

It is with pleasure that I have accepted the invitation to write a few words in support of *POCLS: Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study*. My work with the CREATE Foundation over the last 13 years has focused on research into the out-of-home care system in Australia, with particular emphasis on the experiences of young people during their transition to adulthood.

My work has involved taking snapshots of the state of out-of-home care at various times from the perspective of young people living in the care context. It also has involved evaluations of various interventions designed to change the planning outcomes for those aging out of care. While this work can be useful in guiding policy development, it cannot provide the unique insights available through the POCLS research.

As the name *Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study* indicates, the unique aspect of this project is that it is “longitudinal.” Data collection began in 2010; subsequently, this initial intake has been supplemented by a further four waves extending the sample considerably. The participants have the opportunity of remaining in the study so that changes in their experience can be documented over time and in response to life-course events. It is rare (unique in Australia) to be able to study the same people over extended periods of time to observe the long-term impact of the care system on these individuals.

The data collected over the last 10 years or so have led to numerous papers and reports exploring all aspects of the care system in Australia. A strength of the project is that it has attracted the involvement of respected researchers, both local and international. The data collected have been made available for further analysis by other interested researchers. It truly is a collaborative venture.

Currently, applications are being lodged for a further wave to extend the project for another five years. This will ensure that many of the early participants will have reached the age of transitioning to independence. To have the story of individuals as they have moved through the care system from childhood to adulthood will be invaluable for decision-makers charged with improving the care experience and aiming to achieve better outcomes for young people.

Dr Joseph J. McDowall
Executive Director (Research)
CREATE Foundation