

## **Media Release – 3/03/2020**

### **Predominantly women, foster carers are paying for nurturing our children and young people in care**

This International Women's Day, 8 March 2020, the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) highlights the sacrifices women who provide foster care are making on behalf of the state to meet the needs of our children and young people in care.

Women make up over 83% of foster carers in Victoria. They face reduced salary or changed careers, reduced hours of work or the need to cease work altogether to provide the complex care children brought into the care system often need. These women dedicate themselves to providing high level care with implications on their superannuation, ability to save, ability to buy property and prepare financially for their retirement. On top of this, the real costs of providing care far exceed the care allowance provided by the Government. Estimated shortfalls come in at over \$3000 a year just for basic day to day costs, let alone if extra expenses arise or they take children on a holiday. "Victoria's care allowance levels 1 and 2 are below parity with other states for no obvious reason." Samantha Hauge, CE, FCAV.

The FCAV convened a forum in partnership the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare on 22 July 2019, at which prominent social commentator, Anne Manne said "We don't reward care. We don't respect it. We don't fund it."

So who's picking up the slack?

Ms Manne spoke of the "care penalty". Borne largely by women, a good chunk of earning capacity, superannuation accrual and paid leave is sacrificed to an undervalued caring role played by women overall, which Access Economics modelling put at a full but invisible 50% of GDP in Australia. For foster carers, in their volunteer role, providing 24/7 care we are then asking them to take a huge financial hit for the privilege.

"Foster carers are so important in a community, we must respect and recognise that and make sure they do not suffer the economic care penalty. It's not enough to simply recognize it. We need to reset it. Those people should not become poor as a result of caring for our young." Ms Manne said.

The below have all experienced the impost financially and are willing to be interviewed:

- Dr Chelsea Tobin – Foster carer - 0421 062 909
- Toni Hetherington – President of the Board of Directors and foster carer – 0417 149 577
- Others available as required

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