Two women who met 11 years ago as teenagers in a Territory Government supported accommodation program are now running an organisation to help young people in care.

Family and Community Services Minister, Delia Lawrie, said Eva Purvis and Louella Pettit head the Territory branch of the Create Foundation that aims to ensure children and young people in care maximise their employment and education opportunities.

“The Create Foundation is a fine example of Territorians working together for the benefit of the community, and most importantly in this case, our children,” said Ms Lawrie.

“While much of their work involves improving communication between case workers and children in care and teaching children in care to advocate for themselves, they have been instrumental in placing young people who leave the care system into employment and education.”

Ms Purvis and Ms Pettit said much of this important work might not have happened without a chance meeting in the Darwin suburb of Rapid Creek in 1994.

“Eva and I met through the Supported Accommodation Program and became friends quite quickly because we had similar values and goals,” said Ms Pettit.

“We only lived together for six months but a strong bond certainly developed.

“I soon became involved in the Australian Association of Young People in Care (AAYPIC) and went to a conference in Sydney which inspired me to start up a Territory branch. I then got in contact with Eva and here we are today, working together.”

AAYPIC changed its name to the Create Foundation in 1999 with the local branch funded $137,316 in 2004-05 by the NT Department of Health and Community Services.

Minister Lawrie said the Government shares a commitment with the Create Foundation to deliver services that best meet the interests of children and young people in out of home care.

“I applaud the efforts of these young people who are putting something back into a system they were part of,” she said.

“It’s vital that we not only look after the immediate needs of young people in our care, such as housing and providing a nurturing environment, but also that we work to ensure these people have the same educational and employment opportunities as everyone else.”
Ms Purvis said the Create Foundation’s main focus was the health and wellbeing of young people and children in care.

“Young people and children in care need to be respected and listened to and participate in all decisions that affect their lives from as early on as possible,” said Ms Purvis.

“We aim to empower all young people in care through a range of original programs and services to be their best and grow and develop to fulfil their individual talents and potential.

“So we are always working on ways to strengthen relationships between case workers and children in care and fill whatever gaps that might appear now and then.”

Children and young people are generally placed in care because there are concerns for their care and protection. Placing a child in care is an option of last resort, as every effort is made to explore ways to provide for the safety and protection of the child within the family home first.

It is preferable that children and young people are placed in the care of their extended family, but where this is not possible, Family and Children’s Services will place the child in an alternate care option best suited to their individual needs. These options include foster care or residential care.

When a child is placed in care, Family and Children’s Services continues to work with the family with the view to returning the child to the care of their parent/guardian as quickly and as safely as possible.

Anyone interested in providing care to a child or young person can contact their local Placement Support Team on 8999 4789 in Darwin or 8951 5170 in Alice Springs.

If people are interested in becoming a foster carer they can contact the FACS placement support team on 8999 4789 in Darwin or 8951 5170 in Alice Springs.

More information about the Create Foundation can be found at www.create.org.au or by calling 8945 7751.

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