Media release
5 August 2015 – For Immediate Release

Improving Educational Outcomes for Young People Leaving Care

The Centre for Excellence in Child & Family Welfare is excited to announce the significant investment by the Sidney Myer Fund into the collaborative project “Improving Educational Outcomes for Young People Leaving Care”.

Deb Tsorbaris, CEO of the Centre said, “The Myer Foundation has clearly acknowledged the need to improve the educational outcomes of young people in care. This grant will enable unprecedented collaboration between the education and welfare sectors. Bringing together the Centre for Excellence in Child & Family Welfare and two leading universities, Federation University Australia and La Trobe University and, to develop an innovative strategy for care leaver education.”

“This consortium will work with project partners Anglicare Victoria and MacKillop Family Services, two of the largest providers of care in Victoria, and partner TAFEs to enable systemic and coherent action that will enable more care leavers to access tertiary education.”

There are currently over 7,000 children and young people living in out-of-home care in Victoria. La Trobe University research (http://www.latrobe.edu.au/aaru/external-grants/student-equity-higher-education) highlights that very few of these children will transition into tertiary education, rather, many will face a ‘soft bigotry of low expectations’, and will not be encouraged to study beyond secondary school.

Ms Tsorbaris said, "Students growing up in care have experienced trauma and disruption which often lead to serious learning problems. They are usually behind their peers academically and are far less likely to complete secondary school. As few as 1% of Care Leavers enter tertiary education, there is little policy provision in this domain and programmatic responses remain limited. Supported pathways are urgently required so these young people can achieve their birth-right of strong educational outcomes. This includes access to university and TAFE. We must bring stakeholders together to develop coherent strategies for lasting cultural change. This funding will provide us with that capacity.”
This project will offer training programs to carers, teachers and caseworkers addressing the cross-sectoral knowledge deficits around learning within and post out of home care placements. A resource and information exchange, including a website, will be developed for young people in care, assisting prospective students to explore their tertiary options.

The Universities will support students from care backgrounds with mentoring, academic and student support, as well as by employing a Care Co-ordinator to raise the educational awareness and aspirations among young people living in out of home care.

“This project will open the doors of tertiary education to young people leaving care and ultimately assist young people to reach their full potential.” said Ms Tsorbaris

FOR INTERVIEW & MEDIA INQUIRIES PLEASE CALL DEB TSORBARIS (CEO) ON 0417 599 869
EMAIL: deb.tsorbaris@cfecfw.asn.au WEB: www.cfecfw.asn.au/news, twitter.com/cfecfw