

April 2006



**FCAV
Committee of
Management
2005 – 2006**

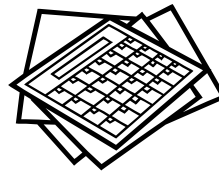
IMPORTANT DATES

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**Helen Brooks
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**Joan Graham
South East Region**

**Liz Neale
Eastern Region**

**Bev Pumpa
Grampians Region**

**John Woolcock
South East Region**

**Peter Van de Burgt
Gippsland Region**

Carers wishing to contact a
Committee Member or an
interim Helpline volunteer,
please phone the
FCAV Office on 03 948 99770

**6TH MAY 2006
STATE
CONFERENCE
9.00AM -5.00PM**

Registrations due by 28th April, 2006

**Victorian Resilience Forum
21st & 22nd August, 2006**

**6th May 2006
Special General Meeting** to decide on
new constitution (during the State
Conference).

**29th September 2006 to 30/09/06
National Conference** held in Adelaide

**27th October 2006
AGM** from 7.30pm to 9.30pm

**11th Feb 2007 through to
16th February 2007
IFCO** to be held in New Zealand

Dare to Care - Foster Care
Patron Ms Denise Drysdale
ABN 30 747 010 099

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FCAV SUB COMMITTEES

Finance Subcommittee	Peter Van de Burgt, Helen Brooks, Dora Kontaratos, Adam McCann & Julien Leith
Policy & Procedures	Offers invited
Constitution	Rebecca Bolton, Sylvia Davey, Peter Kearney, Liz Neale & Peter Van de Burgt

WORKING GROUPS – FCAV REPRESENTATIVES

Director Children in Care & Protection Meetings	Lyn Bicknell, Helen Falconer, Ian Seal & Julien Leith
AFCA	Bev Pumpa and Ian Seal
Child Protection & Family Services Advisory Group	Sandra Creaner, Ian Seal & Julien Leith
Children's Right Charter	Julien Leith
DHS Liaison	Sandra Creaner, Ian Seal & Julien Leith
Face-to-Face	Bev Pumpa
Foster Care Advisory Group	John Woolcock & Joan Graham
North West Region Home Based Committee	Cheryl Brown
Interim Help Line	Helen Falconer, Lyn Bicknell & Committee Members
Kinship Care	Joan Graham
Leaving Care	Ian Seal
Looking after Children	Sylvia Davey
Office of the Child Safety Commissioner Advisory Group	JulienLeith
Quality Assurance	Lucie Kearney
Sex Education Group	Ian Seal & John Woolcock
State Conference	Julien Leith & Joan Graham



YOU'VE GOT MAIL



We could really use your Help!

As the number of people on our mailing list for this newsletter has greatly increased, so too has the cost of circulation, not to mention our workload! In order to keep costs down, we would like to distribute the newsletter via email wherever possible.

If you are currently on our mailing list and have access to email, we would love to hear from you advising us to change you from the "mailing list" over to the "emailing list". Please don't forget to include your name and postal address in your email changeover request. You can contact us via email at admin@fcav.org

Thankyou to those people who have already made the change, we are very grateful for your assistance.

FROM THE CHILD SAFETY COMMISSIONER ...



Since my appointment as Child Safety Commissioner in May last year, I have become increasingly aware of the remarkable contribution made to the community by foster carers. The Foster Care Association of Victoria represents this committed and selfless group, and the children they care for in various invaluable ways that include advocacy, training, information sharing and gathering, policy development and promotion to the broader world. I have personally seen the benefit of these endeavours throughout my 30 years of working in the sector.

Minister Garbutt indicated her own and her governments intent, when, in introducing the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act to Parliament, stated, “The Child Safety Commissioner will advocate for children in care, monitor the out of home care system, and recommend improvements to better meet the needs of children and young people”.

The Office of Child Safety Commissioner brings together 20 experienced and enthusiastic staff, some freshly recruited; and others from the Advocate for Children in Care and the Child Death Inquiry Unit, previously located in Department of Human Services (DHS).

Our vision for the office is for “children to be seen and heard”, and I have every intention of making this happen.

I look forward to the opportunity of working in partnership with the community to enhance the safety and wellbeing of Victoria’s children. Child safety matters will be addressed in a variety of ways, that broadly include:

- Promoting child safe environments
- Monitoring Victoria’s Out of Home Care system
- Conducting inquiries into the deaths of children known to the child protection system and
- Reviewing the administration of the Working with Children Act 2005.

Essential to child safe environments are child safe practices, which will continue to evolve as we all learn from each other about what ‘really works’. A new initiative of government is the Working With Children Check, which provides one measure to assist in keeping children safe. The Check will put barriers in place for those people who should not work with children however, it should only be viewed as a starting point. This initiative is part of a suite of child-safe practices that employers and organisations need to put in place. Other measures include good recruitment practices, codes of conduct and supervision, to reduce the likelihood that unsuitable people will work with children. My office also has responsibility for annually reviewing how the Working with Children Act 2005 is being administered by the Department of Justice and will make recommendations as necessary, with quality improvement in mind.

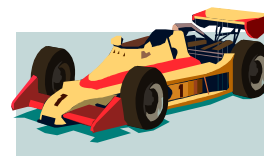
My office will maintain a strong focus on monitoring the quality of out of home care services delivered to children and young people. We are working hard with DHS and the sector to add value to the system as it impacts on the state’s most vulnerable children. I will constantly advocate for them, and make suggestions and recommendations as to how their lives can move forward, so often after sad, abusive and disturbing beginnings to their young lives.

So much of what we do at the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner positively aligns our work with those principles adopted by The Foster Care Association of Victoria. I congratulate the Association on its great work and I look forward to achieving a positive and exciting partnership.

Bernie Geary OAM
Child Safety Commissioner
March 2006

GRAND PRIX

FCAV was again fortunate in being given 11 tickets for carers and their foster children to attend the Grand Prix. The FCAV committee decided to offer these tickets to carers (and their foster children) who have provided support and assistance to the FCAV over the past year. They had a great day....



Thanks to the Victorian Government, on Thursday 30th March, some very lucky Carers and children in their care were able to attend Children's Day at the Grand Prix. Whilst some of us may cringe with horror at the noise levels, the atmosphere was fantastic. We were treated to a superb day, with quality service and care from some very capable and accommodating Events Staff.

Our group of 11 met and made our way to the Paddock Club, where, after a number of security checks, we found ourselves in a Corporate Box, directly above the Pits. Kid-friendly food and drinks were provided all day, and there were celebrities that came in and signed autographs and had their photos taken with our young people. These included Peter Brock, Mark Holden and John So – falling into this category since the Commonwealth games..... Various mascots were wandering around the grounds, like the Dodo bird, and Captain Starlight, also providing picture opportunities. Drivers were around, but wisely kept a low profile!

During the morning, we were able to tour the Pits and talk to various officials and garage technicians. Some were fortunate enough to have their photos taken with Mark Webbers' car – before the gearbox difficulties occurred.... Most of the racing for the day was practise and qualifying runs We observed V8 Supercars and Utes, a Historic Demonstration, Formula 3 cars and there was also some stunt riding thrown in as well. There were a few practise runs with the Formula 1 machines but you couldn't see much, they were so fast. However, you knew they were there as the noise and vibration rattled your teeth! You couldn't help but be caught up in the energy.

Whilst the day centred round the actual races and time trials, there was much to see around the grounds and some took up this opportunity, visiting displays. I'm told the sights from the Viewing Deck were awesome, and there were some interesting tents to visit.

On behalf of FCAV and the families that attended, I'd like to pass on our thanks and appreciation to those involved in providing us with the opportunity to experience such an exciting event.

Lucie Kearney
Foster Carer

BEACH HOUSE

\$50 per night*



This fully furnished retro styled beach house at Cape Paterson is only 1 & ½ hrs drive from Melbourne and available to volunteers, clients & workers within the welfare sector for anything from a well earned break to rapport building, and reconnection.

The property offers: 5 min walk to surf beach, sheltered cliff walks, shops, tavern, established native garden, 2 b/r (sleeps 5) additional mattresses available, open plan living, kitchen (microwave, TV, stereo, washing machine, gas heating). You will need to **bring your own bedding**.

Bookings are available up to two months in advance. For enquiries please contact: KarlTattersall on Mob: 0428523331 or via Email: karl_tatt@hotmail.com

*\$50 per night for a booking of 3 or more nights, otherwise \$70 per night.

LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN (LAC)

Analysis of the 2005 data shows ‘that there is a very considerable variation between CSOs in the extent to which LAC is being successfully implemented across the state. Many CSOs are already very successfully implementing most aspects of LAC whilst some others are still struggling.’

Through FCAV rep. Sylvia Davey’s efforts on the LAC working group, an additional data collection item has been added that requires CSO’s to detail if the LAC forms were given to the carer.

Barriers to achieving LAC targets are seen as:-

Lack of engagement by Child Protection workers, lack of technology expertise in some CSO’s, lack of training.

Solutions included resourcing and provision of appropriate training for CSO, Carers and Child Protection workers.

A **Victorian Resilience Forum** is planned (with LAC as the good practice framework) for 21st & 22nd August, 2006. The forum will bring some highly regarded international LAC experts together in Melbourne. The forum will be organized by DHS and speakers will include:



Raymond Lemay, Executive Director of Prescott-Russell, Canada who inspired many Victorians last year with his presentation on the effectiveness of LAC in improving the resilience of young people in out of home care.

Harriet Ward, academic social work researcher from the UK, who was the key person who developed the original LAC materials in the UK. Harriet is the author of the 6 age appropriate LAC Assessment and Action records in use in Victoria.

Andrew Fuller, an Australian specializing in running forums and workshops in the education sector on resilience issues.

The target audience for the forum is foster carers, CSO workers and DHS protective workers and others involved in out of home carers

CONSTITUTION

As our current constitution has many loop holes (as we discovered at the Annual General Meeting in 2005) and as it is quite unsuited to our new structure whereby we now have staff and an office, our constitution sub-committee has been working hard to develop a proposal for a new constitution.

Following Freehills (the legal experts in this area) advice, we have adapted their modern, minimalist model constitution to our situation. The rationale for this is that it covers only what is necessary with the idea that the committee develops policies ‘underneath’ the constitution. Therefore it should not be necessary to have frequent changes to the constitution whereas policies can evolve and change more readily as the need arises.

We aim to hold a General Meeting as part of the State Foster Care Conference to consider and hopefully adopt this new constitution. There will be a mail out to members 21 days prior to the conference advising of the General Meeting and enclosing the proposed new constitution. We will also place the draft proposed new constitution on our web site at www.fcav.org

INTERNET SAFETY SERVICES FOR CARERS



Net Alert Limited is Australia's Internet safety advisory body. It provides an email and telephone helpline for the community to use which offers information and advice about the benefits and hazards of the Internet. It has a particular focus on providing children with safe access to the Internet.

The helpline is accessible through a toll free national telephone number, 1800 880 176, an email address; enquiries@netalert.net.au or on the web: www.netalert.net.au/help. You can view or download materials such as a Parent's Guide to Internet Safety, Internet safety brochures, family help sheets (contracts, house rules etc). Check it out!

INTERNET SITES WHICH MAY BE OF INTEREST

What's new on the National Child Protection Clearing house webpage?

Two new publications are now available on the website:

The recruitment, retention and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander foster carers by Nick Richardson, Leah Bromfield and Daryl Higgins

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/2005/reports/litreview/litreview.html>

Enhancing out-of-home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people by Daryl Higgins, Leah Bromfield and Nick Richardson

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/2005/reports/empirical/empirical.html>

'Visions of a Child Friendly Community' has been produced to support NAPC National Child Protection Week campaign theme: Child Friendly Communities Prevent Abuse and Neglect of Children. A copy of this publication is available on the NAPCAN NSW website:

<http://www.napcan.org.au/NSW/index.htm>

Recent publications relating to information on child abuse have been updated on the web site of the National Child Protection Clearinghouse.

You can find this information on the What's New page and at:

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/afsapubs.html>



INTERNET SITES FOR THE KIDS

Free touch typing for the kids (Broadband required) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing/>



Also a great times tables downloadable site for PC's (MAC version available midyear): [Freeware](#) > Timez Attack - Learn Multiplication. Chase dangerous monsters, find your way through dark tunnels - and learn multiplication at the same time! Timez Attack is a first person shooter game where you do maths instead of shooting!

[7-11 yrs, Dance Mat Typing](#) OK for older kids too. Learn keyboard familiarity and finger positioning as you work your way through **12 different typing lessons**. Animated characters and dances are triggered by your very own **ten fingers**.

INTERNET SITES FOR THE KIDS continued ...

<http://www.bigbrainz.com/> This educational game is similar to violent games such as Doom, Quake or Half-life, but there is no violence. In order to defeat the monsters you meet on your way through winding tunnels and secret doors, you need to solve mathematical problems.

The graphics are very realistic and the game play is smooth, provided you have a fairly fast computer. If your kids get addicted to this game, they will surely learn the multiplication tables very fast!

You do need to give out your email address in order to download this free game. There is also a non-free version, which includes more levels and cooler monsters.

A general review of educational material can be found at: www.educational-freeware.com This site is dedicated to listings, descriptions and reviews of the best free educational software, both web based and downloadable.

UPDATE ON COMPETENCY BASED ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING

Some of you will be aware that last year at Christmas Nora Risso left DHS (Placement and Support unit) to go on maternity leave. Nora had been working on a project to introduce a common competency based assessment and training package for foster carers in Victoria. Joanne Cowell, a recent arrival from NSW, has now taken up this project.

Joanne previously worked at the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) in Adoption and Permanent Care Services where she managed a program arranging permanent orders for children in foster care. She has also worked at the Office of the Children's Guardian and in the non-government sector at the Post Adoption Resource Centre.



“Step by Step” (the assessment package) and “Shared Stories: Shared Lives” (the pre-service training package for foster carers) are being adapted for Victorian use. Joanne is finalising the packages with input from CSO's and DoCS before they go to print.

67 workers from CSO's across Victoria completed “Step by Step” familiarisation courses during late 2005 or early 2006. A “Train the Trainer” approach is now planned so that further familiarisation courses in “Step by Step” and “Shared Stories: Shared Lives” can be offered by Victorian presenters during 2006.

Joanne can be contacted on 9096 7471 or by email to joanne.cowell@community.nsw.gov.au

GREAT SUPPORT IDEA - A “BUDDY SYSTEM”



To help with recruiting new carers and to support existing carers, Julie Campbell (a carer and also a recruitment worker with the Salvation Army's Peninsula Youth and Family Services Program, is exploring introducing a ‘Buddy System.’ Under this system an experienced carer is linked with a new or less experienced carer. The sort of support can vary. It could be as little as an occasional phone call when the new carer needs advice or just somebody to talk to, particularly at the time of your first placement. Maybe if a friendship is sparked then you may choose to have a cuppa now and again, or even just meet at one of the agencies get together.

If there is enough interest Peninsula Youth and Family Services plan to provide a short training session to help interested “buddies” prepare for the role. We will be keen to hear how it works out Julie. Do keep us posted!

HIC's NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE ENROLMENT OF FOSTER CHILDREN



Foster children may be enrolled on a Medicare card as:

- the cardholder (individual)
- authorised agency as the cardholder on the foster carer's enrolment providing it is long term care.

IT IS PREFERABLE THAT A FOSTER CHILD HAS THEIR OWN ENROLMENT WITH THE RELEVANT STATE AGENCY AS THE CARDHOLDER.

Documentation required to enrol a foster child on their own enrolment:

- completed Medicare enrolment application form with official written confirmation from the relevant agency.

Documentation required to enrol a foster child (long term) on their carer's enrolment:

- completed Medicare enrolment application form with official written
- confirmation from the relevant agency and identification document of the foster parent.

Note: This may occur where a child has been placed with carers until the age of 18 years.

Family Carers

Where a family member is acting as the carer and has responsibility of the child (i.e. there is no state agency involvement) documentation must be provided that the child is in that person's care.

Documents required to prove child is the responsibility of the carer:

- Health Care Card with inclusion of child; and/or evidence of receipt of family allowance.

In both of the above situations additional documentation is required where a child is not already enrolled in the Medicare program, it is necessary to provide identity and eligibility documents which include:

- birth certificate
- Australian passport
- foreign passport with permanent resident visa
- foreign passport with valid visa - proof of application for permanent
- resident status (other criteria must be met) and a letter from the relevant agency.

Children 15 years may transfer themselves to a Medicare card of their own.

Medicare Claims

Bulk billed services

On attendance at a doctor's surgery where the carer does not hold either the Medicare card or the Medicare card number for a child, the doctor may contact HIC on the DOCTORS HOTLINE 132 150 to obtain the Medicare card number for claiming purposes (this is if the doctor agrees to bulk bill the carer for the consultation for the child).

Patient Claim

Where the doctor raises an account which is either paid by the carer at the time of the service or taken away for payment at a later date, the carer must ensure that the receipt or the account is made out in their name to enable the claim to be reimbursed when submitted at a Medicare office. Medicare policy states: a benefit is payable to the person who incurred the expense (the claimant). The claimant and the patient do not need to be on the same Medicare card. When claiming through a Medicare office or through the mail, the Medicare Officer will locate the child's Medicare card number to process the claim and payment will be made to the carer as the claimant. Carers should provide identification at the time of claiming.

Pharmaceutical benefits scheme

On attendance at a pharmacy to fill a prescription issued by a doctor where the carer does not have the Medicare card number, there is provision for the pharmacist to contact the PBS HOTLINE - IME - 1300 302 122 to obtain the child's Medicare card number to enable the script to be charged at the subsidised rate.

AUTISM IS

A lifelong developmental disability affecting about one in 500 people. Confused by the world around them, people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder need help to fit in. They have great difficulty understanding what they see, hear and otherwise sense. A child is born with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, but it is very difficult to diagnose until the child is at least 2 years old. Autism Spectrum Disorders include a diagnosis of Autism, Asperger Syndrome or Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD -NOS).



The term Autism Spectrum Disorder is used because there is great variation from person to person depending on the severity and combination of each area of impairment. Autism Spectrum Disorder may also coexist with other conditions or disorders, including intellectual disability, speech and language disorders, anxiety and depression (especially in adolescents and adults), epilepsy, attention disorders, Tourette Syndrome and Down Syndrome.

In Autism the impairments in the social and communication areas are severe and sustained and clearly present before the age of three years. The child is often anxious, has poor attention and motivation, responds unusually to many different stimuli and is observed as being 'different' from other children. Speech is delayed, or largely absent. A strong reliance on routine is apparent, and the child can have a range of ritualistic behaviors such as toe walking, hand flapping and finger gazing. The child/adult with autism may also be intellectually disabled. Sometimes, clinicians will refer to *Classic Autism* or *Kanner Autism*. This is because they believe the child or adult fits the early descriptions of Autism published by Dr Leo Kanner in the 1940's.

High Functioning Autism is a loosely used term (not defined in the diagnostic criteria) to describe a child or adult who meets the criteria for a diagnosis of Autism, but is not as severely affected as the more classically autistic person.

In Asperger Syndrome there are severe and sustained social impairments, but impairments are not as severe in the language and communication area. Speech usually develops within the normal age range, but the ability to communicate effectively (known as language pragmatics) is impaired. The impairments seem more subtle in the very young child, and become more apparent as the child reaches pre school and school age. The Asperger person is usually in the normal intelligence range.

Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS) is the diagnosis given for children who present with some of the characteristics of either Autism or Asperger Syndrome, but not severe enough for a diagnosis of either of these conditions. This diagnosis has also been referred to as Atypical Autism.

Most important of all: irrespective of the diagnosis or where they fit on the spectrum, each child or adult diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder is developmentally delayed, has significant difficulties participating in day-to-day life and requires sensitive understanding and specialist support and intervention.

For more information go to www.autismvictoria.org.au or ph 03 9885 0533

LETTER SENT TO CEO'S OF HOME BASED CARE AGENCIES**Department of Human Services**

Incorporating: Health, Community Services, Aged Care and Housing

555 Collins Street
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne Victoria 3001
DX210081
www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Telephone: (03) 9616 7777
Facsimile: (03) 9616 8329

RE: Continuation of the caregiver payment for the school year for young people in Home Based Care who turn 18 years of age and who are in full time secondary education

I am writing to provide you with information concerning the continuation of the caregiver payment until the end of the school year for caregivers caring for young people in Home Based Care in full time secondary education who turn 18 years of age during that school year. This issue was raised by the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) in its regular liaison with the Department of Human Services (DHS).

The FCAV raised the issue of the need for a consistent approach across regions regarding the continuation of the caregiver payment. At present there would appear to be inconsistencies, with some regions ceasing the caregiver payment as soon as a young person turns 18 years of age, regardless of their full time study load. Other regions are continuing the payment for a specific length of time.

DHS agrees that the caregiver payments should continue. Regions will now continue the caregiver payment until the end of the school year, i.e. until the end of the Victorian School Term 4, set out by the Department of Education and Training, for caregivers caring for young people in Home Based Care who turn 18 years of age and who are in full time secondary education.

- To clarify, the following should be noted:
- This applies to all forms of Home Based Care;
- This applies only to those young people who are in full time secondary education;
- This applies only to those young people who turn 18 years of age during the year, i.e. a young person who turns 18 in October 2003 and who is in full time secondary education will continue to receive payments until the end of the 2003 school year. The payments will not continue into 2004 even if their full time studies continue;
- Payments will cease as soon as the young person leaves full time education, i.e. if they leave before the end of the school year.

Could you please ensure that your staff advise foster carers in your organisation of this change in arrangements.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gill Callister'.

Gill Callister
Director
Child Protection and Juvenile Justice



Department of Human Services

Incorporating: Health, Community Services, Aged Care and Housing

555 Collins Street
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne Victoria 3001
DX210081
www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Telephone: (03) 9616 7777
Facsimile: (03) 9616 8329

5 April 2006

RE: Case Planning information being provided to foster carers.

The Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) recently raised some concerns at a Departmental liaison meeting in relation to the provision of endorsed case plan reports to carers.

The home-based care handbook was developed to provide information to foster carers about the child protection system and to assist caregivers to understand what they are entitled to receive as part of their day to day care of children and young people.

At a recent Departmental liaison meeting, the FCAV raised concerns that case planning information and a copy of the endorsed case plan is not provided to some foster carers, despite their requests. The FCAV have reported that carers are told by child protection workers and foster care workers that they are not entitled to the endorsed case plan.

Carers are an integral part of the care team, and it is vital that carers are provided with up to date information and a copy of the endorsed case plan regarding the child/young person. The information provided in the case plan will assist the carer in continuing to provide appropriate care of the child/young person concerned.

Section 9 of *The home-based care handbook* "Planning and decision making processes for children and young people in home-based care" states that caregivers can expect

"that in many cases they will attend Case Plan meetings, sometimes as part of a larger group and sometimes they may meet with the case planner separately"

"to receive copies of the endorsed Case Plan" and

"to be consulted about all decisions made in a Case Plan that have an impact on them" (Department of Human Services, 2003: 16).

Looking After Children is a practice framework that encourages good communication, collaboration, planning and assessment in out of home care. It requires the involvement of parents, caregivers, community service organisations workers, child protection workers, children and young people. One key element of Looking After Children is its focus on care and placement planning. With regard to care and placement planning processes, *the home based care handbook* states that caregivers can expect:

"to always be involved in the process"

"to receive copies of the Care Plan and Placement Plan Part Two"; and

“to be consulted about decisions made in the care and placement planning process that affect them, before decisions are made” (Department of Human Services, 2003:17).

We would appreciate if you could ensure that your staff are aware of this information, and ensure that foster carers do receive a copy of the endorsed case plan regarding the child/young person in their care. Advice has been sent to Departmental regions requesting that child protection staff ensure that foster carers receive a copy of the endorsed case plan.

If you require further copies of the handbook, please contact Lisa Rodda, Program Adviser, Office for Children, on 9616 7199 or by email: lisa.rodde@dhs.vic.gov.au

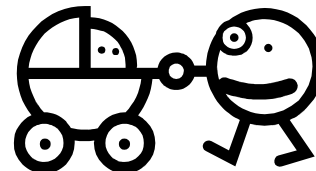
Yours sincerely



Christina Asquini
Director
Child Protection and Family Services

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

The Working with Children Check is a new checking system introduced in 2006 that helps protect children from physical and sexual harm. The WWC Check will assist in preventing those who are a risk to children from working with them in either paid or volunteer work.



The WWC Check is being phased in over the next five years, and foster carers are part of the first group to require a Check. By the year 2010 it is anticipated that 650,000 Victorians who work in child-related work will have applied for a WWC Check.

Foster carers' commitment to the safety and well-being of children is evident by the work they do. The WWC Check promotes children's safety and is designed to support and enhance the important contribution already being made by foster carers.

As one of the first participants, the legislation requires foster carers to submit WWC Check applications by 30 August 2006. The WWC Check is free for foster carers.

Information Sessions for foster carers will be provided by the Department of Justice in metropolitan, rural and regional locations across Victoria. Details of these information sessions, and WWC Check Application Forms will be provided to foster carers by their Community Service Organisations in May 2006.

The Department of Justice will process WWC Check applications. The WWC Check will look at a person's criminal record for *relevant* offences under the *Working with Children Act 2005*, and any findings from prescribed professional bodies. Relevant offences under the Act consist of serious sexual, violent and drug offences (a complete list is provided on the WWC Check website).

When a person has passed the WWC Check, they will be sent a WWC Check Card which is valid for five years (unless revoked) and can be used for all relevant voluntary work.

A unique feature of the WWC Check is that holders of a WWC Check will be monitored for new relevant offences and findings which may lead to a reassessment.

For further information please contact the WWC Check Unit.

- website: www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren
- email: workingwithchildren@justice.vic.gov.au
- information line: 1300 652 879

HELP LINE NEWS

The FCAV has welcomed a proposal from Post Placement Support Service (PPSS) to partner FCAV in providing a Help Line for home based carers. PPSS support permanent carers, adoptive and inter country adoptive parents. PPSS had been planning to develop a help line, but upon hearing of FCAV' intention, thought that a cooperative effort would avoid duplication. Both organizations share the aim of providing information and support to home based carers and both organizations receive a high proportion of calls relating to permanent care both pre and post court. FCAV will continue as the lead agency for the Help Line with PPSS as a partner. PPSS has undertaken to develop a resource manual which will be a very valuable contribution.



The FCAV working group and the Help Line Reference group (comprised of representatives of DHS, CSOs, The Centre for Excellence in Child & Family Welfare, PPSS and FCAV) have been working hard on policies and protocols which will be reviewed by the FCAV committee of management at their April meeting.

The Queensland FAST (Foster Care Advocacy and Support Team) have offered to provide 2 days of training in late April or May.

Help Line volunteers needed! – if you would like to help, or if you know someone who you think would make a good Help Line volunteer, please encourage them to phone Julien at FCAV, 9489 9770

In the meantime, if you need assistance in terms of information, or support about issues relating to foster care, if you phone the office on 9489 770 between 9 am – 5 pm, we will put you in touch with a carer who will try to assist you.

FCAV MEMBERSHIP

The FCAV Executive and Committee of Management encourage you to become a FCAV Member. This will allow you to vote at any upcoming AGM and at any Special Meetings.

As a FCAV Member you will automatically receive the bimonthly newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP FORM FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA Inc

I, (name) _____

of (address) _____

Suburb/Town _____ (post code) _____

desire to formally become a Member of the Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc.

I am an accredited foster carer with (name of agency) _____

I have been an accredited Foster Carer since (date) _____

Telephone: Home _____ Work _____

Mobile _____ Fax _____

Email address: _____

Occupation _____

I agree to be bound by the Rules of the Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc as in force from time to time.

Signature of Applicant _____ Date / /

Please return to: **FCAV Inc** or by fax to
PO Box 729
Northcote
Vic 3070 **(03) 9489 9119**

The FCAV advises that all the above details will be treated with confidentiality and, as promised in the past, none of the above information will be passed on to a third party.

**Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc.
RENEWED VISION, MISSION AND PURPOSE**

The FCAV has identified four core values that underpin its existence and operations now and into the future. The four values were enunciated by Adjunct Professor Jan Carter at the FCAV 2003 State Conference and strongly resonated with the organisation and its members. They are “*cherishment*”, “*connectedness*”, “*community*” and “*civility*”. These values articulate a vision for the children in home-based care, the system to which they have entered and in which the FCAV and others operate.

Vision : *For all children in care to be cherished, connected and treated with compassion.*

Mission: *To strengthen foster families and enhance the wellbeing of the children in their care.*

Statement of purposes

To advance a compassionate and effective foster care system that ensures the nurturing and protection of foster children; supports the needs of foster families and acknowledges the role of the biological family.

To promote a foster care system in which foster carers and their families can effectively help, nurture and care for foster children.

To promote a foster care system that prevents any on-going abuse to, or by, the children and protects the foster family unit.

FCAV seeks to achieve these purposes by, but not limited to

- (a) providing and facilitating information and support networks, counselling, advice, referrals, and any other means of support and assistance for the foster carers*
- (b) research, collection and dissemination of information on or relating to foster care for carers, agencies, and other interested participants*
- (c) promoting and encouraging foster carers and the recognition of the important role they and their families play in the foster care system*
- (d) assisting all participants in the foster care system to develop policies and guidelines to enhance the nurturing and protection of the foster children and that support the needs of the foster families*
- (e) promoting and facilitating effective training and on-going development for foster carers.*

**FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INC
NEWSLETTER RENEWAL**

(Please tick appropriate box)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Approved Foster Carer | <input type="checkbox"/> | Donation of \$10 per annum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Interested in making a donation | <input type="checkbox"/> | (Nominate amount) \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Organisation/Agency | | \$55 per annum to receive newsletter (inc GST) |

Name of Foster Care Agency _____

Name of Foster Family _____

Address _____

Telephone: Home _____ Work _____

Mobile _____ Fax _____

Please make cheques payable to FCAV Inc and mail to: **FCAV
PO Box 729
Northcote
VIC 3070**