



# CARER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICE ANNUAL RESULTS

*1 July, 2016 – 30 June, 2017*

## Carer Information and Support Service (CISS)

The FCAV's CISS program addresses the crucial need for stable, healthy, optimally functioning homes for children and young people in the out of home care (OOHC) system in Victoria.

Foster carers play a critical role in the support team of children and young people in OOHC. To undertake their role well, foster carers require both emotional support—to feel heard, empathized with, validated and empowered and practical support in navigating the complex OOHC system.

CISS aims to provide both this emotional and practical support to carers through the provision of a number of services:

1. Accurate and clear **information** via consultation (phone, email and in person) and public material including its website, newsletter and social media.
2. **Advice** to assist carers in navigating the OOHC system, including regarding the rights and responsibilities of carers, Quality of Care investigations, and complaints processes. It also provides recommendations for insurance, Employee Assistance Programs and legal services, if required.
3. **Individual advocacy** on behalf of carers when required, in the form of phone and email conversations with agencies or DHHS, and attendance at meetings for support.
4. **Broader advocacy** with CSOs and Victorian Government agencies on themes and serious issues affecting carers, children and young people in OOHC that are identified via CISS enquiries.

These Annual Results present CISS service delivery for the period 1 July, 2016 - 30 June, 2017, identifying trends, key themes and recommendations for the upcoming year.

## CISS Service Delivery Annual Results

In the 2016-2017 financial year the CISS team responded to and closed a total of 684 foster care contacts, delivering 834 hours of service delivery.

Currently, the FCAV is funded to provide support to 400 foster care contacts per year. Figure 1 below provides data collected in the CISS database demonstrating that the number of foster care contacts has exceeded this benchmark on average over 60% each year since 2014-15. One-off funding was provided by DHHS in July 2017 to support this activity.

Figure 1: Service Delivery

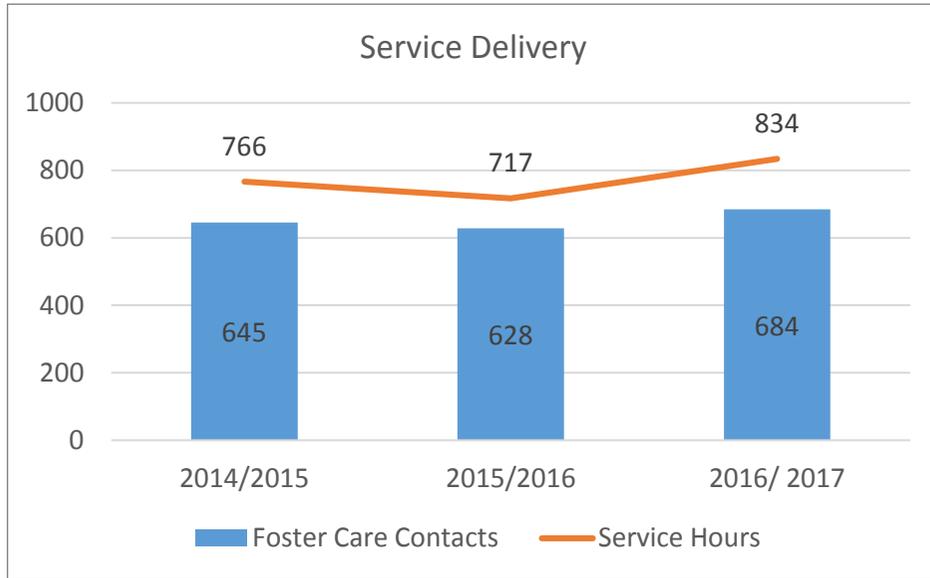
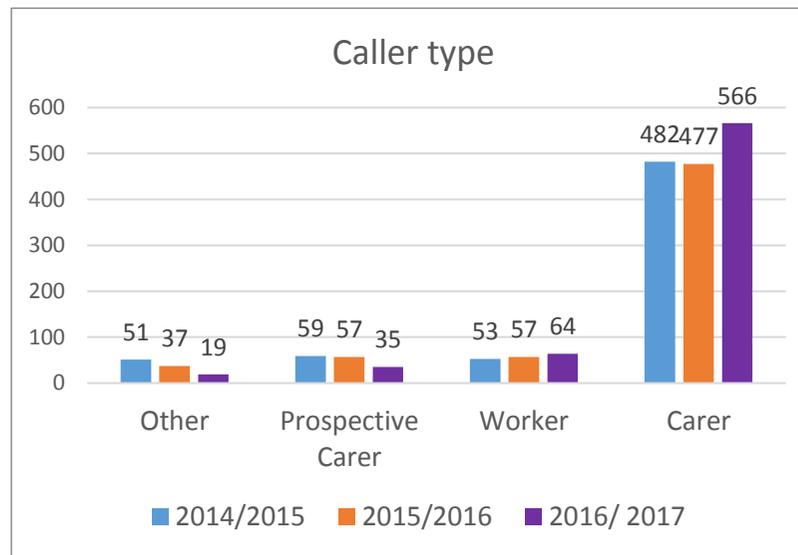
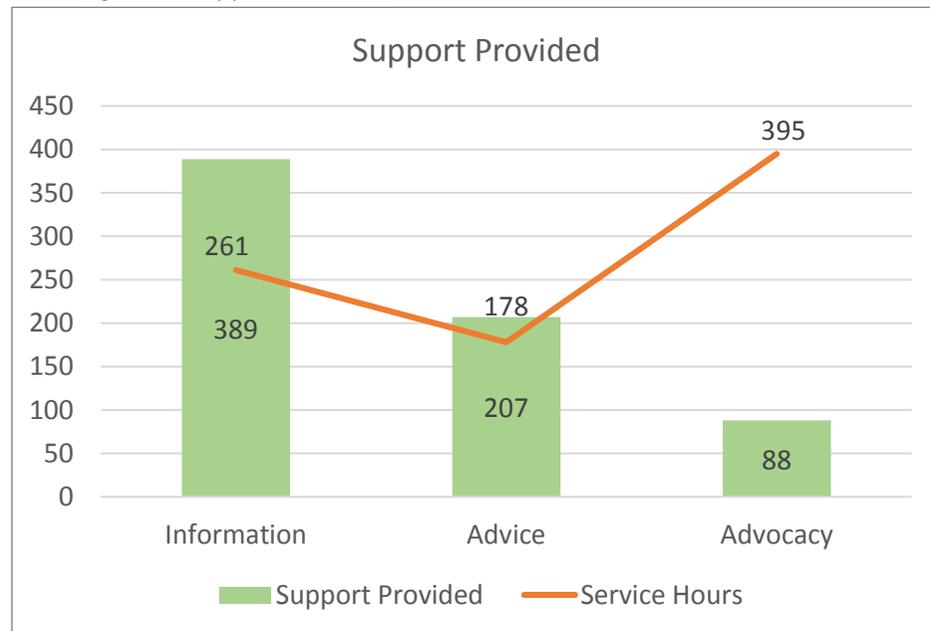


Figure 2: Caller Type



The majority (83%) of contacts were from foster carers, with the remaining from Agency and DHHS workers, prospective carers and 'other'. A comparison over the past three years shows an increase in contacts from foster carers and workers and a decrease in contacts from prospective carers and other, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 3: Support Provided



Of the 684 foster care contacts, CISS provided **information** to 389 (a total of 261 service hours), **advice** to 207 (178 service hours) and **advocacy** to 88 (395 service hours).

Figure 3 highlights that the provision of advocacy support to carers continues to be the most complex and time-consuming component of CISS service delivery. This support includes conversations with carers directly as well as advocacy by phone or in person with the Agency or DHHS.

While carers are encouraged to address issues and concerns themselves in the first instance (with CISS staff providing appropriate information, advice and support enabling them to do so), there are often—and increasingly—instances in which individual advocacy on behalf of a carer is required.



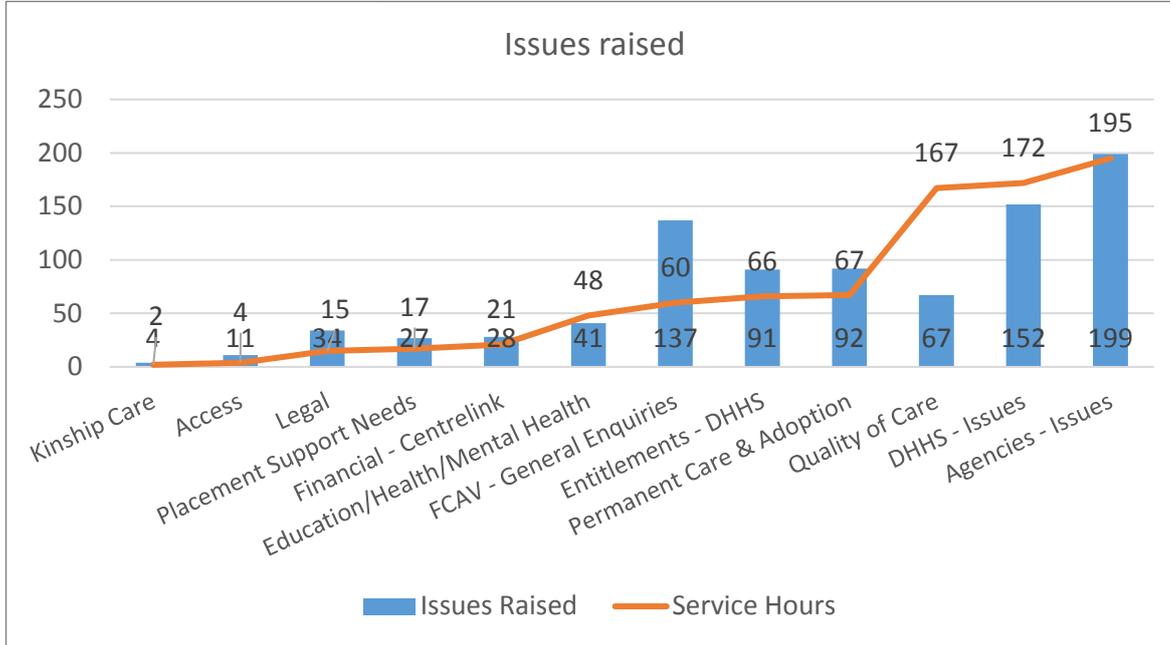
*"Your support and encouragement was invaluable. It made all the difference." - Carer, Jun17*

## Issues raised by carers

Of the 684 contacts, 883 issues were raised. While the majority of contacts continue to call in relation to issues with their Agency or DHHS, the provision of advocacy support to carers undergoing Quality of Care investigations is having an increasing impact on the CISS team's workload.

While issues regarding Quality of Care only made up 67 (10%), they constituted for 167 (20%) service hours. This is reflected in the number of issues and time spent on these areas in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Issues raised by carers



## CISS Coordinator Reflections

During the past twelve months the CISS program has continued to offer a high quality, efficient program to foster carers across the state of Victoria. The team are an experienced group of practitioners. There have been two recent team members join in the last twelve months. As a team we are been refining and clarifying the role of CISS support for foster carers.

## Quality of Care

There were 67 Quality of Care (abuse in care) investigations in the past twelve months. This is an extremely stressful process for foster carers and they seek intensive support of FCAV, sometimes on a daily basis.

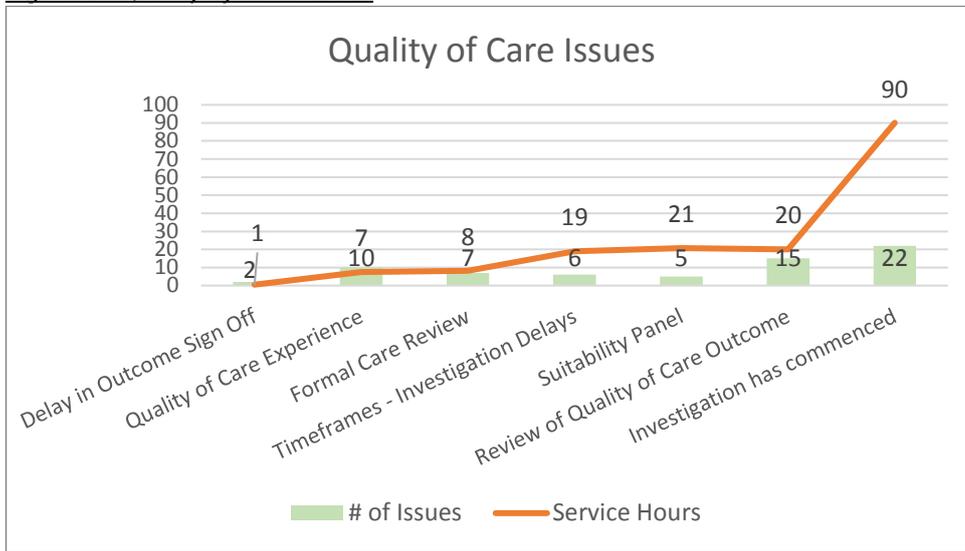
FCAV staff strongly advocate for what should occur in the process, according to DHHS guidelines and assist in communicating with agencies and DHHS to clarify and advocate best practice. FCAV supported six foster carers seeking a review of the Quality of Care outcome and attended a number of meetings with DHHS staff and the carer to hear outcomes. FCAV was involved in supporting a carer at a suitability panel hearing this year.

*"Having you in the room at the meeting was so helpful. I was treated respectfully and felt listened to." – Carer, Apr17*

FCAV have encouraged carers to access the Employment Assistance Program (EAP) attached to their particular agency to receive support and debrief through the Quality of Care process. In a number of cases it has been clearly evident the difference the EAP program has had for carers as they often work through the grief process of realising they will not have the children return to their care.

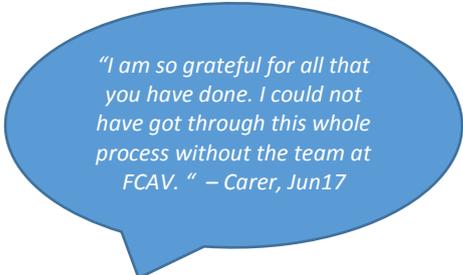
FCAV is aware the Quality of Care process is changing and will monitor the impact of this, as this process is a significant point in the retention of carers.

Figure 5: Quality of Care Issues



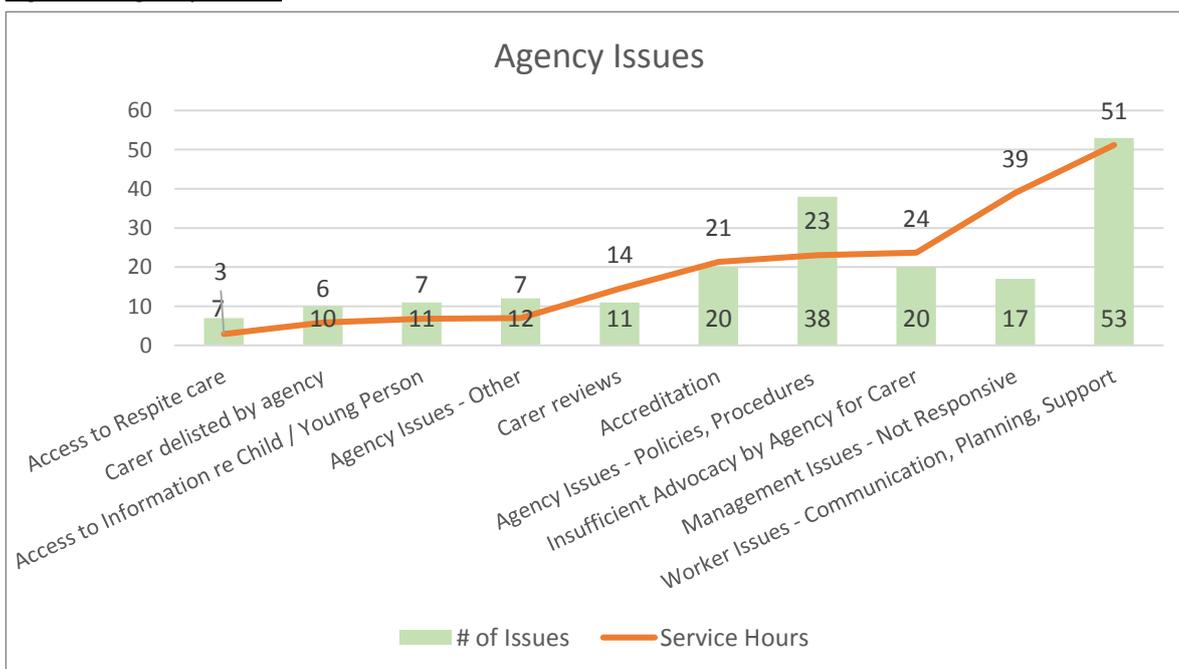
Agency relationships

A significant highlight for the CISS team has been the commitment to develop and strengthen relationships across foster care agencies in Victoria. Since January 2017 the team have completed twenty two site visits of the fifty two agency offices. These visits have strengthened connections and improved ongoing contact to develop the crucial role FCAV plays in the sector. FCAV have been invited to several team meetings in agencies where there can be discussion and sharing of case specific information helping to clarify case decision making processes and provide invaluable feedback to the agency. Once these relationships are well established we hope to see a reduction in the number of contacts to FCAV relating to issues with agencies.



The goal over the coming year is to continue to strengthen relationships with agencies, to increase awareness of the role and importance the agency has in retention of carers.

Figure 6: Agency Issues



Over the next six months, FCAV are strengthening data entry procedures, to be able to provide improved quality and comprehensive data analysis.