



# Claims for Improvement Manifesto

July 2016 Victorian foster care

## Voice of Carers

Increase **foster care reimbursements** to meet the day-to-day costs of caring for children by at least \$88 per week.

### Need for improvement

Victorian foster carers are under financial stress, picking up the shortfall in the Carer Allowance and the real costs of caring. Reports from 2015 showed Victorian foster carers were over \$5000 per annum out of pocket.<sup>1</sup>

### Progress to May 16

A \$20 per week increase in Carer Allowance was funded by the State Government from January 1st 2016.

### Progress to July 2016

Carers need a further increase of at least \$88 per week, to bring the Victorian carer allowance to parity with other states.

Streamline access to educational (including childcare and after school care), medical, allied health and recreational **expense reimbursements for children** in foster care.

Carers need more clarity, and process flexibility to access resources to cover medical, educational and therapeutic **cost deficits** identified by the Foster Care Estimates.\*

\$1000 per placement per child can be accessed through a special fund.

**On 1 July 2016 the DHHS introduced a new Client Support Funding Framework. Consolidated guidelines for care allowances and client support funding. [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/carersupport](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/carersupport)**

Develop and implement quality, targeted and relevant **training and development opportunities** for foster and kinship carers.

There is currently **no framework** regarding the training available to Victorian foster and kinship carers that **equips them to meet the needs** of the children and young people in their care.

One of the 5 retention projects identified in 2015 funding includes development of a **training framework for all carers.**

**A project within the Carer Retention package is being developed to facilitate a longer-term carer training strategy.**

**Respect** for the role of foster and kinship carers as part of the care team, in their knowledge of the child or young person and the significance of the relationship between child or young person and carer.

Foster carer's **intimate understanding** and significant bond with the children and young people they care for day to day, around the clock, is often ignored or disregarded.

Another 2 of the 5 **retention projects** announced in 2015:

- To develop a **Charter for Foster Care.**
- To implement the **Carer Advisory Group** initiative to ensure foster and kinship carer voices are included in **system improvement** at a local level.

A Charter has been drafted. More information to come later in 2016.

August will see the 3rd Divisional CAG meetings.

15th August - North  
17th August - East  
18th August - West

CAGs final action plans 3rd meeting will set priorities



\* Save Foster Care, <http://savefostercare.org.au/about>

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.fostercare.org.au/docs/costcare\\_03.pdf](http://www.fostercare.org.au/docs/costcare_03.pdf)



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Need for improvement	Progress to May 16	Progress to July 2016
Support for young people <b>beyond 18</b> .  (*please note that young people post-18 and engaged in full-time schooling and in home-based care are entitled to ongoing carer allowance).	Young people leaving care need a <b>transition plan</b> and their carers need to be supported to support care leavers <b>until they are 25</b> . Care leavers are at greater <b>risk of homelessness</b> than other groups of young people.  The Homestretch - <a href="http://www.thehomestretch.org.au/">http://www.thehomestretch.org.au/</a>  <a href="http://vcoss.org.au/blog/young-people-transitioning-from-out-of-home-care-in-victoria/">http://vcoss.org.au/blog/young-people-transitioning-from-out-of-home-care-in-victoria/</a>	Launch of the Homestretch Report
Implement a state-wide <b>recruitment and retention</b> strategy.	"...As a good parent would" report recommends all primary school aged children <b>should be in home-based care</b> and are being placed in residential care due to a lack of options. A deficit of at least <b>300 foster carers</b> was identified. <sup>2</sup>	6 months since the start of the Fostering Connections campaign has had 1098 enquiries from prospective carers across the state. Agencies report that many Fostering Connections enquirers have now progressed to training and some to accreditation.
<b>Therapeutic support</b> should be available to all foster carers as they care for children and young people who have experienced <b>loss and trauma</b> .	Carers are <b>under-resourced with therapeutic support and need training</b> to support the therapeutic needs of the children and young people in their care.	Carer's still <b>lack specific therapeutic support and training</b> to support all children and young people with their needs in a <b>therapeutic way</b> .
Streamline departmental "red tape" in the best interests of the child or young person. Carers are frustrated when "the system" doesn't allow for action on the <b>small but very important approvals and resources they rely on for continuity of care</b> .	To ensure easier processing for the security and of daily life for the the children and young people in home-based care and their carers. eg. school excursions, after school activities, playdates, travel and passports, access etc.	This system-wide review must include improving systems and practices which <b>delay or prevent the basic functions</b> of providing care and opportunities for children and young people in home-based care.
Access to <b>relevant information</b> regarding the children and young people, both at the <b>beginning</b> of a placement and on an <b>ongoing</b> basis as necessary, in a timely manner.	Referral information is often <b>delayed, incomplete or withheld</b> . <b>Matching</b> the needs of a child or young person coming into a placement with the right carer skills and experience.	Foster Carers need to be informed and updated on a child or young person's history, education, medical or other circumstances in order to provide <b>optimum care</b> and sensitivity. Care teams must be prioritised.

<sup>2</sup> <http://ccyp.vic.gov.au/goodparent.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [www.fosteringconnections.com.au](http://www.fosteringconnections.com.au)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fcav.org.au/images/documents/CSS2016.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [www.premier.vic.gov.au/better-care-for-our-kids](http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/better-care-for-our-kids)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2925.1%20Info%20for%20carers%20re%20authn%20-%20CSO%20CLTCO%20V2.pdf>



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Need for improvement	Progress to May 16	Progress to July 2016
<b>Siblings should stay together</b> or contact and connection should be prioritised.	Too many instances of <b>sibling separation</b> . eport identified sibling relationships as foundational to a child and young person. <b>Staying together</b> in out of home care is <b>vital</b> for wellbeing.	
<b>That the cultural needs</b> of children and young people are met.	Children and young people from diverse cultural backgrounds and/or language bases are often placed with carers who have been given no training or relevant information to support their connection to their culture.	FCAV sourced independent funding for a Cultural Support Project and was able to provide carer support and information specific to culture as well as increased organisational cultural competency during 15/16. The DHHS Outcomes Framework also focussed on Culture to some extent.
Aboriginal children and young people in care need active <b>cultural support plans</b> developed.	There is an <b>over-representation</b> of <b>aboriginal</b> children and young people in care and many with <b>non-aboriginal</b> agencies and carers.	Taskforce1000 aims to focus on the disproportionate numbers of, and improve the outcomes for, Aboriginal children in out of home care.
The Quality of Care/ allegation of abuse in care process be conducted in a way that is also <b>carer sensitive</b> .	Most quality of care reviews find allegations against carers are unfounded, however, the process often damages a <b>carer's goodwill</b> .	FCAV is on the DHHS working group for a <b>QOC Review</b> and facilitating <b>Carer Consultations</b> with KPMG mid-2016.
<b>Permanent Care</b> conversion.	The process for conversion of orders from foster care to permanent care should be clarified so that carers understand this process.	New permanency legislation has been rolled out as of March 2016.

- The review will address:
- guidelines for responding to and managing quality of care concerns
  - efficacy of the 28 working day timeframe for the completion of all quality of care matters
  - Development of an investigative framework for the management of allegations of abuse and/or poor quality of care