



JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

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Why the next Federal Government must care about our foster carers

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare Inc (The Centre) and the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) are calling on the next Federal Government to enhance support for foster carers across Australia.

An extraordinary community service

Foster carers throughout Australia open their hearts and homes to children and young people who can no longer live with their biological families. These children and young people are among the most vulnerable members of our community, often having suffered forms of neglect and abuse or having been at risk of exposure to abuse and neglect.

Foster carers are an essential component of care services, and play a critical role in helping a child or young person to heal and grow. Without foster carers, care services could simply not function. That's why we believe that our next Federal Government must prioritise supporting the vital community service that foster carers provide to children and young people in Australia.

We are asking for our next Federal Government to introduce some simple, inexpensive reforms that would dramatically improve the ability of foster carers to focus on what matters most – caring for young people and children when they need it.

Helping foster carers to care:

- 1. Allow a grace period for payments to continue between foster care placements** to minimise the burden of regular and repeated interactions with Centrelink when payments stop and start.
- 2. Create a dedicated Centrelink foster care support and advice team** that can provide a high quality, personalized assistance to foster carers to access payments and to resolve payment challenges due to their unique circumstances. This should also include **funding for a carer specific phone advice service.**
- 3. Review the income eligibility criteria for carers accessing Family Tax Benefit (FTB)** – the Federal Government should consider non means testing the FTB to acknowledge the valuable work performed by foster carers.
- 4. Include carer specific information** on the Centrelink website and **update generic forms** so that they accommodate the unique circumstances of carers

It's time for our Federal Politicians to value the work of foster carers

The Centre and FCAV are joining their voices to this important issue that has been neglected for far too long. Throughout the Federal Election, and in the first 100 days of the new Federal Government, we will be regularly advocating to ensure that our Federal politicians take notice of the challenges experienced by foster carers.

Our foster carers deserve more support. They are performing an essential service to the community that is priceless, and our Federal Government – through introducing some very simple reforms – could dramatically enhance the quality of life of foster carers, and in doing so, ensure that children in their care are given the support and love that they need to become happy, and healthy adults.

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