

MEDIA RELEASE

Sunday 30 April 2017

Young people advocate for safe and functional residential care

Suggestions from children and young people about how residential care might be improved will be discussed at a child safe research symposium next week alongside findings that most young people do not feel safe within this environment.

Researchers from the Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) at Australian Catholic University will present the findings of their study *Safe and sound: Exploring the safety of young people in residential care* at the Creating Child Safe Institutions symposium in Melbourne on Monday.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is hosting the symposium to discuss the findings of three research reports it has commissioned and published.

Dr Tim Moore and Professor Morag McArthur from ICPS and colleagues from Griffith University and QUT investigated the experiences of 27 children and young people and their safety in residential care for their study. They found that most respondents had experienced physical threats, sexual harm, bullying and harassment, and identified changes that were required to improve their safety. Although the respondents believed it was highly unlikely that a staff member would sexually abuse children and young people in residential care, a number reported that adults outside of units targeted young people in residential care and exploited their vulnerability. They felt ambivalent about the capacity of staff at an organisation to prevent or respond to their safety concerns.

“Young people advocated for safe residential units: that were home-like, that functioned as they believed a normal home and family functioned, where they were protected from harm and where life was better than it was when they lived with their biological families or in foster care,” lead researcher Dr Tim Moore said.

“Young people clearly articulated what they thought could be done to improve their safety in residential care, such as better matching of peers, involving young people in decision-making about placements, and limiting the number of moves from one unit to another,” said Dr Moore. “They believed that most children and young people should be kept from entering residential care and that safer models of care should be provided to those in long-term residential care placements.”

Further information

Creating Child Safe Institutions: the Victoria Room, ibis Melbourne, 15-21 Therry St
Monday 1 May 2017, 9am–12.30pm

The research report, *Safe and sound: Exploring the safety of young people in residential care* can be downloaded [here](#).

A short animation targeted at young people presenting the key findings from the report will be launched at the symposium and is available [here](#).

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