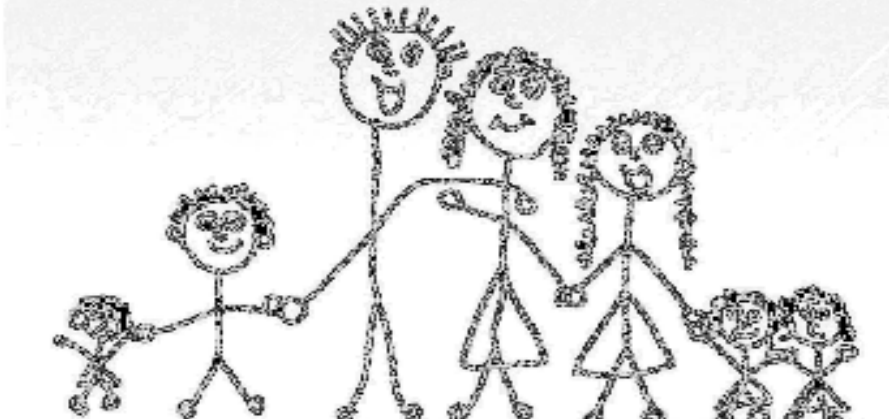




VICTORIAN HOME BASED CARE CONFERENCE

Victorian Home Based Care Conference

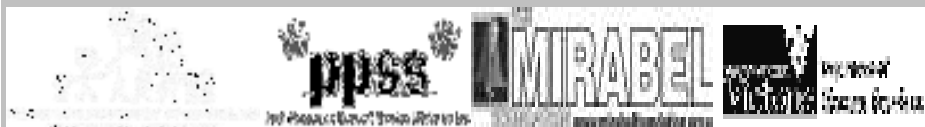
2020 Summit on Home Based Care



“Caring for Carers”

Saturday 10th May 2008

MC Chris Keogh: Actor & Film maker, who has generously donated her time!



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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Summit on Home Based Care 2

Carers & the Legislative Reforms 3-5

Kinship Care 6-8

Child Support Scheme 9

NSW Foster Care Conference 10

Family Relationships 11

Contact Details 12

2020 SUMMIT ON HOME BASED CARE

Facilitator—Chris Keogh, Actor & Filmmaker

Victorian Home Based Care Conference



How should home based care look in 2020?

How can we improve the system?

What needs to be fixed?

40% of carers leave within 2 years of becoming carers – how can we stop the drift?

The number of children and young people coming into care is increasing
– how can we stem the tide?

Is the system acting in the best interests of children?

What are the solutions?

TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE YOUR SAY

On Saturday 10th May, 2008

At the Victorian Home Based Care Conference

If you can't make it to the conference, please send us your ideas by 10th May so that we include them in a meeting we have requested with Minister Neville following the Conference.

Ideas for the 2020 summit on Out of Home Care can be emailed to admin@fcav.org or posted to 2020 Summit on Out of Home Care, Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc, P.O. Box 729, Northcote, 3070

CARERS & THE LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

Carers Rights to Involvement in Decision Making and Information about children in their care



It was heartening to see that the new legislation emphasized the importance of carers being involved in the decision making process and having access to information. The letter sent by Christina Asquini, DHS, to DHS staff and Community Service Organizations in December, 2007 alerting them to this was also warmly welcomed by the FCAV. However, it is disappointing that we continue to receive calls from carers who are not being involved in planning and decision making or given the information they need about children in their care.

We are therefore reprinting the relevant extracts from the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, the Child Protection Practice Manual and the Home Based Carers Handbook so that carers can refer workers to these documents if they are not being involved in decision making about children in their care or given sufficient information.

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005

Part 1.2, Division 3 - 1.1. Decision making principles

- (b) Where a child is placed in out of home care, the child's care giver should be consulted as part of the decision-making process and given the opportunity to contribute to the process.
- (d) The views of all persons who are directly involved in the decision should be taken into account;
- (e) Decisions are to be reached by collaboration and consensus, wherever practicable;
- (f) The child and all relevant family members (except if their participation would be detrimental to the safety or wellbeing of the child) should be encouraged and given adequate opportunity to participate fully in the decision-making process;
- (g) States that the decision-making process should be conducted in such a way that the persons involved are able to participate in and understand the process, including any meetings that are held and decisions that are made;
- (h) Persons involved in the decision-making process should be –
 - (i) Provided with sufficient information, in a language and by a method that they can understand, and through an interpreter if necessary, to allow them to participate fully in the process; and
 - (ii) Given a copy of any proposed case plan and sufficient notice of any meeting proposed to be held; and
 - (iii) Provided with the opportunity to involve others persons to assist them to participate fully in the process.

CARERS & THE LEGISLATIVE REFORMS continued

The Home Based Carers handbook p18 states that carers can expect

“to receive copies of the endorsed Best Interests Plan unless there are exceptional circumstances or it is not in the best interests of the child or young person to provide this.

They will be invited to attend planning meetings, or if this is not appropriate, the best interests planner will arrange a separate alternative meeting with them.”

Information for carers:

Part 4.3, Division 3 – 179 – Responsibility of Secretary or out of home care service to provide information to carers

(1) If the Secretary or an out of home care service intends to place a child in the care of person other than the parent of the child, the Secretary or out of home care service must provide the carer with all information that is known to the Secretary or the service that is reasonably necessary to assist the carer to make an informed decision as to whether or not to accept the care of the child.

(2) If the Secretary or an out of home care service has placed a child in the care of a person other than the parent of the child, the Secretary or out of home care service Must provide the carer with any information known to the Secretary or the service regarding the medical status of the child to enable the carer to provide appropriate care for the child.

The Child Protection Practice Manual advice number 1403: Information sharing in out of home care summarizes the legislative obligations and specifically advises: “Child Protection practitioners must use and disclose personal information in the best interests of the child in a way that ensures good quality care is provided and ensures their safety, stability and development, and at the same time protects their privacy.

Although the need to know particular personal information can only be determined on a case by case basis, it must again be emphasized that those who have a direct involvement in the provision of out of home care will generally need to collect and use all relevant personal information in order to provide good care. This includes home-based carers who have 24 hour direct care of a child.”

The Home Based Care handbook expresses these requirements more simply “Carers must be given the information they need to provide good care for a child or young person. This information should be provided to the carer before or at the time the placement is made, or as soon as possible thereafter.”

CARERS & THE LEGISLATIVE REFORMS continued

Stability Planning

We also continue to receive calls from carers seeking information about stability plans as they are concerned about plans to move children who have been settled in placements for several years.

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 , Part 4.3, Division 1 – 170. Preparation of stability plan.

- (2) The stability plan for a child must be prepared by the required time after an interim accommodation order or protection order or either of them placing the child in out of home care is first made by a court for the child.
- (3) The required time for completing a stability plan is –
 - (a) 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 or more periods totaling 12 months;
 - (b) in the case of a child who is 2 years of age but under 7 years of ages at the date of the order, once that child has been in out of home care for a period of or periods totaling 18 months;
- (4) A stability plan can only be prepared for a child who is in out of home care.
- (5) The Secretary must provide a copy of a stability plan within 6 weeks after it is prepared to –
 - (a) The parent of the child; and
 - (b) If the child is of or above the age of 12 years, the child.

THANKYOU VERY MUCH

The Victorian Home Based conference would like to thank Australia Post, Beraldo Coffee and Cricket Victoria for their generous donations. Thankyou also to the Australian College of Natural Medicine who have kindly make the team of masseurs available to pamper our conference delegates.



KINSHIP CARE - NOT JUST A FAMILY MEMBER

Questions:

Are you caring for your grandchildren on a full time basis? Yes No

Are you caring for your nieces or nephews on a full time basis? Yes No

Are you undertaking the care of these children because their parents are unable to care for them adequately themselves? Yes No

Have the children been placed in your care by a government agency or by the Courts? Yes No

Have you taken the children into your care in consultation and agreement with the children's parents because you have recognised that the children are being neglected or abused? Yes No

Have you taken the children in to you care, along with their parents because you recognised the children were being neglected or abused? Yes No

Have you taken these children into your care despite their parents because you recognised the children were being neglected or abused? Yes No

If you have answered yes to any of these questions you are not alone

Increasingly, thousands of extended families across Australia are being impacted by the growing need for kinship care due to parental drug use, alcoholism, mental health issues, domestic violence, poverty and countless other causes resulting in the neglect and abuse of children.

While some States across Australia have undertaken a very proactive approach in supporting kinship carers, other States are falling behind. Different budgeting allowances along with different child protection strategies and guidelines across each State have resulted in a variety of kinship models, with most relying on a statutory, or Court, placement before any assistance is made available to kinship carers. The one thing everyone seems to agree on however is that the costs of raising these children, both financially and emotionally, are substantial.

The Foster Care Association of Victoria is hoping to raise the profile of both statutory and non-statutory kinship carers, with a view to encouraging the Australian State and Federal Government to ensure an appropriate and standardised level of financial and services support is available for all kinship carers across Australia. It has been suggested that the best way to do this is by introducing a Federal Kinship Payment. What do you think about these ideas?

In order to do encourage State and Federal governments to take action on these issues, we need to know your story. Anecdotal evidence will provide us with a real look at kinship care in Australia, and impress on our Federal politicians the very real needs of these families and the amazing job they do to protect their own. While studies are done regularly on these types of issues, the actual story rarely is presented. Rather, we submit numbers and statistics and estimates without considering the actual impacts for families undertaking kinship care and all the associated elements this entails.

KINSHIP CARE - NOT JUST A FAMILY MEMBER

If you are happy to share your story with us, please provide a half to one page synopsis of your situation. We do not need actual names so please use false names for both yourselves and the children. Our aim here is not to highlight any one family, but rather to show our politicians the enormity of what you are all dealing with.

You may wonder who I am - I am a non-statutory kinship carer. My story follows.....

One story of non-statutory kinship care

(real names have not been used and identifying information has been removed)

My name is Bev. I am 40 years old and I have been with my partner Pete, 55 years, for about 11 years now. Since January 2006, we have been caring for Pete's two grandsons, Cameron, nearly 12 and Leslie, nearly 5.

We had looked after Cameron once before. He and his mother Marlene moved in with us when we were living interstate back in 1998. Cameron was only about two and a half at the time and he stayed with us, with and without Marlene, for a bit over three years, before we returned to Melbourne for work. It was in the lead up to Marlene and Cameron moving in with us that we first learned of Marlene's heroin addiction and it was while she was living with us that we learned of her additional struggle with alcohol.

By the time we returned to Melbourne, Marlene had returned from a nine month trip to Far North Queensland with William, the man whom she would ultimately have Leslie with. After her return, we went through an odd sort of visitation process with her staying at her mother's full time and taking Cameron for weekend visits. When we returned to Melbourne, Marlene and Cameron were living interstate with Marlene's mum, Jennifer and things seemed to be going okay.

In the years that followed, Marlene seemed to get a handle on her addictions and her relationship with William grew stronger. They moved to Central Victoria where Cameron was enrolled in school and William worked as a labourer. In June 2003 Leslie was born and they all seemed to be doing well. By July 2004, both Marlene and William were back using drugs and alcohol, and the boys had been placed in temporary foster care after a car accident saw both Marlene and William hospitalised after William drove up the back of a truck while stoned - the boys were both in the car at the time.

Marlene and William moved back to QLD under a supervision order - there appears to have been little to no follow up of this order however as the next 18 months saw Cameron raising Leslie while Marlene and William battled it out in a drug and alcohol fuelled violent home life.

In December 2005, three months after Marlene, William and the boys had moved back in with Marlene's mum Jennifer, Marlene had a psychotic breakdown. This followed a 3 day alcohol binge which ended in Cameron calling the police after Marlene began physically attacking Jennifer. Marlene was admitted to a mental health ward in a local hospital and Jennifer called us, pleading with us to come and see what we could do to fix things.

KINSHIP CARE - NOT JUST A FAMILY MEMBER

After a week of talking and negotiating and offering countless rehabilitation options, we booked tickets to return to Melbourne, having solved nothing. Then, Marlene disappeared from the hospital with William. While they both surfaced the next day it was clear to all of us that they were by no means stable, but they were ready to run, with or without the children, depending on their mood at the time. So, Peter spoke with Marlene and finally convinced her to allow us to bring the boys back to Melbourne. Marlene was to follow within a month and enrol in Odyssey House, and once she had completed her rehabilitation, we would then support her and the boys as she continued life on her own, without drugs and alcohol...Marlene agreed.

It is now March 2008. I don't know where Marlene is - we assume she is alive as her child support payment of \$6 a week is still coming through. As for William, he is now taking us to Court for access to both boys - he is not listed on birth certificates for either of the boys, and we know he is not Cameron's father, but according to the Courts, that is his right.

I took a 'Career Break' in February 2006 in order to care for the boys full time. Cameron is a handful to say the least. He is angry, hurt, disrespectful, loving, caring, funny and keen to be a criminologist when he gets older. Cameron wants nothing to do with his mother or with William.

When we took Leslie in, we had only met him five times - once when he was born, again at six months old and then three times during the week we were interstate prior to bringing him to Melbourne. After his arrival he didn't smile much and he didn't laugh at all - he also never asked about his mother or father - he still hasn't. He loves shoulder rides with Pops and he adores going to kinder. Oh, and he is obsessed with dinosaurs!

Financially this has devastated us. As I am not working, Pete's wage needs to stretch to everything from the mortgage to the credit cards, clothes, food, bills, birthday's, Christmas, doctors appointments, medications, everything. We took out a loan after the boys arrived to try and consolidate some expenses, but the costs just keep coming. One of these expenses was my private health cover. Ironically I went to my doctor with a painful knee about ten months after dropping my private hospital cover. As a result I have been on a waiting list for a public hospital appointment for 15 months now, and I fear this will only confirm my doctor's diagnosis - it won't solve the problem.

We have huffed and puffed at our State Government departments and politicians over the last two years, but to no avail. We remain in the abyss of non-statutory kinship care. We know the boys, in particular Cameron, need specialised counselling, but we cannot afford it. We need legal representation in our current court matter with William, but we cannot afford it. We know Peter and I need separate and collective family counselling to help us adjust to the challenges that now lay before us, but we cannot afford it.

It is a daunting thing to know you will never retire. It is an equally daunting thing to wrap your mind around the fact that the life you have planned for yourself has now gone - you are now living someone else's.

'Bev,' kinship carer.



Am I eligible for child support?

If you have care of grandchild/ren who are under the age of 18 years of age, you can receive child support from one or both parents of the children if you apply to the Child Support Agency (CSA) for a child support assessment.

The new Child Support Scheme

From 1 July 2008 the Child Support Scheme will change. Under the new scheme there will be some changes to the way child support is assessed for non-parent carers. A non-parent carer includes grandparents with care of a child under 18 years of age.

Child support payable to non-parent carers will still be worked out using a formula based on both of the parents' incomes, cost percentages and child support percentages – similar to how it is worked out for parents. This helps ensure that both parents contribute to the ongoing costs of raising their children. The amount of care each parent has will also be taken into account.

However only the non-parent carer's cost percentage, based on your percentage of care for the child/ren, is relevant to working out how much child support is payable. Your income is not taken into account. Your percentage of care is based on the number of nights you have care of the child.

If you are a grandparent carer with significant regular daytime caring responsibilities and no night time responsibilities, CSA recommends you and the parent(s) make a parenting plan and provide a copy to CSA. The plan, which will outline how much time the child will be in your care and your care percentage, will ensure your arrangement is recognised for child support purposes.

Other Child Support products and services available to help you

The Me and My publications are a series booklets that provide practical advice for families after separation such as how to manage a budget and how to maintain a healthy relationship with the other parent or carer. These publications are available in English, Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Spanish and Turkish and can be ordered, along with other useful publications, from www.csa.gov.au or by phoning 1800 040 972.

More Information

For more information about CSA or how the new scheme will affect grandparents and other non-parent carers call 13 1272 or visit www.csa.gov.au

CONFERENCE
INVITATION



THE FOSTER PARENTS SUPPORT NETWORK



NSW
FOSTER CARE CONFERENCE 2008
"LOOKING FORWARD"

GREETINGS

The FPSN invite Foster, Relative, Kinship Carers and Professional Workers to the 2008 State Conference, taking place at the **Crowne Plaza Norwest Hotel**, Baulkham Hills.

Friday 13th June, with the Hon Kevin Greene officially opening the Conference at 9am.

Friday evening there will be a **Gala Dinner**. Saturday 14th June will commence at 9am and conclude with afternoon tea at 4pm.

This Conference has been heavily subsidized by the Department of Community Services to make it affordable for all Carers. There will be Carers from NSW and Interstate.

HIGHLIGHTS

Friday Keynote Speaker – Mary Ann Goodearle MS

"Foster Parenting – Excellence Through Teamwork".

Mary is the author of "A Guide to Foster Parenting Everything But the Kids". With her husband Allan, they join us from the United States of America.

Saturday Keynote Speaker – Dr. Stephanie Taplin

"Contact with Birth Parents – What Does the Research Say".

DINNER As it is Friday 13th, "BLACK & WHITE" will be the theme.

ACCOMODATION

Excellent on site accommodation at reduced rates. A booking form is included for you to confirm your reservation directly and accompanies this information. Identify yourself as a delegate of the FPSN Conference, we have booked rooms. Free on site parking. You will be responsible for all your hotel costs. The hotel has disability facilities.

REGISTRATION FEE INCLUDES

Chosen Conference package – morning and afternoon tea, lunch, pre dinner drinks, Gala Dinner (complimentary drinks) handouts. A Master of Ceremonies throughout the event.

DEADLINE/CANCELLATIONS

Registration closes May 30th. Should cancellation occur, your registration less 25% administration cost will be refunded on receipt of a written request at least ten days prior to the Conference.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Please advise of special needs – dietary or otherwise – at the time of registration.

TRAVEL

The Crowne Plaza Hotel is situated at **1 Columbia Court, Baulkham Hills** – 15 mins from Parramatta.

Transport from the Airport will be available, please advise your flight details to the FPSN when available.

Regional Carers – financial assistance may be considered, apply at the time of registration.



FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

www.familyrelationships.gov.au



Is a Federal Government Initiative which provides information about family relationship issues, ranging from building better relationships to dispute resolution for families which are together or separated.

Family Relationship is made up of a comprehensive website with information for children with links to the kids helpline and other information; for teenagers with links about dealing with arguments and problems and information for them when their parent's split up; for couples with information about new/formed relationships and the potential problems and changes; for parents with information about families, violence and money and information for separated parents and for grandparents who are involved in family separation.

The Family Relationship has an advice line, which is available 8 – 8pm, Monday to Friday and 10 – 4pm, Saturday.

1800 050 321

There are 40 Family Relationship Centres in Australia. The centres provide information for families, run public information suggestions, help families use other services, provide assistant for separating families.

The centres provide individual advice free of charge. Centres will provide up to three hours of joint dispute resolution sessions (such as mediation) free of charge.

In Victoria we currently have 10 centres across Victoria:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Ballarat
32 Main Road, Ballarat (interim site)
1300 303 988 | 6. Mildura
105 Lemon Avenue, Mildura
1300 667 382 |
| 2. Berwick
1-2, 38 Clyde Road, Berwick
(03) 8768 4111 | 7. Ringwood
68 Charter Street, Ringwood (interim site)
(03) 9871 6300 |
| 3. Frankston
37 Playne Street, Frankston
(03) 9770 0341 | 8. Sunshine
1 Clarke Street, Sunshine
(03) 9313 0444 |
| 4. Geelong
Suite 2, 27-31 Myers Street, Geelong
1300 656 043
(03) 5246 5600 | 9. Traralgon
41 Grey Street, Traralgon
(03) 5174 1055 |
| 5. Greensborough
79 Grimshaw Street, Greensbrough
(03) 9404 7800 | 10. Wodonga
282 Beechworth Road, Wodonga
(02) 60228644 |

**Foster Care
Association of
Victoria**

ABN 30 747 010 099

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NORTHCOTE, VIC, 3070**

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E-mail: Admin@fcav.org

DARE TO CARE

**We're on the web!
<http://www.fcav.org>**

FCAV Staff

**Executive Officer
Julien Leith**

&

**Office Coordinator
Jenny Clayfield**



**Have you changed your
contact details?**

We have been receiving quite a lot of “undeliverable email status notifications”. If your email address was among these, we have removed it from our database. This means that you will still receive correspondence from us however it will be sent out via the post.

If you have changed any of your contact details, please email admin@fcav.org to update your records.

Please include your postal address so that we can verify we are updating the correct record.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



Do you have any spare time?

Are you able to use Microsoft Office applications proficiently? In particular, do you have advanced skills in the use of Excel and knowledge of spreadsheets?

If this sounds like you please contact Jenny at admin@fcav.org or via phone on 94899 770

We would love to hear from you!

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