, and the lack of awareness, as both these issues can be barriers to early intervention.
- To build a collaborative partnership between service providers, the school and Mind Blank which will seek to educate the young people and key educators about mental health issues and pathways to seeking help, with the aim of decreasing poor outcomes in at risk young people.
- To provide a 'soft-entry point' for those who may need further mental health seeking support.
- To empower young people into apply self-care techniques and support peers in a time of need.

The University of Wollongong conducted some research on our work and our evaluation results show that Young people have reported that they listen, take in and remember the information more readily in this format than in other formats they have experienced, this demonstrates a high level of engagement with the performance and the effectiveness of this approach.

1:00pm – 2:00pm

WHAT DOES STABILITY AND PERMANENCY IN CARE LOOK LIKE? HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS GET IT RIGHT? CREATIVE WORKSHOP

SARAH WINTER, EY CONSULTANT WITH ELIZABETH MACKAY, AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Young people, carers and professionals get creative to explore what stability and permanency means to young people in care, what are the critical elements and what do policy makers and case workers need to know to get it right.

Come together as young people, carers, parents and professionals to build pictures about what stability and permanency means to you. What are the key elements to ensuring stability and a sense of belonging for kids in care.

Governments are collaborating nationally to improve permanency outcomes for children and young people in care. Now is the time to have your voice heard.

This creative, interactive workshop will draw out what permanency means to you, what it actually looks like and what it should look like, and how governments can get it right.

C2.5

10:50am – 11:35am

“FEELING BETTER” – A CHILD PROTECTION AND MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY INITIATIVE

WARREN BERGH, QUEENSLAND HEALTH, EVOLVE THERAPEUTIC SERVICES & CAITLIN, CREATE YOUNG CONSULTANT

Evidence shows that children and young people with an out-of-home care (OOHC) experience face challenges related to their mental health at a disproportionate level compared to the general population. In recently sharing her own story Catlin sparked the genius of the **Feeling Better** initiative - a partnership between CREATE Qld (including Young Consultants), Evolve Therapeutic Services (Queensland Health), and PeakCare.

Despite the disproportionate levels, at this point there is very limited accessible and easy to understand information for children and young people and professionals about what is mental health and wellbeing in OOHC and what they can do to increase wellbeing. Therefore the purpose of **Feeling Better** is to:

1. Increasing awareness of mental health and well-being for children and young people in OOHC;
2. Establish a common language and a cultural change to encourage children and young people to access mental health and wellbeing support services;
3. Improve the capacity of those who interface with children and young people to respond to mental health and wellbeing issues.

At address this, a number of resources focusing on educating young people and professionals (e.g., foster carers, residential workers, Child Safety, and NGO sector) about specific mental health and wellbeing topics and what individuals can do have initially been developed. This is about the journey, the story and what **Feeling Better** can do for you and what you can do for **Feeling Better**.

11:35am – 12:20pm

REAL LIFE SUPER HEROES
DEE MICHELL, UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

"I'm working from a premise that's too often neglected: just because a goal is unattainable, that doesn't mean we can't take it as a goal and make progress toward it. If we decide it's desirable, we can figure out which steps move us closer - even though we'll never actually get there" (Peter Elbow, 2012, 124).

As Lemn Sissay - care leaver, acclaimed poet and Chancellor of Manchester University - has noted, many fictional super heroes have been in out-of-home care as children, eg, Superman, Batman, Harry Potter. However, there is a considerable mismatch between the heroic status of fictional heroes and the actual status of most children and young people in care. Part of the reason is long-term stigmatisation, but another part is the ongoing tendency of advocates for needed improvements in the care system to tell only one story, that of poor outcomes.

In this interactive workshop I offer a counter-narrative to the usual one and draw on biographies of Real Life Super Heroes with an out-of-home care background to encourage conference attendees to dream big - for themselves and/or for the children and young people in their care. Amongst others I will use the examples of iconic actors Charlie Chaplin and Marilyn Monroe, significant American writer Jim Tully, and award winning British writer Jenni Fagan; renowned Australian art historian Bernard Smith and Nancy Russell, Australian writer Kate Grenville's mother.

As Peter Elbow says, the point is to figure out what steps are needed to achieve our dreams. Even if we do not achieve them, we are likely to achieve way more than if we never tried. Therefore a primary focus of the workshop is to hear from children and young people about their dreams, and to begin a discussion about the steps they'll need to take to achieve them.

1:00pm – 2:00pm

PANEL: TRANSITION FROM CARE AGE 21
MADONNA BOMNAN, PHILIP MENDES, PAUL
MCDONALD, CEO ANGLICARE, SHEENA OLSEN AND
ANDRE, CREATE YOUNG CONSULTANT

This panel discussion is an interactive workshop that will include presentations from expert speakers outlining the importance of supporting young people to successfully transition from care. Being an interactive workshop, you will be provided with the opportunity to share your views on increasing the age of leaving care.

THURSDAY 10 AUGUST

2:00pm – 2:30pm

YOUNG PEOPLE TRANSITIONING FROM OUT-OF-HOME CARE: TOWARDS POLICY REFORM
PHILIP MENDES

If we as a community are going to give our government the power to coercively intervene in families where alleged significant abuse or neglect has occurred, then our government has both the moral and legal obligation to devote sufficient resources to ensure that the outcomes for those children are far better than if they had remained with their family of origin. It does not at the age of 18 years suddenly become somebody else's responsibility.

Associate Professor Philip Mendes teaches social policy and community development, and is the Director of the Social Inclusion and Social Policy Research Unit (SISPRU) in the Department of Social Work at Monash University in Victoria, Australia. He has been researching young people leaving state care for more than 18 years, is the Australian representative on the Transitions to Adulthood for Young People Leaving Public Care International Research Group, and has completed major studies pertaining to youth justice, employment and mentoring programs, disability, and Indigenous care leavers. He is the author or co-author of 11 books including Young people transitioning from out-of-home care: International research, policy and practice co-edited with Pamela Snow (Palgrave Macmillan, October 2016), and the third edition of Australia's Welfare Wars (February 2017).

2:30pm – 3:00pm

YOUTH JUSTICE PRESENTATION
CREATE FOUNDATION

Youth Justice – 'Cross over kids' – children and young people who cross over from the care and protection system into the youth justice system and back again.

In 2016, CREATE Foundation conducted structured interviews with 200 young people, from across Australia aged 18 – 25 years of age. We spoke to young people, who had previously been in out-of-home care about their experiences with the justice system. In this project the justice system included: contact with Police, the courts, youth justice supervision and detention. During this session, staff from CREATE will talk through the project and the key findings from the report.

C2.6

2:00pm – 2:30pm

CREATING EQUALITY - SUPPORTING LGBTQ YOUNG PEOPLE IN OOHC
MICHELLE GARDINER, CREATE

The Creating Equality resource is the first project and completed resource of its kind in Australia, focused on young people in out of home care (OOHC) who identify as LGBTQ, unique from anything CREATE or any other organisation has accomplished. The resources created with young people are in the form of a video, information sheet and training, the aim of the resource, is to empower carers and workers to promote a positive, safe and supportive environment for LGBTQ YP. Resulting in better lived experiences and better life out comes for CYP.

CREATE works with some of the most disadvantaged CYP, and identifying as LGBTQ can add another layer of stigma and disadvantage. By promoting this resource through the CREATE conference, CREATE is starting the conversation and being leaders in breaking the stigma. Presenting at the conference would empower all CYP in care, including LGBTQ CYP, to express their true identity and sexuality without prejudice and show their voices are valued just as every other

young person. To assist us with presenting we would like to invite a YP who worked on the project. To complete this resource, CREATE employed a YP to work on the resource in consultation with another 8 YP who identified as LGBTQ. She quoted "This project has given me something to look forward to everyday, it's something I'm proud of".

The result of this project is LGBTQ young people connected with each other from all over Victoria and helped to build their self-confidence. This project helped pave the way to changing the care system in consultation with YP by increasing community awareness on how to support LGBTQ YP in OOHC and reduce stigma. The result of this presentation would be on a larger scale, connecting CYP from all over Australia to help connect, empower and change.

2:30 pm – 3:00 pm

NOT JUST A KID IN CARE: REDEFINING YOUR IDENTITY

JULIA HAYES, CREATE YOUNG CONSULTANT

Children and young people in care can sometimes be labelled as "the foster kid" or "the kid in care." These labels can be taken on by children and young people and potentially form part of their self-identity. As a young person approaches 18 and starts to transition, this "identity" can be more harmful than helpful. As a child or young person under 18, having this label/ identity can make them feel part of a group, like they are not alone. Once they transition this label is no longer accurate and young people can find themselves lost and feeling like they don't know who they are or where they belong. I believe that to understand one's own identity, one must first have a knowledge of what identity is, how identity is formed and how identity can change. Through this interactive workshop Participants will explore identity and how this can influence their future self.

C2.4

10:50am - 12:20pm

PANEL: CHILD PROTECTION IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS
DR JOSEPH MCDOWALL, CREATE FOUNDATION,

Life outcomes for many young people in care remain poor, and currently one in three young people leaving care will be homeless within the first year. Issues faced by those in care concern not only the level of support they receive, but also the stigma associated with being a child in care. Last year, CREATE's Chief Executive Officer visited Scotland where the government has implemented new legislation to broaden the support base for children and young people in care. The model ensures government departments and various instrumentalities are held responsible for working together to assist children and young people in care in the role of "Corporate Parent." Each government department and associated organisations has to implement an action plan that outlines how they can support children who have been in the child protection system. This could include organisations employing young people with a care experience, funding scholarships, providing cheaper or subsidised public transport, subsidised health services, or promoting positive news stories about children in care.

This session provides a unique opportunity to discuss possible strategies for developing a comparable model in Australia, possibly involving actual "corporates" in a supporting role.

1:00pm - 1:45pm

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION
JACQUELINE HOGBIN

Children's Rights and Participation Workshop - showcasing the games and activities to support children to participate in case planning and to understand their Rights. Children's Rights are defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Charter of Rights and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This workshop will showcase games and activities that have been developed in Southern NSW to help children understand their Rights. The workshop will show how play and creative activities have supported children to participate in decision making.

Our workshop will showcase how children can be supported to attend meetings with a genuine understanding of the purpose of the meeting. The workshop will show how children can understand their Rights and participate in decisions that affect and shape their lives.

This will include demonstrating:

- A variety of games that invite children into discussions around their Rights and explores how rights apply to them.
- How involving the carers in these games can assist in creating a discussion of Rights and Responsibilities involving all of the household members.
- Using an App to develop a Comic Book Case Plan with the child to gain their active participation in the development of case plans.

The frameworks underpinning the work are:

- Play is the embodiment of the right to have fun. It also helps children talk about things that are important to them and to build relationships.
- Participation is more than attendance and requires work to support children in decision making
- Children enjoy reading and being read to as it enables them to explore scenarios, imagination and assists in the development of attachments with significant people. The importance of story telling in the context of our work relates to children developing their own narrative around their life story.

Tim and Jacqui are Casework Specialists within Family and Community Services who are passionate about the implementation of Children's Rights in the field of Child Protection. Tim has worked across multiple roles within FACS over the years and has been central to the improvement of children's lives within the Out of Home Care program in Southern NSW District. Jacqui is a highly experienced social worker who has led practice improvement in the field for over 20 years and who regularly walks the path of best practice with caseworkers in the field. Together we have combined theoretical underpinnings with pragmatic strategies that can be applied by any organisation working with vulnerable children in order to increase their quality of life.

C2.5

11:35am – 12:20pm

NEXT STEP AFTER CARE – FINDING A VOICE FOR CHANGE

ADAM MCMURRAY, LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS AND CREATE FOUNDATION

When Next Step After Care began in March 2015 to provide post-care assistance and support to young Queenslanders who had left care, we listened to what young people had to say. The program was co-designed with young people who told us they wanted a 24 hour service, and wanted to be able to access it through a whole variety of mediums, from social media, to SMS messages, to phone calls and personal interaction.

But most of all they didn't want to be 'talked at' or preached to - they wanted someone they could trust to get things done on their behalf. They wanted someone to listen to their needs and not try to 'sell' them something else, for example, "If I need to get a fridge, then don't give me a counselling session!"

More than 1500 young people have accessed assistance from Next Step across the State of Qld.

Young people continue to bring information about the core issues they face on leaving care: homelessness, health problems, job searching, transportation, and other basic needs that are not being fulfilled.

We are finding new data from young people every day - through social media and other channels - that is helping us shape the future direction of our services, and we're presenting this data as a cognisant, collective voice to help inform government of these issues.

Young people who have been with Next Step are keen to talk about their experiences - they are shaking the stigma of being in care, and showing other young people what is possible when a bit of directed help comes along at the right time.

Some of them will be with us to present at this conference, and their stories will inspire and inform - Next Step After Care works for young people and gives them voice to effect change.

FRIDAY 11 AUGUST

1:00 pm – 1:45 pm

IF I HAVE A DISABILITY THAT AFFECTS HOW I MAKE DECISIONS DOES IT AUTOMATICALLY MEAN THAT A GUARDIAN FROM A GOVERNMENT AGENCY WILL NEED TO MAKE ALL MY DECISIONS FOR ME ONCE I LEAVE CARE? AFTER CARE – FINDING A VOICE FOR CHANGE

CATHERINE MOYNIHAN & JONTY BUSH, OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN

We know that Transition to Independence for young people with disabilities does not necessarily mean transition to the guardianship system where a guardian from a government agency is appointed to make decisions for them. But how do we ensure that this intent matches the reality?

This presentation aims to consider what the law/policy says compared to what occurs in practice.

The Public Guardian has the statutory role to promote and protect the rights and interests of children and young people in care and adults with impairments.

Approximately 10% of applications for the appointment of the Public Guardian are from Child Safety for young people with impairments.

The Public Guardian considers from a practice perspective how the voices of young people can be heard in this process and how to ensure that appointments for guardians are only made where there is no other appropriate person able to act as guardian and only for the areas of decision making that are required.

It will explore:

- the commonalities and differences of the child protection and guardianship systems
- the nature of transition to independence planning and why it is a critical opportunity to explore whether or not the appointment of a guardian is required
- why children and young people's understanding and participation is important
- the process of advance appointment including the need for child protection and disability/guardianship systems to share information and hearing from young people about what they think suggestions for improving awareness of the process of transition from the child protection to guardianship system where it is required and the need for collaboration to support young people.

1:45 pm – 2:30 pm

**FOSTERING EDUCATION
TERESA HINTON, SOCIAL ACTION AND RESEARCH
CENTRE, ANGLICARE TASMANIA**

Children and young people in out-of-home care deserve a good education. Yet although many do well at school, others struggle and have poor educational outcomes. Research clearly demonstrates that when foster carers support education and learning it can have a major impact on educational aspiration, progress and achievement. How can we better support foster carers to support education?

This presentation explores the findings from research conducted during 2016 about the experiences of Tasmanian foster carers in supporting the education and learning of those they care for. Through focus groups, a survey and good practice case studies the research collated information from half of the foster care households in Tasmania with a current placement. The research also collaborated with CREATE Tasmania to talk to young people about the support they most valued from foster carers as well as reviewing a range of models implemented in other jurisdictions to support foster carers support education.

The presentation will examine the challenges foster carers face in supporting education and learning and what they have found assists them to do this better. It will look at their ability to engage with schools and how the educational response to students' needs can support or put additional pressure on often fragile placements. Finally the presentation will outline the resource and policy implications of the research - in terms of training and support for foster carers, strengthening collaborative mechanisms around the education of children and young people in out-of-home care, strategies for learning at home and school responses to trauma-affected students.

2:30 pm – 3:00 pm

PARTICIPATION IS NOT ENOUGH
MEAGHAN VOSZ , SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY

'Participation is not enough' looks at how children and young people can make a difference at a systemic level in Australia, and shows how young people with lived experience of out of home care influenced the Senate Community Affairs References Committee inquiry into out of home care in 2014 -2015.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires Australia to 'give due weight' to children and young people's views at all levels of decision making in our society. This research looks at how Australia's policy makers measure up against other countries in giving young people's views due weight, and puts forward some ideas about how we can examine policy decisions to determine whether policy makers are fulfilling on this obligation. It also looks at some ways that policy makers can involve children and young people who actually use out of home care to create a better system using design thinking, co-design and deliberative democracy.

The aim of the presentation is to excite policy makers about new ways of involving children and young people and to advance the need for greater transparency in policy making in Australia. Results are presented using biteable and other creative visual and auidial formats to bring policy makers together with children and young people, the real experts on their own lives.

C2.6

1:45pm – 3:00pm

KICBOX - AN APPLICATION BY, AND FOR, YOUNG PEOPLE
RACHELLE RILEY, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES,
CHILD SAFETY AND DISABILITY

Are you a Young Person living in out-of-home care? Do you wish you could choose how and when you communicate with your Care Team? Would you like to have more visibility and control over your personal information?

Or you might be the Carer of a Young Person and would love to have somewhere to record their key development milestones and store digital mementos and photographs from their time with you.

Accessed on a mobile phone or via a web browser, kicbox is a bit like an electronic memory box for Young People - where information, documentation and memories can be stored securely, and accessed from anywhere. It also provides more convenient and contemporary ways of communicating and sharing information through direct messaging, calendars and group noticeboards.

The Department worked with Young People in care from all across Queensland. We wanted to learn their stories understand their pain points, and get their perspective from a cultural and geographical perspective. And we asked them to help us design kicbox to ensure that we created a tool that would make a positive change to the time they spend in care and beyond.

kicbox will be made available to all Young People (14 to 17 years) in out of home care across Queensland in 2017. An interface that that will enable Carers to contribute information for the Young People in their care will also be trialled in 2017.

Come and hear firsthand how kicbox has enhanced the lives of Young People in out of home care. We would also invite you to participate in an interactive, hands on workshop to provide input into additional features and functionality that could really make a positive change and empower Young People as they transition to independence.

C2.4

10:50am – 11:35am

**ALWAYS HAS BEEN, ALWAYS WILL BE:
STORYTELLING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER YOUNG PEOPLE**
RACHEL ROBINSON, CHURCHES OF CHRIST,
CHILDREN YOUTH AND FAMILIES & ALETHEA
BEETSON, DIGI YOUTH ARTS

Storytelling and arts programs have been shown to improve mental health and wellbeing. Using storytelling is a traditional way of transmitting knowledge throughout generations that can assist with increasing connection to culture, social inclusion and civic engagement (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, 2015).

Churches of Christ Care collaborated with Digi-Youth-Arts, an Indigenous arts company and a group of eleven young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to use storytelling as a framework for cultural connection. This culminated in the writing and production of a play called Dislocated, which was performed at Brisbane Powerhouse over three nights. As an organisation we aimed to facilitate a framework for young people placed in foster or residential care to work with a culturally appropriate Indigenous organisation to explore issues they face including racism.

The project included a period of engagement with Digi Youth Arts, which allowed the young people to interact with their cultural heritage through a back of house museum tour, engage in watching cultural dance performances, and attending two camps, to tell their stories, and to rehearse the play.

Through the course of the project, the young people formed strong bonds, and have described the group as a "second family".

The presentation details implementing the project and learnings as the journey progressed. Outcomes of the project will be presented

11:35am – 12:20 pm

THE HEALING ART OF STORYTELLING
LAURITA GORMAN, MENTAL HEALTH INPATIENT
UNIT

At such a young age, our youth are often struggling with not only developmental changes, but the pressures of school and peers as well. Furthermore, when youth are experiencing difficulties within the home, their stressors begin to compound making it a challenging time to navigate all the moving pieces of their lives. For those who are in care, these issues become magnified as they struggle to situate themselves within a new family context and establish their own individual identity. More often than not, youth in care struggle with their mental health as a result and find it difficult to express their emotions, thoughts, and needs. Their voices of their unique experiences are at times left unspoken, unheard, or invalidated, leaving them to manage their challenging thoughts and difficult emotions on their own without the support or skills necessary. This dynamic can create an environment for youth to engage in at risk behaviour and they become vulnerable to unsafe situations.

In order to support youth during the difficult transition to adulthood while also navigating their lives being in care, we need to create a safe space for them to use their voice and share their story. When we can open up, hold space, and

allow them to share the intimate details of their story, we begin to build a foundation for connection, and through this, positive relationships can be fostered.

Through the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and the art of storytelling, we can support and encourage young people to share their story, create a new narrative, and inspire others to do the same. By sharing their story, they transcend beyond the shame and create a new meaning of their experiences, which helps to release the pain and suffering and supports them in moving towards embracing their own courage and power.

Each and every one of us is an unfolding narrative and a hero in a story that no one else can write. When we leave our stories untold, we remain isolated and disconnected and we miss the opportunity to help others find hope and strength. When we share our stories and others bear witness, the belief that we are disconnected and alone in our pain begins to dissolve and we become aware that millions of others are suffering just like us. The art of storytelling encourages us to embrace our emotions rather than resist them, helping us to then cultivate our capacity for radical acceptance of our experiences. It is through our stories that we as human beings become united, and with this new shared sense of connection, we begin to break down the stigma which makes seeking support and treatment possible.

1:00 pm – 1:30 pm

**NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION –
TALKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THE
NATIONAL FRAMEWORK**
**MEGAN MITCHELL, NATIONAL CHILDREN'S
COMMISSIONER AND NOELLE HUDSON, CREATE
FOUNDATION**

In 2016, the Commonwealth Department of Social Services engaged the CREATE Foundation and Megan Mitchell, the National Children's Commissioner, to manage a series of consultations with young people across Australia about the Third Three Year Action Plan 2015-2018 developed under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020.

The Third Action Plan outlines three key strategies to achieve the Framework outcomes:

1. Early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1000 days for a child.
2. Helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive into adulthood.
3. Organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe.

CREATE, as project manager, subsequently contracted Alasdair Roy, a Canberra based consultant, to design and facilitate the consultations, and to prepare a report on the outcomes of the consultation sessions.

Megan and Alasdair will highlight some of the key themes identified by the young people, including messages relevant to the Third Action Plan written by young people directly to the Government and other young people.

1:30 pm – 2:00 pm

**THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH
SELF-PLACING YOUNG PEOPLE**
**CHLOE WARRELL, TAMARA MCGUIGAN & TRACEY
WRIGLEY, BRISBANE EMERGENCY RESPONSE
OUTREACH SERVICE**

BEROS is an outreach service that provides flexible and responsive case management support to young people 12-18 who are identified as self-placing, couch surfing or sleeping rough, and on a child protection order in the Brisbane region. This group of young people are often the most disconnected from supports both formal and informal. BEROS engagement aims to support young people to connect to Child Safety and other systems which may include health, education, youth justice, placements and other housing. We support this engagement to achieve safety, stability, holistic care and wellbeing.

Our practice is centred in engaging and empowering young people to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. We aim alongside young people to advocate for their views, wishes and needs to be heard and recognise young people as the experts in their own lives. In order to do this BEROS believes in providing a therapeutic relationship with a key worker is essential in providing an environment which the young person feels safe and supported to participate in decision making.

Successful engagement with young people often requires a multi-disciplinary approach to achieve effective outcomes, transitions and goals that are identified by young people. In order to do this BEROS works alongside Child Safety Officers and other members of the care team with the young person's wellbeing and needs identified as core to the support plan.

In this presentation the BEROS outreach team will demonstrate their approach to a therapeutic relationship through case studies, activities and discussion particularly in engaging high risk and disengaged young people. We aim to share practice skills and strategies that we employ to support young people to feel empowered and share their voice.

C2.5

11:35am – 12:20 pm

"I WANT TO SEE MY BROTHER, AND FIND MUM": THE FAMILY FINDING MODEL IN THE VICTORIAN CONTEXT

JENNIFER MCCONACHY, BERRY STREET

The Family Finding model seeks to build or maintain a Lifetime Family Support network for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people who are disconnected or at risk of disconnection from their family, friends and community through placement outside of their home and community. The process identifies relatives and other supportive adults, estranged from or unknown to the young person, especially those who are willing to become lifetime connections for them. Integral to the process is what the child wants - very often it is simply to know where siblings and close relatives are, and to see them again, and if possible to live with someone they are related to or know. Upon completion of the process, young people have a range of commitments from adults who are able to provide permanency, sustainable relationships within a kinship system, and support in the transition to adulthood and beyond. Keeping safety at the forefront and using a family-driven process, families are empowered and supported to formulate highly realistic and sustainable plans to meet the long-term needs of young people.

The model has recently commenced in Victoria, and has been introduced in New South Wales and Western Australia, having been utilised in the United States and Canada for over ten years. In this presentation: the Family Finding model, and research and evaluation findings with particular reference to the involvement of the young person will be discussed; activities that are used to aid professionals and family understand the wishes of the young person will be demonstrated; and case examples will be used to illustrate how the young person is involved, and the sorts of feedback we have received from them. Participation from the audience is encouraged, to further develop ideas for the meaningful and safe participation of children in our work.

1:00 pm – 1:30 pm**SPEAKING OUT ABOUT RAISING CONCERNS IN CARE****ALEXA WILKINS, SENIOR POLICY OFFICER FOR COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUNG PERSON ALISON**

This presentation shares the voices of 96 children and young people across metropolitan and regional Western Australia who participated in the consultation: Speaking Out about Raising Concerns in Care. This partnership between the Commissioner for Children and Young People, CREATE Foundation and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support sought to hear children and young people's experiences in raising concerns and worries and accessing help in care, with a view to enhancing current mechanisms.

The project identified barriers children and young people face in speaking up, what enables them to have a voice, as well as other factors that support children and young people in care to raise their worries. Some of the barriers included a fear of not being believed, fearing the consequences of speaking up, not having anyone to speak to, and power imbalances. They also spoke to a number of enabling factors to speaking up, including having alternatives methods to have their say, receiving support, using technology, and having trusted, stable, and responsive adults to confide in.

This consultation was undertaken to inform current Western Australia out-of-home care reforms, and to support a review and strengthening of current complaints systems for children and young people in care. A number of key areas for reform have been identified, including further exploring the use of technology, training and development of staff, and also external mechanisms to support children and young people to speak up.

This session would be beneficial for practitioners, decision makers and young people to explore best practice in supporting children and young people to speak up.

1:30 pm – 2:00 pm**USING EFFECTIVE SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN TASMANIAN CARE****DANNI ASHTON, CREATE**

A large percentage of children and young people who participated in CREATE's Tasmanian Youth Advisory Groups throughout 2014 noted that their experiences with the Education System was not idyllic.

Through effective youth participation and collaboration with the Commissioner for Children's Young People, Child Protection Services and the Education Department in Tasmania, positive outcomes were achieved and have begun to pave the way to improve young people's experiences of school in Tasmania.

Young People voiced their concerns at the State-wide Youth Advisory Groups about bullying in school and the stigma which surrounds kids in care, along with the impact this has on their education.

This information led CREATE to collaborate with the Tasmanian Commissioner for Children and Young People, Mark Morrissey in order to conduct a state-wide consultation with children and young people in care to further understand the young people's experiences, concerns and suggestions for improvement.

With Young Consultants Nicola and Michael taking a lead role and joined by CREATE Foundation Community Facilitator Danni Ashton, this presentation highlights the impact of Youth Participation, collaboration, and effective systemic advocacy, along with the progress towards improved outcomes for young people at school in Tasmania as a result.

Come along to this informative, interactive session, where we will share progress in Tasmania and invite you to share your ideas for positive change within the Education space.

This presentation is suitable for young people, carers and workers within the sector.

To what extent can youth participation, collaboration and effective systemic advocacy improve children and young people's experience of education in your jurisdiction?

C2.6

10:50am – 11:35am

CAMP TO BELONG: A UNIQUE PROGRAM REUNITING SIBLINGS LIVING SEPARATELY IN THE OOHC SYSTEM

MILISSA CHRISTIAN, CAMP TO BELONG
INTERNATIONAL

Separate sibling placements for children and young people in the Out of Home Care system is known to predict a number of adverse outcomes. The trauma of being removed from their families of origin is compounded by being separated from the only people who can directly relate to their stories, and in some cases, are the only people who intimately know the stories from the inside.

This paper will show that a unique and ground-breaking program, initiated in the US and now operating regularly in Australia, is helping to bridge the gaps which divide siblings by reuniting them temporarily, in an extended multi-night camp designed to not only bring the separated siblings together in one place, but to elicit developmental and emotional outcomes aimed at addressing the adverse outcomes often experienced by these children and young people.

Giving a brief history of the inception and evolution of Camp To Belong, this paper will describe the specific activities designed and curated to elicit specific outcomes, as well as review the ongoing research into outcomes experienced by Camp attendees. Data collected at Camps shows that the program is achieving what it sets out to, with positive outcomes showing across all metrics tested, including: Increased and ongoing family contact with siblings and family; Increased attendance or engagement at school; Increased positive behaviour or engagement in care; Demonstrated interest or participation in their own development or learning.

10:50am – 11:35am

EMPOWERING TEENAGE GIRLS CARLY FOSTER AND SARAH ILIFFE, LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

We do lots of work with teenage girls in OOHC. We found that many girls lacked self-worth and often felt disempowered in their placements, schools, and peer circles. As a result, we identified recurring themes of internet

safety, self-worth, a lack of personal boundaries and assertiveness - all leading to lack of self-empowerment. Two therapeutic groups were developed to target these themes, and the feedback from these groups has been really positive.

The 'Self-Worth and Internet Safety' group focuses on self-esteem and identity issues, as well as safety when using the internet including appropriate boundaries in online social situations. The relationship between low self-worth and unsafe online behaviour is targeted in this group. This group also provides the girls with tools to help build and strengthen their self-esteem, their emotional resilience, and their protective behaviours.

The 'Self-Empowerment: Positive You, Positive Outcome' group focuses on helping the girls identify what they value and what their dreams and aspirations are. The group uses practical activities as well as group dynamics, to identify the girls' values and to target negative beliefs about their level of control in their environment and their life.

Both groups are packed with practical skills and exercises that the girls can use on a day-to-day basis. Using individual and group reflection, there will be lots of time for the girls to identify unhelpful feelings, beliefs and behaviours, and to practice helpful, empowering behaviours. The outcome - a more empowered group of young women who use their own internal navigation system to identify safe and unsafe relationships. The groups spark change from within, to create a more positive outer reality.

11:35am - 12:20pm

CLASHING CULTURES, CLASHING IDENTITIES, CLASHING CIRCUMSTANCES..BEING SUPPORTED TO EXPERIENCE AND FIND ANSWERS TO WHO I AM AND WHO I WANT TO BE KERRY CABRERA

Children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds bring with them unique histories which influence who they are, their identity and what sense they have of their family, their community and their world. Couple this, with a history of child protection and experiences in out of home care, children and young people in Australia from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) are confronted with multiple additional challenges and opportunities.

At a time when there is significant national and international diverse views on culture- faith, language, ethnicity, it is critical to hear the voice of CALD children and their carers and to work together to engage and build collaborative, respectful ways to remain connected in safe environments which allow opportunities to explore and grow.

This paper provides an overview of the voices of CALD children and young people, multicultural carers and bilingual caseworkers, collected through CALD and OOHHC youth consultation forums, bi-lingual carer support groups and bi-lingual workers.

With a focus on empowerment and opportunity to build relationships, develop experiences and create foundations for wellbeing, belonging and positive identity. It is critical that adults involved with children - carers and caseworkers - pace support that is responsive to develop unique identities and access information and support that can nurture and encourage children and young people achieve the best possible outcomes

Key messages include;

- Cultural awareness and responsiveness are critical skills for carers and caseworkers.
- A willingness to understand the diversity of culture and its impact on children and young people as they develop and explore who they are and where they belong.

- Living with family who share ethnicity, language and faith may be one aspect. However for other children historical experiences have created attitudes where children want to be completely disconnected from cultural elements they associate significantly with trauma.
- The SSI multicultural foster carer program, established in 2013, the first of its kind, has a strong commitment to keeping children and young people safe, in stable positive family relationships and connected to community and culture

The program's central belief is that culture influences a sense of belonging, identity and provides guidance for life's routines and rituals. As such the program prioritises where possible matching children with foster families who share the same language, faith and ethnicity. When this is not possible the program supports carers and bilingual caseworker to support children and young people remain connected to their culture.

1:00pm – 1:30pm

IMPROVING YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING CULTURES ANDREW CUMMINGS, ANDREW CUMMINGS TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY

This workshop uses an activity from the CREATE Your Future Program Call Your Shots, as a basis for exploring ways to improve young people's participation in decision making in projects and organisations.

Roger Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation identifies eight levels at which young people can participate in decisions about things that affect them. The eight levels are:

1. Manipulation
2. Decoration
3. Tokenism
4. Assigned but informed
5. Consulted and informed
6. Adult initiated but shared decisions with young people
7. Young People initiated and directed
8. Young people initiated - shared decisions with adults

The workshop will explore what each of these levels means, by looking at a range of scenarios describing young people's involvement in projects and organisations, and exploring the elements that determine the level of participation that each of these scenarios operates at.

Participants will then explore practical ways to improve the participatory nature of these scenarios, by discussing ways to increase the level of ownership and determination by the young people involved.

Finally, the workshop will provide the participants with opportunities to explore ways to improve their own youth participation practices. For those who work with young people, this will involve thinking about the opportunities their organisation offers for young people to participate in decision making, and how these can be improved. And for young people, this will involve thinking about the opportunities to participate that they would like to be involved in, and how they can help to make these happen.

SATURDAY 12 AUGUST

1:30 pm – 2:00 pm

BEYOND EXPECTATIONS PILOT: EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING FOSTER CARE
VICKY MEYER, IFYS (INTEGRATED YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES LTD)

This presentation will showcase the Beyond Expectations (BE) program, which was developed in 2015 in partnership between Child Safety on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland and IFYS (Integrated Family and Youth Service). Unfortunately, young people leaving care are at greater risk of experiencing poor life outcomes than their peers and they do not always have success in terms of employment and ultimately a career. Employment gives young people a sense of purpose and belonging, and provides a foundation on which to establish stability, security and responsible adulthood.

First, the presentation will discuss the processes involved in developing and implementing the BE program. These included understanding the needs and interests of each young person, connecting with their foster carers and other agencies supporting them, whilst engaging with the business community to be involved and arranging interviews and industry experiences with interested businesses (e.g., at Australia Zoo). In its first year, the program supported over 80 young people to engage/ re-engage in education, access training, participate in work experience and obtain work.

Second, the presentation will hear from and about the young people who have engaged with the Beyond Expectations Team. Their experiences in navigating school and their first job are inspiring and can offer invaluable advice to other young people who are embarking on this journey.

Finally, the evaluation of the BE program by the University of the Sunshine Coast will be outlined, using feedback from the young people, their foster carers and Child Safety Officers. Compared to a control group (two adjacent Child Safety offices), young people in the BE program showed small to medium increases in job-related well-being and self-efficacy. The foster carers and CSOs were also positive about the effectiveness of this unique education and employment program, which operates in conjunction with Child Safety's 'Transition to Independence' processes.