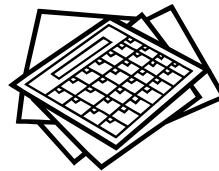


June 2006



FCAV
Committee of
Management
2005 – 2006

IMPORTANT DATES



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Vic 3070

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Vice President
Ian Seal
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Lucie Kearney
Gippsland Region

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Dora Kontaratos

Committee Members
Rebecca Bolton

Helen Brooks
Grampians Region

Joan Graham
South East 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

Victorian Resilience Congress
21st & 22nd August, 2006

Working with Children
Foster Carers must submit their
Working with Children Check
(WWC) applications by
30th August, 2007

National Foster Care
Conference, Adelaide
29th September 2006 to
30th September 2006

AGM from 7.30pm to 9.30pm
27th October 2006

IFCO - New Zealand
11th Feb 2007 to
16th February 2007

Dare to Care - Foster Care
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	Sylvia Davey, John Woolcock, Helen Falconer, John Hulskamp, Julien Leith - Offers Invited
Constitution	Rebecca Bolton, Sylvia Davey, Peter Kearney, Peter Van de Burgt, Peter Falconer & Lyle Allen

WORKING GROUPS – FCAV REPRESENTATIVES

Office of the Child Safety Commissioner	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
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
Quality Assurance	Lucie Kearney
Sex Education Group	Ian Seal & John Woolcock
National Conference	Sandra Creaner, Joan Graham, Claire Brunner, Peter van de Burgt & Julien Leith
Child Health & Well Being Group	Claire Brunner
Resilience Congress Planning Group	Sylvia Davey
Email Response Group	Claire Brunner, Sylvia Davey, Helen Falconer & Cheryl Whitehead Further Offers Invited—see below



EMAIL RESPONSE GROUP

The FCAV has the opportunity to provide input and response to important issues and documents, generally through the Department of Human Services. Recent examples include the new legislation, allegation guidelines and therapeutic foster care documents. It would be great if we had an email reference group who would be willing to review such documents and provide feedback which could then be collated into a response for committee approval prior to sending to the department (or appropriate body). Would you be interested in participating? If so, please advise admin@fcav.org



WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK - FOSTER CARERS



The Working with Children Check (WWC Check) is a new checking system currently being implemented that helps protect children (under 18 years of age) from physical and sexual harm. The WWC Check achieves this by checking a person's criminal history for serious sexual, serious violence, and serious drug offences and relevant findings made against a person by certain professional registration bodies.

The WWC Check is different to a police records check. A unique feature of the WWC Check is its ongoing monitoring. This means that when notified of further relevant charges/offences or findings, the Department of Justice will review a person's continuing suitability to hold a WWC Check. Even if an applicant has had a police records check he or she will still need to apply for a WWC Check.

The WWC Check is being phased in industry-by-industry. It is anticipated around 650,000 people who work or volunteer in child-related work in Victoria will need to apply for a WWC Check. The commitment by Foster Carers to the safety of children is evident by the invaluable work they do. As Foster Carers work with vulnerable children, they will be amongst the first participants of the WWC Check. Legislation requires Foster Carers to submit their WWC Check applications by **30 August 2006**.

If a Foster Carer has not applied for a WWC Check by this date, it will be an offence for him or her to engage in child-related work. It will also be an offence for his or her CSO or foster care agency to engage the Foster Carer in child related work.

As volunteers, the WWC Check is free for Foster Carers.

It is important that Foster Carers lodge their application by 30 August 2006 with proof of identity and a passport size photo at any participating Australia Post outlet. Application forms will be forwarded to Foster Carers by their CSOs or foster care agencies.

Information sessions are available to help Foster Carers understand the WWC Check and what this means for you. A letter offering information sessions has recently been sent to your organisation. Should you wish to attend an information session, please contact your CSO or foster care agency.

If you would like further information about your participation in this important initiative promoting children's safety, please contact:

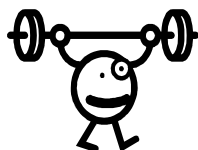
WWC Check Unit, Department of Justice

- website: www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren

- information line: 1300 652 879

- email: workingwithchildren@justice.vic.gov.au

RESILIENCE CONGRESS “Every Child Every Chance”



Day 1 “Building Resilience through Looking After Children”
Day 2 “Building Resilience through Education”

Monday 21 and Tuesday 22 August
at Sofitel, 25 Collins St, Melbourne

Presenters

Raymond Lemay

Executive director, Prescott-Russell Services for Children and Adults, Ontario, Canada

Professor Harriet Ward

Director of the Centre for Child & Family Research, University of Loughborough, England

Andrew Fuller

Melbourne-based author, Clinical Psychologist and Family Therapist.

**NB. DHS is providing money for child care, accommodation and travel to enable carers attend.
You will need to contact your agency as soon as possible to make arrangements.**

NEW LEGISLATION: The Children Youth & Families Act 2005



New Legislation was passed by State Parliament in November 2005.
Final advice on the commencement date for the Act will be provided shortly.

A key feature of the Act is to provide earlier intervention services to vulnerable children and families to ensure children’s safety, stability and wellbeing. Effort will be focused on helping families to meet children’s development needs and, where possible, to prevent the need for child protection involvement.

Where the risk to the child warrants a child protection response, the reforms are aimed at maintaining a focus on working intensively with families to keep them together. This year’s budget provides brokerage funds for families involved with Child Protection. A critical focus of these funds will be to help parents to make required changes if a child cannot live safely at home.

Where a child is placed away from home, the Act also guides Child Protection to carefully consider the impact of placements and attempts at reunification on the child. The Best Interests Principle clearly states that children’s stability should be a focus in all planning by Child Protection. In addition, the Act contains a new lever to encourage Child Protection to assess the impact of family circumstances and instability on a child. This lever is new maximum timeframes for stability planning.

Stability Plans

The purpose of a stability plan is defined in section 169 of the Act. This plan will address the stable long-term out of home care for a child. It will not only consider where a child will live, but will also spell out actions to promote children’s health, learning and development (by incorporating the key domains of the Looking After Children framework). The development of this plan signals that reunification is no longer considered to be in the best interests of the child.

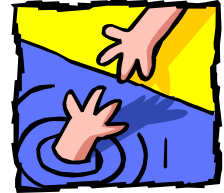
Section 170 (3) gives the maximum timeframes for considering whether a stability plan is in the child’s best interests. These timeframes are differentiated according to the age of the child, as follows:

- in the case of a child who is under 2 years of age at the date of the order, once that child has been in out of home care for one or more periods totaling 12 months
- in the case of a child who is 2 years of age but under 7 years of age at the date of the order, once that child has been in out of home care for a period or periods totaling 18 months
- in the case of a child who is 7 years of age or over at the date of the order, once that child has been in out of home care, for a period or periods totaling 2 years within a period of 3 years from the date of the order.

NB A stability plan for an Aboriginal child must be in accordance with the Aboriginal placement principle.

THE VALUE OF FOSTER CARE

The determined self could be the name of his book, which surely he must write one day. "Andrew" (not his real name), a focused, accomplished and mature young man now, was once in the depth of despair. Coming from a non-English speaking background, his family structure was under extreme pressure. A broken home resulted, torn apart by his mother's mental illness and his father's emotional extremism and fuelled by the endemic nature of a family where dysfunction is the norm. After a failed attempt at living with his sister, Andrew lived his early teens in a shared, adult less household - society's attempt to protect him. Consumed by a drug habit, he found himself exposed to all manner of other drugs, the "norm" of teenage pregnancy, sexual molestation and in general, group dysfunction. In addition his peers were too focused on wanting to pull him down. This coupled with the stresses of trying to run a home which was largely without adults at the age of 14 for many leads to the streets, or even worse. Faced with this bleak future, Andrew intelligently assessed his situation. He wanted more. He not only wanted to survive. He wanted to succeed. He knew he needed stability - a gift that society was poised to give to him - foster care.



With regular counseling and a case manager who helped him to mediate with his family, when needed, he set about the task of healing. He had previously survived through his defenses and now had to learn to trust, to rely on others, to accept advice and to take orders. He knew in his heart that these people, though strangers, were good people and though he says that he found the first six months the most difficult, he found that he was able to hold his tongue and accept good advice. He described himself as "being a broken individual from a broken house" but had found the space now to grow in and grow from.

Andrew spent 4 years with his foster carers. He saw a lot of other children go through the house. Some benefited from the situation and from him, but others simply didn't realize what they had. He saw and observed his foster parents strength of communication and the mutual support afforded by the bond, good communication brings to families. The gratitude which flows from this young adult to his foster parents appears as palpable as an unbreakable cord between his heart and theirs.

Andrew's success began with his self determination which was fostered and fuelled by a society determined to help. Today Andrew has multitudes of accomplishments to his name. He has achieved an Honors degree in Performance Studies (Distinction), has traveled overseas on a scholarship, has partaken and achieved success in many poetry competitions, has written 5 - 10 books and is a qualified ballroom and Latin dance teacher. How many of us could maintain such drive and determination? The courage to succeed, to overcome adversity, to accept help and to love, worked at through self determination is what enabled Andrew to achieve his goals, but gratitude will probably ultimately be his greatest virtue. What great hope we have for society through foster care!

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.

STATE FOSTER CARE CONFERENCE



The conference was well attended with a mix of carers and staff from agencies and the Department of Human Services. Carers really appreciate the opportunity provided by conferences to participate alongside workers as equal partners in the foster care team.

Laurel Downey's engaging presentation on the 'Implications of Trauma Theory or Children in Out of Home Care' delivered many fresh ideas and was described in glowing terms. Information about new developments was provided by the Child Safety Commissioner Bernie Geary and the Working with Children Check Unit from the Department of Justice. These presentations generated great interest.

The diverse array and excellent quality of workshops ensured something for everyone with the main complaint being too many choices and not enough time! Practical information provided by carers Allan and Carol Sharpe through their workshop "Risky Business – Allegations Support" was very well received. We will explore how we can make this more widely available.

The panel focused on "Support What Helps and What Doesn't" provided some moving presentations from the entire range of home based carers – foster, kinship and permanent carers. Needs of foster carers were strongly expressed as were needs of kinship and permanent carers with extremely alarming situations resulting from lack of both service and financial support being described where the safety and stability of children has clearly been jeopardized.

This was the first time we have provided child care and it was very popular and successful. A big thankyou to CREATE who provided activities for the children ensuring they had a great day.

An addition to the conference this year was the 'Super Support Awards' given to agencies in recognition of their great work in supporting carers. We decided to award the carer Certificates of Recognition at a special 'Foster Care Celebration Day' which will be held during Foster Care Week in September. Nominations for certificates recognition received so far were displayed via a power point presentation throughout the day at the conference.

A big thankyou to committee members, carers, volunteers, agency and departmental staff and to CREATE for making this such a successful day.

NB Conference proceedings can be found on our web site www.fcav.org

CONGRATULATIONS



"Congratulations to the FCAV on a most successful conference. This annual conference offers a unique opportunity for professional workers to gain a glimpse into the world of foster care, from the caregivers' perspective. I attended this year's conference with two new colleagues and we all agree that it was a very useful training experience. We look forward to accessing the conference papers and notes from the FCAV website, and sharing them with other workers and carers in our team".

Janet Elefsiniotis
Family Services Leader
Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service

SUPER SUPPORT AWARDS

The FCAV introduced Super Support Awards for agencies at the State Foster Care Conference to highlight the importance of supporting carers. Support to carers is vital in ensuring carers are able to provide good care for children. It is also extremely important in improving the retention rates of carers. Awards were as follows:



Regional

Community Connections (Vic) Ltd for their “Share the Care” and “Foster Carers Network” programmes.

The Share the Care program is a planned response to support each long term placement where a ‘Share Care’ family becomes part of the child’s extended family and undertakes the diversity of support roles that extended families usually take on. They are accredited and take up their role as part of the ‘parenting team’ supporting the child and his/her long term carer as the need arises. For example the Share Care family enables the foster care family to have a planned break or emergency breaks in case of stress or unexpected contingencies. Sometimes the support offered is the lynch pin holding the placement together.

Carer support “As a foster carer of 19 years, I would not still be a carer if our agency had not come up with such a supportive program that “share the care” is. It allows you flexibility with the juggling act and pressures from day to day events. Our family could not continue with fostering without this great programme.”

The Foster Carers Network provides support to foster carers. It encourages belonging and commitment to the Agency, provides a Buddy System to support new carers and provides on-going training to develop best practice skills in all carers.

Like to know more? Contact: Jane Chin, Warrnambool Community Connections ph. 55 71071071

Super Support Metropolitan

Anglicare Yarra Ranges for their “Friends” programme.

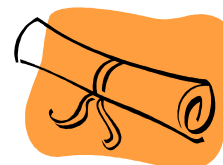
The friends program transports foster children to appointments and access, provides child care when carers need to attend appointments or commitments where they are unable to take their children with them and provides outings for foster children during school holidays. They also help foster children with homework or become mentors for foster children. Through all of these activities, friendships develop and the child’s place in the community is strengthened whilst the foster family is assisted to manage the multiplicity of demands that fostering children involves.

Carer support: “the support provided by the Friends programme is really valuable for busy carers.”
“It’s great to know that there is help with the many extras that don’t always fit into our busy schedule.”

Like to know more? Contact Judy Davidson, Anglicare Yarra Ranges, Ph 9725 1622

SUPER SUPPORT AWARDS

Barry Neale Award for Innovative Support to Foster Carers



The late Barry Neale was a staunch advocate for children and young people in care and a tireless campaigner for support for carers. The FCAV decided to create this award in memory of Barry and the enormous contribution he has made to foster care in Victoria.

Barry and his wife Liz have been foster carers for 16 years providing respite, short and long term as well as permanent care for a wide variety of children including children and young people with disabilities.

Barry was involved with the FCAV for approximately 13 years undertaking roles as Secretary, Vice President and Treasurer. Barry represented the FCAV and carers on several policy and stakeholder working groups including the CREATE "Face to Face" initiative and the "Leaving Care" working group. His excellent knowledge of the care system and passion for improving the system for children and young people assisted him in this important work.

Barry, in collaboration with Janice Hughes and Janet Brooks, was also heavily involved in supporting carers with the various issues they needed assistance with. This team of committed carers provided strong support to fellow carers over many years. The FCAV is now in process of developing a Help Line to extend this important work. Given this huge contribution, the FCAV committee of management have created this award as a tribute to him.

Barry Neale Award For an innovative support program or project

Awarded to St Lukes Anglicare, Loddon Mallee for their innovative "Back Pack" project.

The back packs are provided to all children coming into care. They are intended to meet children's immediate and longer term needs and to be a support to carers in easing a child's transition into care and providing practical assistance to carers, especially for emergency placements. Packs include a range of items including backpack, torch, camera, photo album, personal toileting items, pyjamas, underwear, socks, nappies, sunhat, drink bottle/sipper, book/toy/DVD suitable for the age.

Carer Support: "Carer pack is a great idea and makes life a little easier and happier for all. Excellent!"
"I was absolutely rapt – the care packs were fantastic! I was surprised there was so much in them."
"The children in care felt that they were their own things in the pack and it gave them a sense of ownership."

**Like to know more? Contact Kaye Berlin, Manager Foster Care Programme @ St Lukes Bendigo,
Ph 54 401100**

BOOK REVIEW



"Mixed Blessings" – one woman's heartwarming story of her life fostering Australian children, by Deborah Lee, to be published in 2006, Bantam, RRP: \$32.95

Mixed Blessings should be compulsory reading for all people thinking about becoming foster parents. In fact, I think agencies should provide it at their training sessions. It will then sort out all the people who could cope with foster parenting and the ones who could not cope with the inevitable stealing, walls smeared with faeces, the difficulties of dealing with birth parents and the endless screaming of babies who are withdrawing from drugs.

Mixed Blessings is also interesting as an autobiography. Lee writes in a chatty style about her marriage to Cedric, son of retailer Bing Lee, their struggles to adopt children, her three adopted children and her experiences as a foster parent. Deborah is feisty, funny and a true survivor.

Reviewed by Katy Gerner ,courtesy of Foster Care Association NSW (Inc) Thanks Katy!

GREAT SUPPORT IDEAS

It was hard to decide which initiatives to give awards to as there were several excellent ones. We have included all nominations in the newsletter to provide inspiration!



BERRY STREET HUME – ROVING RESOURCES

Every six weeks, four localities in the Hume region are visited, taking along toys and equipment. Morning and afternoon tea is provided using carers homes as the venue. Carers are able to borrow toys and equipment. The gathering is also an opportunity to do some short training sessions and circulate articles.

BERRY STREET NORTHERN

Has a group of dedicated/experienced carers who provide mentoring/support to all new carers. These mentors assist in resourcing placements and provide practical advice to carers about managing children. They also attempt to provide social opportunities for the carers.

KOORIE CARE

Special mention to Koorie Care from carers who commented on the tremendous work that Koorie Care workers have done in supporting and reassuring them. Carers are very grateful for the caring and sharing of information together with the books and pamphlets that help them to be kept in the loop.

OZ CHILD INITIATIVES

ONCALL SERVICE

Oz Child introduced a dedicated on-call/after hours service in 2003 as a support for home based carers. The service operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and aims to improve support and supervision of carers through consistent after hours staff with whom carers are able to develop some familiarity.

EMPLOYMENT OF A HBC CARER WITHIN RECRUITMENT TEAM

In July 2005, Oz Child and Peninsula Youth & Family Services both received funding from DHS to employ an accredited home based/carer to participate in a regional recruitment strategy within the Frankston catchment area. The Carer has worked 2 days a week with Oz Child over the past 9 months within the recruitment team – this has been a very positive experience.

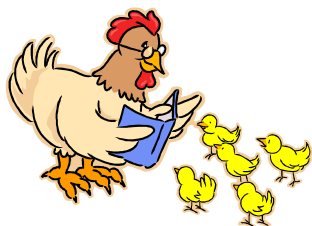
BUDDY SERVICE

This service builds upon the concept of carer peer support (carers supporting carers) Buddies are matched with carers accredited over the last 12 months and all newly accredited carers in an ongoing way. This is a response to the need to provide better support to new carers and hopefully extend carers involvement in foster care!

YOUTH CONNECT PROGRAM – COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

A newly established ACP program for teenagers 12 – 17 yrs in Geelong which prides itself on responding to enquiries within 3 days. Youth Connect gets special mention from its carers who judge the program to be very professional in ensuring that teenagers are placed with appropriate foster carers. It has been commented that Youth Connect “go the extra mile” .

SAGE COTTAGE FARM : an innovative program for vulnerable children



Menzies Inc. have created an Animal Assisted Therapy program incorporating Creative Arts Therapy for children who have been exposed to family violence, abuse or neglect.

Animal Assisted Therapy involves the thoughtful use of animals in a therapeutic setting by a trained clinician who develops goals for each client. Programs are built around three key competencies: trust, empathy and mastery. These elements are considered intrinsic to healing

damaged and at risk children. Anger management is also addressed. Children and young people are able to work with clinicians in small groups or on an individual basis.

The local community plays a vital role in the success of the farm incorporating school students and volunteers in a variety of ways. Sage Cottage Farm incorporates Menzies Inc. core values of safety and respect and works closely with Monash University to negotiate evaluation of selected programs.

To make a referral or find out more information about the Animal Assisted Therapy program, please ring Kate Perry on (03) 5971 5964, or email her at perryk@menzies.org.au.

ROBIN CLARK MEMORIAL AWARDS 2006 Call for Nominations



Recognising excellence in working with children, youth and families

The Victorian Government invites nominations for the Robin Clark Memorial Awards 2006.

Through the Awards the Government seeks to recognise and encourage work, of the highest standards, which improves the lives of vulnerable children, young people and families in Victoria.

The Awards are dedicated to the memory of Robin Dennis Clark (1936–2001), a widely respected, inspirational leader and role model in the field of child, youth and family welfare.

The Awards are aimed at volunteers, and individuals or groups from community, government, and academic organisations. Nominees should have made a significant contribution, either in service provision or practice based research, to the Victorian child and family services sector.

Awards are offered in two categories:

Inspirational Leadership in the Field

Making a Difference with Children, Young People and Families.

The Minister for Children will announce recipients at an official evening function on Tuesday 5 September 2006. Nominations open Monday 29 May, and must be received by close of business Friday 7 July 2006.

Download the Awards Information Pack and Nomination Form now from

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/robinclarkmemorialawards>

Please refer any questions to Linda Doble at email Linda.Doble@dhs.vic.gov.au

IFCO XV BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL FOSTER CARE CONFERENCE



The Biennial International Foster Care Organisation Conference will be held at the Waikato University, 5 minutes from Hamilton, in New Zealand. The University sits on New Zealand's most beautiful campus in nearly 70 hectares of park-like surrounds.

The Conference will run from Sunday 11 February through to Friday 16 February 2007, the theme being "*Fostering our Taonga (children are our treasure as are those who care for them).*"

Each day the Conference will be run with a supporting theme. Day 1 will be taken up with an official welcome and formalities and an informal "mix and mingle" session. The theme "*Families/Whanau are our treasure*" will be the focus of Day 2 and Day 3 the theme will be "*Communities are our treasure.*" Day 4 will be a free day and several sightseeing trips are available for this day. Day 5 the theme "*Developing new treasures*", centered around the Chinese proverb, "*Learning is weightless, a treasure you can always carry easily*" will be conducted and on Day 6 the Conference will conclude, with feedback from the Youth Programme and a closing ceremony with a Maori theme - "*Poroporaki – traditional Maori farewell*".

Casual childcare places will be available through the Campus Crèche and single room accommodation is available offering bed and continental breakfast at approximately \$60.00 per night.

This is a great opportunity to find out what is happening in foster care in other parts of the world. If you are interested in attending we suggest you contact your agency and see if any assistance can be made available to enable you to attend.

For more information, please go to www.ifconz07.org.nz.

WEBSITE FOR KIDS AND CARERS

KidsHealth (<http://kidshealth.org/kid/>)

KidsHealth covers health related topics in a kid-friendly way, including 'dealing with feelings', 'my body', 'growing up' and 'people, places and things that help me'. There are some great recipes for kids, including recipes for vegetarians, people with diabetes, celiac disease, lactose intolerance or cystic fibrosis. There are also some online games and activities to make learning fun!

“WELFARE TO WORK” AND FOSTER CARE



Late last year the Federal Government passed welfare reform legislation commonly known as “Welfare to Work”. Under these provisions, all people on Parenting Payment will be moved to Newstart Allowance once their youngest child turns eight. They are then expected to look for, or obtain, paid work for a minimum of 15 hours a week. This is to start on **1 July 2006**.

Foster carers will be **automatically exempt** from the provision to look for paid work for up to 12 months. Carers on Parenting Payment **will be moved to the Newstart Allowance**, but they will receive a top up payment so that the money they receive will total the same amount they are currently receiving. Carers will also be required to register with an employment service.

Foster carers must be **accredited or approved** and **current** carers to receive this exemption. At this stage, all home based carers are covered (general, permanent care and kinship care). The general requirement is that the foster child has been subject to Child Protection involvement.

Proof that the carer is approved and active must be given by the carer to Centrelink when requested. This will take the form of a certificate or document from DHS.

These certificates are not yet available, so the process for current foster carers will take some time. It is expected that the certificate will be valid for twelve months to tie in with the twelve month’s exemption from the requirement to look for paid work. New carers will need proof of their fostering role to obtain the exemption.

Each carer’s exemption will be reviewed every year, which is usual Centrelink policy. A new certificate from DHS will therefore be issued each year.

Carers will no doubt need patience, as the Centrelink staff will also be getting used to a new system. If you are having problems, the relevant guideline to quote to Centrelink is: Guide to Social Security Law made pursuant to section 5B(2) of the *Employment and Workplace Relations Legislations Amendment Welfare to Work and Other measures) Act 2005*.

Helen Falconer

BOOK FOR ABORIGINAL CHILDREN IN CARE



“My home in Kakadu” by Jane Christopherson, illustrated by Christine Christophersen, Magabala Books, 2005

My Home in Kakadu is a picture book written by an 81 year old Bunitj elder, illustrated by her daughter and told through the eyes of her granddaughter Tarrah.

The book explains about the animals and plants of the area, cooking, hunting and gathering procedures and the six seasons of the year and what foods you can expect to find in them.

A page from the book reads: “Most people in the Northern Territory know only two seasons, the Wet and the Dry, but Aboriginal people know six seasons. Each season has its own bush fruit so when one is finished, another fruit is ready to pick. When the rivers flood, we go hunting for the goannas that shelter in the trees. We catch them by pulling on their tails and dragging them into our boat”.

This is a wonderful book. It’s educational, interesting, beautifully illustrated (the artist received a “highly commended” in the Telstra Art Awards) and the author is a foster mother, who has fostered dozens of children! I definitely recommend it.

For more information on books from Magabala, visit their web site at www.magabala.co. Magabala Books is a not-for-profit Aboriginal Corporation that aims to promote, preserve and publish Indigenous Australian culture.

Reviewed by Katy Gerner ,courtesy of Foster Care Association NSW (Inc) Thanks Katy!

2006 BUDGET - WHAT'S IN IT FOR FAMILIES?

Each year, as a service to its Members, Families Australia provides an overview of key features of the Australian Government Budget relevant to families.



Carers

Government will provide a \$1,000 bonus payment to recipients of the Carer Payment and a \$600 bonus payment to recipients of the Carer Allowance, by 30 June 2006. Cost: \$358 million. The \$1,000 payment will also be made to people who receive Carer Allowance and either the Wife Pension, or the Veterans' Affairs Partner Service Pension.

Family Tax Benefit

In 2006-07, Government will spend \$28 billion in assistance to families with children, up from \$14 billion in 1996-97. From 1 July 2006, more families will receive the maximum FTB rate — they will now be able to earn \$40,000 a year (up from \$33,361 in 2005-06) without having their entitlement reduced. This measure will provide increases in FTB Part A of up to \$9.62 a week for about half a million families annually, delivering over \$993 million in additional payments over four years. Government will extend eligibility for the Large Family Supplement of \$248 a year to families with three children with effect from 1 July 2006. Cost: \$497 million over four years.

Child care places

From 1 July 2006 Government will remove the cap on the number of outside school hours care and family day care places. Cost: \$60 million over four years. An estimated additional 25,000 child care places will be created. Overall, child care places are expected to increase to more than 700,000 by 2009, compared to 307,000 in 1996. Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Child Care funding will be increased by \$9.4 million to help parents undertaking activities such as job search, work or training with the costs of approved child care. There will be increased checking of child care services through a compliance and quality program. Cost: \$50.8 million. Better information will be provided on availability of places for parents as part of a new National Child Care Management System (funding to be announced).

Child Support Scheme

CSS will be reformed and the Child Support Agency's service capacity will be upgraded. Cost: \$877 million

Indigenous Australians

Government will provide an additional \$488 million (including \$115 million in capital) over five years to improve Indigenous outcomes. Priorities include - \$129 million for housing initiatives, including greater access to finance and financial management services. \$67 million for education initiatives, including expanding the tutorial assistance programme and sporting academies. \$61 million for health initiatives, such as improving access to mainstream health services. \$55 million to help combat petrol sniffing, including further roll-out of non-sniffable Opal fuel, as well as prevention, diversion and rehabilitation strategies. \$48 million for the development of community stores to improve health and business activity. \$28 million to improve the governance of Indigenous organisations. \$23 million to enhance community leadership. \$3 million to assist the development of welfare reform trial in four Cape York communities to improve incentives to study and work and outcomes for children.

Education

\$40.8 million over four years for the *English as a Second Language – New Arrivals (ESL)* programme. \$5.8 million over two years for a pilot study to examine current funding arrangements for students with disabilities and ways to maximise portability of funding to support parental choice. \$59.5 million over five years to assist a further 38,250 young people through the Youth Pathways programme, including those with a mental illness, to remain engaged in education. \$34.9 million over four years for the Partnership Outreach Education Model to assist around 12,000 young people to re-engage with education and training after dropping out of school. An additional \$106.7 million over four years for New Apprenticeships Centres. \$10.6 million over four years to extend incentives for employers of higher level New Apprentices in key growth areas.

Drug and alcohol abuse

An extra \$79 million for initiatives to address drug and alcohol abuse, including \$48 million to combat psychostimulant and cannabis use, will be provided.

MUMS THE WORD



FOSTERING: GAY AND LESBIAN CARERS.

On any one night in Victoria, 2700 children and young people are safe and sound in the care of foster caregivers, yet children in need of foster care far out number the caregivers available. An initiative taken by City of Yarra foster care agency Share Care to address this challenge is to recruit more Lesbian and Gay foster carers from the local community.

"I'm constantly surprised that so many lesbians and gay men don't yet realise that they do have the option to foster. We urgently need more kind, good-hearted people who are willing to open up their homes to kids in need of some extra nurture and care," says Share Care worker Janet Elefsiniotis.

Share Care strongly supports the view that a person's sexuality should not be a criterion in relation to foster parenting. "I've been assessing people for fostering for the last 15 years and in that time we've been recruiting gay and lesbian singles and couples and they're great foster parents. Foster care offers the chance to actually do something, to make a difference, to touch the lives of others and in doing so, maybe become more in touch with your own," says Elefsiniotis.

Unlike Share Care, most foster care agencies do not actively promote, recruit or target the gay community and consequently, a valuable and willing section of the population is bypassed. As a group, gay and lesbians remain a largely untapped resource when it comes to foster care. Janet adds, "Gender preference is irrelevant in ascertaining whether or not a person is caring and capable and has the ability to relate sensitively and appropriately to children in their care."

In the last decade there has been a rise in the number of lesbians and gay men forming their own families through foster care and other means, despite traditional societal values that continue to be placed on our community. As Janet points out, "All the available evidence demonstrates that sexual orientation of parents has no impact on the sexual orientation of their children. A recent report by the APA (American Psychological Association) observed that 'not a single study has found children of gay or lesbian parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect, relative to children of heterosexual parents.' In fact there is some evidence to show that children of gay and lesbian families learn to be more tolerant of diversity."

FACTS & FIGURES

Victoria's anti-discrimination legislation makes it illegal to discriminate against same sex couples that are seeking to become foster parents on the basis of their sexual orientation. However Victorian Law prohibits gay men and women from adopting children or accessing reproductive technology.

In 2002 the British Parliament passed the Adoption & Children Bill enabling unmarried couples, including gay and lesbian couples to jointly adopt children. This brings Britain into line with the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, some US states, Canada and in Australia; WA, Tasmania and more recently Canberra.

Children are a part of between 20-40% of gay and lesbian families in Victoria and NSW. Studies have concluded that between 2% and 5% of gay and lesbian couples who want to have families, do so by fostering or adopting. For more information about becoming/a foster carer call the Share Care Hotline 1800 013 088 or directly on (03) 9417 1288.

SUPPORT GROUPS
Prospective Lesbian
Parents
 (03) 9513 1412
 plpvc@hotmail.com

The VGLRL is a lobby group that aims to achieve equality and social justice for lesbians and gay men. They can be contacted at -

www.vglrl.org.au

FCAV MEMBERSHIP

The FCAV Executive and Committee of Management encourage you to become a FCAV Member. This will allow you to vote at Annual General Meetings and Special or General 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 **(03) 9489 9119**
Vic 3070

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**