

Media Release

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Celebrating the achievements of young people who grew up in foster care for World Care Day

“You never grow out of being in foster care,” says a 28-year-old woman who spent most of her teenage years in foster and residential care. A decade later and now living in a home she has purchased, she continues to experience stigma due to her experience of living in the care system as a child.

Another young man has lived in care for all of his teenage years. Despite a significant history of childhood trauma, and diagnoses of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder, he is now living independently, studying hospitality, and is working towards his dream of owning a country pub.

World Care Day (16 February 2024) is the world’s largest celebration of young people with a care experience. This World Care Day, MacKillop Family Services (MacKillop) is encouraging people to deepen their understanding of children in care, and celebrate the outcomes they achieve, despite a challenging start to their lives.

MacKillop’s World Care Day campaign (www.mackillop.org.au/CareDay) gives a voice to young people with a care experience by enabling them to share their stories, so people in the community can see life in care through a different lens.

Latest figures from 2022 tell us there are 45,400 Australian children and young people in out of home care. MacKillop’s CEO Robyn Miller sees first-hand how young people in care face judgment and discrimination, which impacts their wellbeing and future prospects.

“Nationally, MacKillop looks after more than 3,000 children and young people in residential and foster care each year. We know every one of them is dealing with the trauma of leaving their family. They also face barriers to staying at their regular school and keeping in touch with school friends; keeping connected to their sporting team or dance class; and they often lack family support to fall back on.

“What inspires me on a daily basis is the extraordinary courage and resilience of these young people, who often go on to post-secondary education, trade apprenticeships, become community leaders and create their own safe and nurturing families,” Robyn says.

“We want to address the stigma these young people sometimes face. We know that growing up in care does not make children ‘less than’ their peers and should not pre-determine a future with lesser outcomes,” adds Robyn.

Robyn says she was particularly struck by the words a 16yo living in foster care shared for the campaign, who said, “People treat me differently when they find out I’m a kid in care.”

“We know from listening to our young people that having a care history impacts them well into their adulthood. They are often portrayed in a negative light, and this can impact everything from their prospects of employment, to finding rental accommodation.”

“We hope that by sharing their stories, we can challenge this portrayal, address the stigma, and celebrate the remarkable courage and achievements of young people with a care experience,” said Robyn.

This Care Day, communities across Australia are encouraged to read the stories of children in care, and share their voices, and the voices of those who support them by visiting www.mackillop.org.au/CareDay

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