

Herald Sun

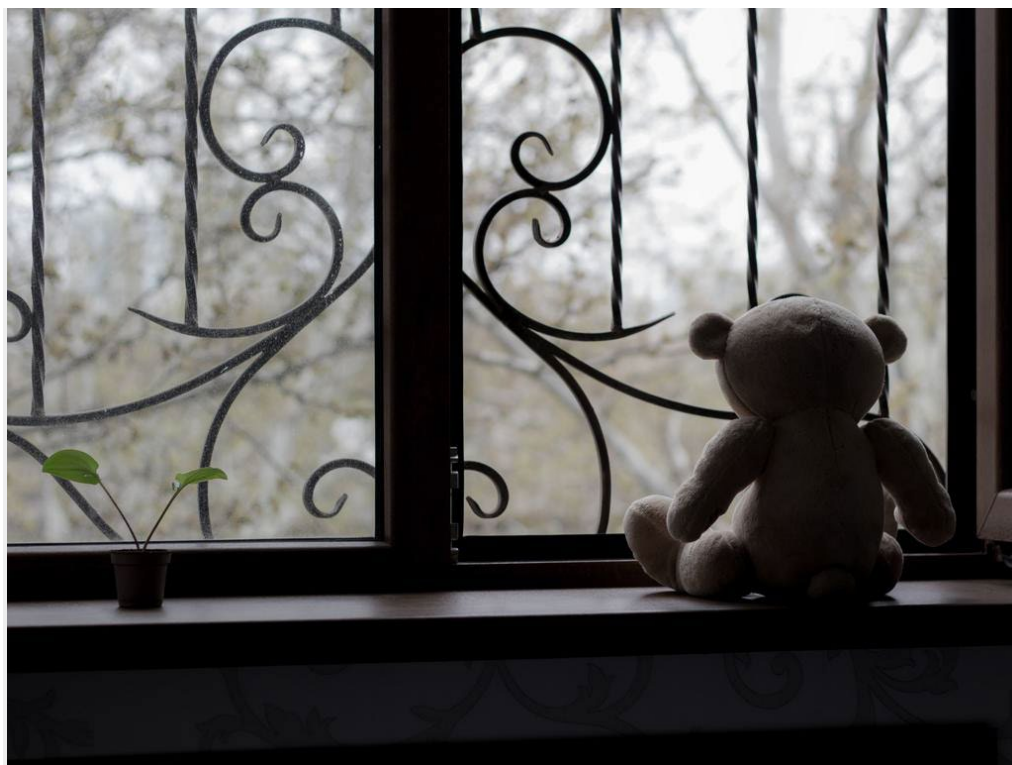
Foster carers sound alarm over Victoria paying lowest allowance in Australia

Struggling foster carers are deserting the industry in Victoria due to being paid the lowest allowances in the country to look after vulnerable children.

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2 min read

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Victoria pays foster carers the lowest allowance in the country.

Victorian foster carers are leaving the industry in droves [after years of being short-changed by the government](#), with some warning the state's most vulnerable kids will be forced into [troubled residential care homes](#).

Struggling carers are increasingly being expected to fork out thousands of dollars to look after a revolving door of foster kids as indexing on government payments rises by just 2 per cent a year, despite inflation hitting 6 per cent.

Victoria has the lowest care allowance rate for foster, kinship, and permanent care of anywhere in Australia.

Carers in Victoria are paid \$91 dollars less a week compared to NSW families caring for a child the same age.



Victorian foster carer Charney Marshall, 46, has cared for 15 children.

Picture: Supplied

Part-time foster carer Charney Marshall, who has cared for 15 children since 2020, aged between six months and 16-years-old, said the current rate was barely enough to cover the essentials.

She currently receives roughly \$20 to \$30 per day, or about \$200 a week, per child.

“A lot of the time these kids will turn up with nothing and you’re having to buy everything, bottles, dummies, nappies, backpacks, school uniforms,” she said.

“We’re not doing it to make money but generally for me, I’ve been a few grand out of pocket per child.”

Ms Marshall fosters kids through not-for-profit Lighthouse Foundation which provides additional support to its carers.

She said it was “heartbreaking” to watch other carers forced out of the industry due to financial constraints.”

Foster carers in Victoria receive a base allowance of between \$11,364 and \$46,289 per child annually.

Fellow foster carer Natalie Pryor, 46, accused the state government of deserting carers and ignoring the needs of often traumatised kids.

“We became foster carers because we saw the need in our community,” she said.

“Carers have to pay for so much themselves to ensure these kids have the care they deserve, including things that should absolutely be covered by the government like medical appointments, therapies, travel to have visits with siblings.

“On top of that you’ve got toys, education supplies, birthday parties, recreational activities – you just want them to have the same opportunities as other kids.”



Victorian foster carer Natalie Pryor, 46, is forced to pay thousands of dollars out of her own pocket. Picture: Supplied

Ms Pryor said carers should not be expected to subsidise the system.

“We’re being left behind,” she said.

“If we don’t support our carers properly and show them the respect they deserve, we’re going to lose them. We’re already losing them. And ultimately it’s the kids who suffer.”

Foster Care Association of Victoria CEO, Samantha Hauge, said in March more foster carers left the system than joined, with a net loss of 60 families.

“The latest annual results from AIHW show a net loss of 317 households in Victoria,” Ms Hauge said.

“The Victorian Care Allowance cost of living indexation for the last 24 months was 2 per cent when annual household inflation was more than 6 per cent in both 2022 and 2023.”

A petition to raise the Victorian Care Allowance has gained 1600 submissions.

A government spokesman said \$5.8m had been invested to support kinship and foster carers over a four-year period.

“The Andrews Labor government appreciates Victoria’s carers and the outstanding job they do supporting children who can’t safely live at home,” they said.

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