

May 1, 2018

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Foster care direct supports missing from the State Budget

The budget handed down this morning has failed to improve the financial and bureaucratic conditions which are inhibiting the work and retention of our foster carers. The Foster Care Association of Victoria's carer data, representing 4,300 foster carers in this state, is still seeing a flood of good carers exiting because funding is slow to catch up with the true costs and supports needed to care. The Foster Care Association welcomes the announcement of continued funding of Carer Kafe, the statewide training framework for kinship and foster carers. We applaud Minister Mikakos, Families, Children and Young People, for her continued investment in packages of therapeutic support for complex care and in significant funding announcements to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) on Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care principles.

Katie Hooper, CEO FCAV attended the launch of Wungurilwil Gapgapduir, Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April. "It's important to see resourcing of self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and towards early assistance to keep families together, however when things do go wrong, it is our carers keeping children and young people out of residential care." she said. This year marks a net loss in the carer pool available in this state, an ongoing trend. We appreciate the ground work necessary to reform the child protection system, however, children and young people who will tonight be experiencing care with a foster family, need their carers to be provided with:

- 1) Increase care allowance which covers the true cost of caring for a child or young person. In Victoria the allowance is less than most other states in Australia. The current rates of Carer Allowance must increase by at least \$70 a week to reach parity with other states with the removal of the lowest two "basic" levels of care allowance.
- 2) Clear and automatic reimbursement of expenses that mean carers can give children and young people in care access to the same experiences and activities as their friends. Eg. A pair of spectacles, swimming lessons or a new bike.
- 3) Care extended to meet the needs of young people until at least 21 years so they can continue living at home with their carers while they embark on tertiary study, find employment and establish themselves into adulthood.
- 4) Good and reliable respite care alternatives.
- 5) A professional foster care model which provides an opportunity for carers to join a waged carer system, remunerated on the basis of skills, qualifications and experience.

"This budget leaves carers facing financial stress. They (carers) already do so much, they provide the heart and the home, day and night. We can't continue to expect them to be out of pocket or wade through bureaucracy whilst they do it." "Properly funded and resourced carers can ensure young people regain a sense of security in their lives." Ms. Hooper said today.

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