

F C A V

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2004 – 2005**

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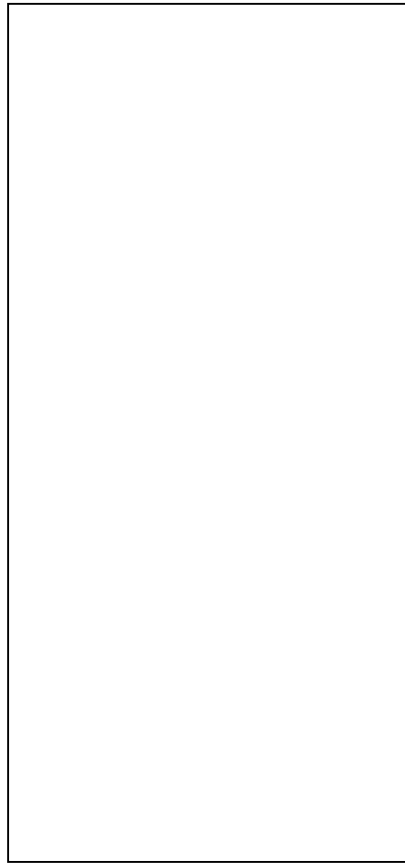
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**FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION OF
VICTORIA INC**

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AUGUST 2005 NEWSLETTER

FCAV MONTHLY MEETINGS AT 7.30pm

Ground Floor, 48 High Street, Northcote 3070
Check with a Committee Member on dates and times

DARE TO CARE - FOSTER CARE

Patron Ms Denise Drysdale

ABN 30 747 010 099



Items/articles in this newsletter are not necessarily those expressed by the FCAV Committee of Management.
Information has been obtained from sources deemed reliable

Dates to Note

FCAV Information Session

If you are interested in joining the committee of management or would like to know more about how it works then this is for you

Friday 7 October 2005 - 6.00pm - 7.30 pm
(followed by the monthly Board meeting)

AGM

Fri 28th October 2005, 7.00pm - 10.00 pm
Boroondara Community Health Centre
378 Burwood Road, Hawthorn

HBC Forum

Wednesday 9 November 9.30 am to 2.30 pm,
Hemisphere Conference Centre and Hotel 488 South Road, Moorabbin.

Guest speakers:

Bernard Geary: Child Safety Commissioner, Office of Child Safety
Tim Moore: Neuro Psychologist

NEW LEGISLATION

The new draft legislation relating to children can be found on the www.dhs.vic.gov.au/protectingchildren website. From there click onto Draft Legislation in the blue area then go to the bottom of the new page and decide if you want to download the entire act or just the Explanatory Notes which tells us all the changes. If you would like more information contact admin@fcav.org

Progress on reforms to date include

- Appointment of the Minister for Children (Sherryl Garbutt) and establishment of the Office for Children and the Children's Services Coordination Board
- Victorian Children's Council created
- Bernard Geary appointed as Child Safety Commissioner.
- Children and young people given a voice through family group conferencing and the creation of the Advocate for Children in Care

DHS is currently working on the draft Children Bill which will go before parliament in October 2005. DHS has provided a consultation with FCAV. The FCAV has several serious concerns with the Bill and is formulating a response. We are also seeking to make joint representations with other peak bodies on these issues. Please let the office know if you share these concerns and/or have additional ones.

Stability Plan

Child Protection will be obliged to prepare a stability plan within timeframes, differentiated according to the age of the child (S102)

- children under 2: once the child has been in out of home care for one or more periods totalling 12 months of which the final 6 months are consecutive
- children aged 2 – 6 years: once the child has been in out of home care for 1 or more periods totalling 18 months of which the final 12 months are consecutive

- children aged 7 yrs and older: a period of 2 years from the date of the order, or for a period totalling 2 years within a period of 3 years from the date of the order.
- No longer a requirement to consider reunification on every extension of a Custody or Guardianship Order.

Concerns

- stability plan is not defined and is not as clear as permanency. The idea of permanency planning has been weakened.
There is no requirement of the court to act in accordance with stability plan. So we could be in the same situation. DHS can recommend things according to what is required of them, but the court could overturn the DHS recommendation!
- Need to be aware on the impact of decision making on the viability and therefore of the placement.

Voluntary Agreements: these are commonly used as a protective tool. Despite the fact that a voluntary agreement can last for 2 years, they are not counted in terms of the stability plan requirements. If a voluntary agreement leads to a court case, previous care should be included (even if care is intermittent).

Legal representation: children under 7 not represented. All children and young people should have an appropriate advocate. The advocate should have the required knowledge and experience to participate in court processes and have credibility in terms of their knowledge and experience of children's emotional and psychological processes. An appropriate advocate may also be a community representative who knows the child extremely well.

Protection for Carers

In some circumstances identifying details of carers should not be disclosed. Carers would like to be able to make a contribution to proceedings without being put at risk by being identified.

Earlier intervention and better integration: the word notification will not be used. If a child is believed to be in need of protection a Child Report will be made to Child Protection. If there is significant concern for a child's wellbeing, a Child Report will be made to a Community-based intake and referral service.

Concern: community service organizations will become clogged with Child Reports and there will not be sufficient resources to ensure agencies will be able to respond adequately. Community Service organizations will be seen as too closely linked with Child Protection and families will be reluctant to use their services.

Leaving Care: responsibilities are listed but not enforceable. DHS should retain responsibility for young people until they are 25 years, not 21 years.

Family Conferencing: what is referred to in the Bill is at the late stage where there is a dispute. Family Conferencing should be required much earlier as is successfully done in NZ, the family or community may produce alternative solutions to the protective concerns without disputes arising and the need for court action be eliminated.

Inclusion of Carers : carers are not mentioned very frequently and should be incorporated into the Bill much more in terms of participation in provision of information, access to relevant information and decisions about access arrangements.

Access: rights and responsibilities of everyone need to be stated – child, birth parents and family and carers.

Treatment for Sexual Abuse: provides for treatment for young people aged 10 – 16 yrs. Must ensure that children under 10 years and young people over 16 are also provided with appropriate treatment.

Definitions: need to define family.

Resourcing: Allans Consulting have been engaged to look at what will be required to resource the implementation of the legislation. Very important especially in relation to resourcing early intervention strategies and treatment of sexual abuse.

FCAV ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Early advice for your diary!

The Foster Care Association of Victoria AGM will be held on
Fri 28th October 2005, 7.00pm – 10.00 pm at the Boroondara Community Health Centre
378 Burwood Road, Hawthorn.

Guest Speaker: Simone Fullerton, Project Manager, Kids Under Cover
“Role of Kids Under Cover in Building Bungalows for Foster Families”

Free child care provided by arrangement with office (must arrange by October 21st)

HELP LINE: volunteers needed.

FCAV believes carers need all the support possible and with this in mind, we are planning to set up a Help Line for carers.

Janice Hughes, Janet Brooks and some Board members have been providing information, support and advocacy for several years. Since the office opened in January 2005, the Coordinator has also been able to provide some assistance to carers. However as approximately 1,000 calls are received per annum, a more accessible and organized system is now needed.

The FCAV plans to have a team of specially trained carers who volunteer to provide support, information and advocacy for carers. We hope eventually to have this service operating on a regional basis but this will need to be worked towards gradually.

Help Line volunteers will be able to take calls in their own homes. Calls will be diverted to the volunteer on roster from the office phone. Calls, as you can imagine, can be about all sorts of issues including Centrelink enquiries, the need to debrief, anxiety about a complaint or allegation, communication difficulties, access arrangements to name a few! Sometimes carers just like to talk to another carer.

The FCAV will be developing protocols with DHS and community service organizations to ensure that the Help Line is a positive, constructive mechanism in relation to DHS and agencies, as well as providing extra support to carers.

The training provided will be accredited and therefore may be of assistance to carers in obtaining a welfare or associated qualifications. It will involve 2 short courses of 2 days duration to be held in Melbourne, hopefully later this year.

If you are interested in extending your skills and experience by becoming a Help Line volunteer, please contact Julien at the FCAV office on 9 489 9770 or email admin@fcav.org I would love to hear from carers based in both country and city locations.

Julien Leith Coordinator.

CAREGIVER REIMBURSEMENTS IN RESPITE SITUATIONS

The last newsletter gave details of DHS policy in relation to this. If you missed it, contact the FCAV office. We are advised that this policy also applies to children or young people in a permanent care placement where the permanent care order has not gone through.

HOME BASED CARE FORUM

The Department of Human Services, in consultation with FCAV will hold the fourth ***Home Based Care Forum*** on Wednesday, November 9th at the Hemisphere Conference Centre, 488 South Road, Moorabbin.

Guest speakers are Bernard Geary, Child Safety Commissioner, Office of Child Safety and Tim Moore, Neuro Psychologist (who gave an excellent presentation at our State Conference).

A number of workshops and presentations will be held that will be of great interest to foster carers, community service organisation staff and child protection workers. We will keep you posted!

The conference will start at 9.30am and finish at 2.30pm. Morning tea, and lunch will be provided.

Details and registration will be advised but for initial enquiries, please contact Lisa Rodda, Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Branch, Department of Human Services on: 9616 7199, Monday – Wednesday only.

WELFARE TO WORK –

The issue

From 1 July 2006, those people on Parenting Payment whose youngest child is 6 will be moved to Newstart Allowance. This means they will be obliged to search for, or find, work for a minimum of 15 hours per week.

NB. Under the proposed guidelines foster carers' biological children are those considered to be over 6. Hence, if a carer has school aged children and takes on an infant or toddler, the carer would be obliged to seek paid employment as the foster child under this measure is currently not considered part of the carer family.

This measure will affect a number of foster, relative and kinship carers as the majority of these carers also currently receive full or partial income support from the Commonwealth. This may mean that some carers will not be able to continue

as volunteer carers for children, as the associated demands are often not compatible with being in the paid workforce.

As carers you will be aware of the many demands that could conflict with availability for work. For example:- school holidays, access arrangements on weekdays, attendance at meetings, appointments – drs, specialists, assessments, counselling, carer training and appointments with CSOs and DHS. Also of course, the unpredictability inevitably involved in caring for children and young people with emotional difficulties and behavioural problems.

It is therefore clear that this policy is likely to have a dramatic effect on the availability of home based care for children unable to live with their biological parents.

The Facts

from Budget release by Hon. Kevin Andrews:

Parents receiving Parenting Payment prior to 1 July 2006 will be able to remain on that payment under the current entitlement; that is, until their youngest child turns 16. This group of parents will have a year to seek work voluntarily from 1st July 2006 or when their youngest child turns six. After that they will become subject to an obligation to seek part-time work of at least 15 hours per week.

☐ Parents applying for Parenting Payment on or after 1 July 2006 will receive Parenting Payment while their youngest child is less than six years old. When their youngest child turns six, this group of parents will receive enhanced Newstart Allowance and be subject to an obligation to seek part-time work of at least 15 hours per week.

☐ Parents with a youngest child aged 6-15 years who claim income support after 30 June 2006 will have an immediate requirement to seek 15 or more hours of work a week.

☐ Parents may satisfy their requirements by working part-time (15 hours a week), or searching for part-time work and participating in Job Network or other services.

☐ Parents who are not working may be required to undertake an annual Mutual Obligation activity.

☐ Work requirements will be modified in special family circumstances, such as a child having a **significant disability**.

The Good News:

After some negotiation, foster caring was accepted as suitable voluntary work for mutual obligation purposes under the Australian's Working Together initiative. (Originally foster care was not considered suitable voluntary activity under the guidelines because it was conducted in the carer's own home). These carers are still required to attend an annual review interview at the request of Centrelink, but upon production of evidence of their accreditation as a current and active foster carer in the formal out of home care system they are not required to then participate in other voluntary activities/work.

Proposal:

Following the above principle, Australian Foster Care Association (AFCA) are requesting:- **that formal foster care be recognised as work for Welfare to Work purposes**. Only accredited and active carers should be eligible for this provision. The carers could be flagged by the central Centrelink records, just as they are for Family Tax Benefit payments. It would also be reasonable to request carers falling into this category to provide proof of their accreditation and currency on an annual basis. If you wish to support AFCA's proposal you should contact your local member to follow up on this issue, especially if it is likely to impact on you as a carer.

Suggested framework if you wish to follow up this issue:

(you may wish to incorporate these points into your follow up letter or phone call. Kinship and permanent carers will need to make appropriate alternations).)

- Concern about the proposed Welfare to Work Reform which we believe will have serious consequences for the home based/foster /kinship/permanent care system.
- We are aware that you have already received information from the Australian Foster Care Association (which has outlined the background and rationale for foster care being considered “work” for the Welfare to Work provisions.
- We want to approach you, as a Victorian member/senator, to inform you of the impact this legislation will have in Victoria.
- Department of Human Services data indicates that the number of children entering care is increasing, whilst the number of foster carer is decreasing. It is also more difficult to recruit new foster carers, with an approximate 40% drop in recent years (DHS). These trends are expected to continue. Furthermore, the foster care population is ageing, as many carers come to fostering after having their own children.
- FCAV believes that the Welfare to Work provisions will result in a number of carers ceasing this important voluntary work to look for work. Any further stress on the foster care system will ultimately lead to its breakdown and the loss of this home-based care option in caring for children on child protection orders.
- Foster carers volunteer their time and homes to look after vulnerable, and often very damaged, children. Without this unpaid workforce, the cost to the state and federal governments for providing 24 hour rostered care would be significant, to say the least.
- We are seeking your support so that formal foster care is recognised as ‘work’ for Welfare to Work purposes. Only accredited and active carers should be eligible for this provision. **If you want further information about our concerns, please feel free to contact Helen Falconer on 9735 1381.**

Welfare to Work Relevant Press Articles

Adelaide Advertiser Thurs 18/8/05
Bronwyn Hurrell, Canberra

Changes “will mean fewer carers”

Recruiting **foster** parents will become even more difficult under the Federal Governments welfare to work changes, the Opposition and foster parents have warned.

FCA spokeswoman Helen Falconer said there were already increasing numbers of children needing foster care and decreasing numbers of foster parents to take them.

The Government also had not taken into account the extra care foster children often needed. "I am concerned that we are going to lose more foster carers because they are not going to be able to juggle looking after the more complex issues of these children and looking for work at the same time." Mrs Falcomer said.

Family and Community Services Minister Kay Patterson told Parliament that the concerns of foster parents details would be taken into account.

Courier Mail Thursday 18/8/05
Steven Wardill

Work-for-dole changes threaten many foster carers

Australian Foster Care Association spokeswoman Helen Falconer said the number of people willing to become foster parents was already falling and the welfare-to-work changes would drive away carers "in their droves".

"We are concerned that the welfare-to-work initiatives will result in carers being forced to cease their caring role to look for work," she said.

Opposition employment spokeswoman Penny Wong stated "the impact on foster carers exposed how extreme the welfare changes were. The Howard Government should be encouraging people to support the community by becoming foster parents, but they are so out of touch that all they are doing is making a tough job harder."

A spokesman for Employment and Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews said "the Government was aware of the impact of its legislation on foster carers."

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

AFCA MEETING

DHS LORNE FORUM

The 2005 child Protection and Family Service Forum was held in Lorne, Victoria at the beginning of August 2004. Janice Hughes and Janet Brooks attended on behalf of FCAV.

Keynote speakers were David Murray C.E.O Youth Substance Service, and David Green from Latrobe University – both very interesting speakers.

David Green’s question for carers, workers and Departmental workers was “how will **all** the legislation made in Victoria affect the children of Victoria?”

Many workshops were presented. Janice Hughes presented an update on FCAV activities.. Other topics were:

- “Aboriginal young people - Do They Have a Future?” Alf Bamblett, C.E.O. Victorian Aboriginal Community Services
- “Victorian families – Children and their Carers in 2016”: Nigel Brand from Office of Children, DHS
- Three young people from CREATE also did a presentation which was very thought provoking.

The 3rd keynote speaker was KAKKIB li DTHIA WARRAWee’A: an indigenous spiritualist who was a wonderful motivator.

The Children’s Bill Exposure Draft was launched on the final day by The Hon. Sherryl Garbutt, Minister for the Office of Children and Community Services, followed by Ms Gill Callister, Executive Director, Office of Children who spoke on “Better Outcomes for Victorian Children & Young People.”

FACE TO FACE (F2F)

2005 THE SUPER HERO'S JOURNEY

tackling transition issues

WHAT IS A F2F CONFERENCE?

F2F is a biannual conference held by CREATE the organisation run for, by and with kids in and ex care. A big effort is put into making it young person friendly by having lots of fun while dealing with serious issues, aiming for concrete outcomes. This year's Superhero theme, had plenty of detective chores, TV chat shows, rap stars, undies on the outside and lollies. . It's an illusion free zone (no drugs or alcohol) and those not into fun and games needn't apply!!

WHO GOES AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

200 kids, carers, state/federal department and agency workers come together from all over Australia to discuss a specific issue, figure out the problems and work together on national solutions.

This year's Brisbane F2F discussed supporting positive leaving care and transition experiences.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- 'Cut the crap ... keep it real' (young person)
- Young people want to have a free and cheerful experience of ordinary life
- Is the system good enough for our kids should they need it?(researcher)
- 'Have you ever been home for dinner, or to stay the night, or to borrow money from your parents after you've left home? That's what we want'(young person)
- Need to drop the professional barriers and humanise the relationships between workers (dept / agency) and the young people they worked with.

MOVING FORWARD

A full report will be released by F2F later in the year and available through FCAV. Some of the highlights from a carer point of view include:

- Pushing for state/federal legislation to support young people up to the age of 25 where necessary (as in WA)
- Working towards maintaining and strengthening young people's significant relationships (eg with carers, extended family) with a view to life time relationships
- Significant others (eg carers) having access to support services after young person leaves the system
- Strengthening of all transition services eg life skills courses, accommodation and employment services

FOOTNOTE

The first ever F2F dedication was made to Barry Neale, FCAV's inaugural representative. He was remembered as a man of great passion, hard work, with 'fire in his belly' An all

round fabulous champion for young people ... who also looked great in a frock when required!!

Email Claire Brunner cbrunner@labyrinth.net.au or admin@fcav.org for more details.

Good News for Permanent Carers:

DHS introduced the Post Legal Support scheme in 2004. This is a recognition by DHS that permanent care families may require support at key times after the permanent care order has gone through.

Funding has been distributed across the 9 permanent care teams in Victoria, ensuring that each region is provided for. The amount of funding for each team has been based on target numbers (i.e. number of placements). The funding is to be spent on permanent care issues but can be utilized flexibly by permanent care teams.

Eastern, Northern and Southern (Connections) permanent care teams have funded post legal support workers, some regions have boosted existing staff positions to enable more time to be allocated to post legal placement support. The funding can also be used to purchase counselling or services or to fund support groups. It is envisaged that providing this flexibility will enable areas to respond flexibly to need and also enable a picture to be formed as to what the needs are.

Unfortunately at this stage the funding allocated is small, so that permanent care teams are generally only providing this support to the placements or conversions (from foster care to permanent care) that they have organized. This leaves a gap as an agency may have organized the placement but not have post legal support funding. Do let the FCAV office know if you are in this situation!

So that FCAV can effectively represent you as this program is evaluated, it is important to give the office any relevant feedback. If you are having difficulty accessing the assistance you need, let the office know so that we can try and assist you, or at least ensure that DHS is aware of problems with the program.

Support Packages for permanent carers:

Financial assistance and other forms of ongoing support need to be negotiated on a case by case basis **prior to court.**

If a child has special unexpected needs or a permanent carer's situation changed, carers may be able to apply for assistance even after the permanent care order has gone through.

More detailed information is available in the office for anyone who is interested.

Julien Leith
Coordinator.

Update on the Post Placement Support Service (Vic) Inc

From Cas O'Neil

The Post Placement Support Service (PPSS) is an early intervention support and training service which will serve anyone who has a personal or professional connection with permanent care, adoption, long term foster care, kinship care and donor conception.

PPSS do not have mainstream funding yet, and at this stage are only able to offer a limited number of workshops for parents, carers and professionals. - In September/October 2005 these are being provided for rural regions in Victoria.

PPSS also maintains an email list and regularly email items of interest on alternative care. (For details of workshops or to join the email list contact PPSS – contact details provided below).

The Potter Foundation has provided funding to PPSS to enable a strategic planning process to be undertaken. This is underway.

If funding is forthcoming, PPSS aim to provide:

- ❖ Specialist individual, family and group counselling and therapy
- ❖ Support, information and education
- ❖ Training and consultancy for professionals (e.g. teachers and health professionals)
- ❖ Collaborative research projects with universities and other relevant organisations
- ❖ A resource centre, incorporating interstate and international networking with similar organisations
- ❖ Rural outreach and video conferencing
- ❖ Partnerships with culturally diverse organisations in the child welfare field

Contacts:

Ms Mary Natoli - 8 Bath St., Abbotsford, 3067. Tel: 9417-6949

Dr Meredith Temple-Smith - 6a Chestnut St., Surrey Hills, 3127. Tel: 9808-3535

Dr Cas O'Neill - email: casoneill@dodo.com.au. Tel: 9489-2591

Nancy Verrier is coming to Melbourne

We are delighted to announce that Nancy Verrier, author of “**The Primal Wound**” and “**Coming Home to Self**” is coming to Melbourne to present and share her knowledge of attachment, separation and loss issues .

Seminar	
Tuesday 6 September 7 pm – 10pm (incl supper) \$20 non members \$15 members	Open Session for all interested people. FJ Rose Auditorium, 597 St Kilda Road, Melbourne
Workshop	
Wednesday 7 September 9.30 am – 4.30 pm (Incl lunch) \$100 non members \$95 members	For Professionals (ANF, 540 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne)

Nancy is a psychotherapist in private practise in Lafayette, California. She is the mother of an adopted, a biological and a stepchild – all adults. She is an authority on the effects of early childhood trauma and deprivation caused by separation..

For further information contact VANISH on 1800 334 043 or 9348 2111

National Symposium

