

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
HON HELEN MORTON MLC
MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND FAMILY SUPPORT
VIEWPOINT AND CHILDREN IN CARE
TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2013**

As I reported to the House on 11 June this year in response to question from the Hon Sally Talbot regarding the CREATE Foundation's Report Card, the State Government continues its commitment to support children and young people in care in Western Australia to have their say in decisions that affect them.

To achieve this, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support uses *Viewpoint*, an interactive, self-interviewing tool that is used regularly to improve communication between children in care and the Department.

Young people in care over the age of five are invited to respond to questions about the things that are important in their lives and to tell the Department what they want to happen.

Responses provided in the *Viewpoint* program are completely unmediated and therefore independent of influence from anyone other than the young person concerned.

This computer-assisted self interviewing method offers a non-threatening, child-friendly environment. Children can complete the questionnaire in private, at their own pace. Young people are more likely to share sensitive personal information in this way than in other interview conditions.

They know that their responses are confidential, and will not be shared with others unless they give their consent or there are protective issues that require action.

Viewpoint has been robustly evaluated as an effective methodology for engaging and eliciting information from vulnerable and/or hard to reach children and young people in care.

Viewpoint provides a comprehensive reporting system which is used for monitoring children's wellbeing as well as service improvement.

The Viewpoint Organisation has extensive international experience in developing systems which offer young people an engaging and independent means of expressing their views. The organisation compiles and analyses the data and provides independent reports to the Department.

I congratulate and praise the children and young people in care that have participated in this survey. Their willingness to provide information about their personal care experience, despite coming from troubled backgrounds, enables their voices to be heard and assists the Department in improving the services provided for them.

Viewpoint has been extremely well received by these children and the feedback they have provided shows they find it easy and enjoyable to use. A lot of these young people have gained confidence and are voicing their experience, where they have been reluctant to before.

I am pleased to be able to advise that the latest results show that 921 or 33% of children and young people in care in Western Australia (aged 4-17 years) completed a questionnaire between July 2012 and June 2013.

This participation rate is significantly higher than that achieved by the CREATE Foundation for its Report Card which achieved an average of only 9% across the rest of Australia.

Key findings from the *Viewpoint* data show that despite facing complex and difficult situations an average of 84% of the children and young people surveyed said they felt safe where they live now; 73% of children reported that they see the person who cares most about them as often as they want; and 87% of young people over 16 years said someone had discussed their leaving care plan with them.

The State Government is committed to supporting these vulnerable children and young people but we know there is more to be done. While I am heartened by some of these positive responses, the *Viewpoint* results are clear about where more work is needed, including improving engagement with children and young people with their health and education planning as well as increasing access to social and recreational activities.

I have already met with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support to discuss the *Viewpoint* data. We are committed to the continuous improvement of our service to children and young people in care.

Additional key findings from the *Viewpoint* data measured against the applicable national standards for out of home care have been prepared and are tabled today for Members' information. These will also be used to meet reporting obligations against the national standards for out-of-home care.

However, while these key findings will be made available, the full *Viewpoint* report will not be released publicly.

It is important to remember that the young people who participate in the survey consent to their responses being used in their individual care plan reviews, as well as collectively to inform service improvement – but they do not

provide consent to have their responses being made public, or being scrutinised by the media.

This provision is critical to ensure that this group of already vulnerable young people feel confident and comfortable with the use of their data, to continue to provide open, honest and forthright information.

Other State and Territory Governments are also now looking to follow Western Australia's lead and are currently piloting *Viewpoint* as the preferred survey method for children and young people in care.

Table 1: Western Australian participation rates for Viewpoint

	Number of children in care 5 – 17 years	Number of participants
WA	2725	921(33%) completed Viewpoint July 12 – Jun 13

Table 2: Participation rates for the CREATE report card 2013

State/Jurisdiction	Number of children in care 8 – 17 years	Number of participants in the CREATE report card 2013
QLD	2953	256 (8%)
NT	424	67 (15%)
TAS	493	144 (29%)
NSW	4186	309 (7%)
ACT	307	28 (9%)
VIC	1573	162 (10%)
SA	1151	103 (9%)

Table 3: Viewpoint data and national standards for out-of-home care¹

National Standards for Out-of-Home Care	Key findings of Viewpoint Surveys July 2012 – June 2013
Standard 1: Stability and security	84% of children said they felt safe where they live now.
Standard 2: Participation in decisions	66% of children said their case worker was helpful.
Standard 4: Health and Education planning	43% of children said someone had discussed both their education and health planning. <i>(Note - health and education are individually identified and addressed as part of care planning and 90% of children in care have a current care plan addressing these areas).</i>
Standard 5: Needs assessed and attended to	50% of children said they do not get sick often or do not have concerns about their health.
Standard 6: Access and participation in education	81% of children said they are happy at school or attend every day.
Standard 7: Supported to be engaged in Education	60% of children reported their carer was a significant support in educational engagement.
Standard 8: Social and or recreational activities	52% of children said they participate in social and recreational activities regularly.
Standard 9: Maintain connection with your family	49% of children said they see their family as much as they want to.
Standard 10: Supported to develop identity	37% of children reported having or developing a life story book.
Standard 11: Someone who cares about their future	73% of children said they see the person who cares most about what happens to them as often as they want.
Standard 13: Care Leaving	87% of young people over 16 years said someone had discussed their leaving care plan 'completely, or some, but I want to know more'.

¹ Standards 3 and 12 are excluded from table 3 as these are not measured by survey.

