



**Quarter one | 2019**



● **Cultural Diversity Week**   ● **Back to School**   ● **Caring for Carers Program**



## Carer Information and Support Service:

The Foster Care Association of Victoria's Carer Information and Support Service (CISS) provides a confidential, independent support hotline to all foster carers in Victoria. Are you a current foster carer? Do you have questions about your role? Are you having issues you need to discuss with someone?

Call: **9416 4292** or access carer support online:

[www.fcav.org.au](http://www.fcav.org.au)

**Cover Image:** Messages on the deck for carers. FCAV is crowdfunding in February to support the Caring for Carers Program. Read more on page 5...

This newsletter is produced quarterly by the Foster Care Association of Victoria to provide information and support to Victoria's foster carers.

To view past editions please visit our website at: [www.fcav.org.au/newsletters](http://www.fcav.org.au/newsletters)



FCAV is funded through the State Government of Victoria and is grateful for the support of agency subscribers and our generous donors.



## MESSAGE from the CEO

As you know we have been doing lots of reform and advocacy work and now see 2019 as a year for action. Home stretch has been approved for piloting, Carer KaFÉ has a full training calendar and is also developing online options and DHHS are embedding their area based structure.

We met with the new Minister for Child Protection and Carers, Hon. Luke Donnellan MP. who was very interested in the barriers to support within the system that carer's experience. We will not only ramp up our advocacy regarding improved client expenses funds availability and processes but we will also see to streamline administrative processes regarding children and young people identification. We will be seeking resources that will focus on registering births, getting copies of birth certificates, making passport applications.

The FCAV Board lead by Toni Hetherington has signed off on a new strategic plan. Thanks to those of you who had input. While support and advocacy will always be key to our operations the team at FCAV are excited to be fundraising for caring for carers program (see more on page 5 ) we hope to see you at a retreat or long lunch soon.

**Katie Hooper,**  
*Chief Executive Officer, Foster Care Association of Victoria*

## In brief...



- FCAV acknowledges the generous philanthropy of **YDT** [yourdevelopmentteam.com.au](http://yourdevelopmentteam.com.au) who recently visited the office and made a significant donation towards supporting carers.
- The FCAV wishes you a Happy Lunar New Year and celebrates the year of the pig. For celebrations around Melbourne see: [www.cnymelbourne.com.au/home](http://www.cnymelbourne.com.au/home)
- FCAV staff can recommend the movie "**Instant Family**". While the Hollywood, all-star portrayal of foster care is in an American context and takes poetic license with some of the processes and outcomes, we agree it does honour the nature of the bonds created and a few laughs and tears were left at the cinema. Check for screenings in a cinema near you. [www.instantfamily.org](http://www.instantfamily.org)
- Back to school financial guide for carers - [www.services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-10/Financial-support-guide-for-home-based-carers.doc](http://www.services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-10/Financial-support-guide-for-home-based-carers.doc)
- Red Nose Safe Sleeping eLearning** is a free online course that provides evidence-based recommendations for sleeping baby safely to reduce the risk of Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy. [www.rednose.com.au/section/elearning](http://www.rednose.com.au/section/elearning)

# CARER GIVEAWAYS! ENTER NOW TO WIN...



## CULTURAL DIVERSITY WEEK PRIZES



In recognition of **Cultural Diversity Week** coming up in March, we're offering 4x \$50 vouchers for the purchase of books and resources at **Global Language Books!**

To win, go online to the website **www.globallanguage.com.au** and browse the books, posters or resources you'd like to have available to the children in your house.

To be in the running to win, email by

**Sunday 10 March, 2019.**

Use the subject header "**Cultural Diversity**", in the body of the email tell us what resource you'd choose and why, along with your full name, phone, address and agency to:

**competition@fcav.org.au** or call the Foster Care Association office on: **9416 4292.**

**Good Luck!**

## HOME OR GARDEN MAKEOVER

With the year underway, it's a good time to organise a clean-up around the home or garden.



Perhaps you need new sheets for the bed, tins of paint for the bedroom or a garden tidy up?

We have 4 x \$250 to give away to carer families, for home & garden maintenance of your choice!

To be in the running to win, email by **Sunday 10 March, 2019**, use the subject header "Home & Garden" and in the body of the email tell us a how you would spend the money, along with your name, phone, address and agency. Winners will be reimbursed up to \$250, good luck! Please include your name, address and current contact phone numbers to: **competition@fcav.org.au** or call FCAV on: **9416 4292.**

**Good Luck!**



**Caring for Carers Program**

[www.chuffed.org/project/fcavretreat](http://www.chuffed.org/project/fcavretreat)

## Caring for Carers Program

### We're Crowdfunding all of February!

We hope you've all heard by now, about the crowdfunding campaign for the Caring for Carers Program that's been running this February 2019. Thank you to everyone who has made a donation so far. We have been overwhelmed by the generosity in the community. Two donations of \$1000 each from anonymous donors as well all the other donors of amounts large and small, who have shown great belief in the Caring for Carers Program and the benefits to the Carers and the Victorian children and young people in their care.

Make a donation today and jump on Facebook at **fostercarevictoria** to share the campaign with your friends in this last week of February. Thanks to those of you who may have already made a donation yourselves or shared the campaign online. It's worth doing again in this final week! Every dollar helps reach the target.

**DONATE TODAY AND SHARE WITH FRIENDS!**

## Back to School [www.innerworldwork.co.uk](http://www.innerworldwork.co.uk)

This resource from the UK was identified by our own Deb Collard as a really useful website full of tools and information which may help you and your student in these early days of the new year.

There are free handouts to understand what survival states look like at home and at school and what you can do to help ground your child and subsequently make them feel safer. Also ideal to pass on to friends and family to help them understand what is going on for your child, particularly as they integrate into a new school year.

Visit the website above for free carer resources, worksheets and information.



# Carer Information & Support Service

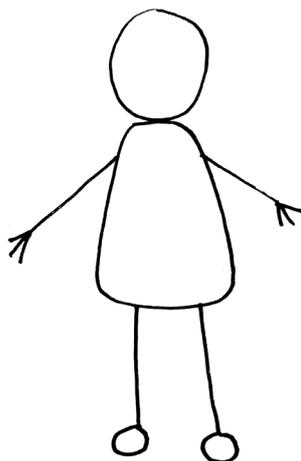
☎ 9416 4292

🌐 [www.fcav.org.au](http://www.fcav.org.au)

The **Carer Information and Support Service (CISS)** at the Foster Care Association of Victoria provides free, confidential and independent advice and advocacy for Victorian foster carers, covering all areas of foster care. You do not need to be a member of the Association to access CISS, however we recommend all foster carers become members to ensure you receive all the information, assistance and resources available to you.

If you would like more information, contact the CISS team 9am-5pm, Monday to Thursday and 9am-4.30pm on Friday: **9416 4292** or visit our website: [www.fcav.org.au](http://www.fcav.org.au) under Carer Resources to see the FCAV's range of Information Sheets. [www.fcav.org.au/carers-support-service](http://www.fcav.org.au/carers-support-service)

## INSIDE CISS SUPPORT: The transition to school



### Current research on Transitions to School

Transitions from home to early childhood education and on to school are important milestones for both children and families. The transition into school is especially significant as "school readiness" is predictive of long-term academic and occupational achievement.

A child's ability to transition successfully to school depends upon their own personal characteristics (e.g. temperament, personality), parent characteristics (e.g.

attitudes to school, maternal education) and community characteristics (e.g. accessibility and quality of local services).

Children from backgrounds of financial disadvantage, Indigenous families, children with a disability and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families are less likely to attend an early childhood education and care service before they start school, which some of our foster children have also missed.

For children, successful transitions into and from the early learning environment can be facilitated by a range of approaches such as assisting children to understand the routines and practices of the settings they are transitioning into. During both the transition to early learning environments and to school, a partnership between carers and educators/ institutions can help carers manage this period of change.

The Early Years Learning Framework (COAG, 2009), which was developed to provide a foundation for quality teaching and learning in early childhood education and care settings in Australia, describes the following factors as important to successful transitions:

- building on children's prior and current experiences; respectful and reciprocal relationships,
- ensuring children have an active role in preparing for transitions,
- assisting children to understand transitions, routines and practices of the settings they are moving to and feel comfortable with this process;
- helping children negotiate changes in status or identity, especially during the school transition phase;
- Working collaboratively with each new educator for the child and other professionals to make certain that a successful transition occurs.

Research shows that approximately 10–21% of children have difficulty adjusting to the transition to school (Giallo, Treyvaud, Matthews, & Kienhuis, 2010). These difficulties may be expressed via:

- Complaints of being sick; negative attitudes towards school
- increased worries, fears, crying; temper tantrums

The capacity to make and maintain friendships has been found to be a protective factor in the transition to school and if the child has made friends in kindergarten or preschool then they will often experience feelings of security during the transition, particularly if these friends then attend the same school. This is especially true for boys.

What can help a child transition successfully to school?

- the number of transition program activities attended (the more the better);
- the child's level of developmental maturity relevant to their chronological age and gender (boys had more difficulty adjusting in the areas of social skills and behaviour);
- children's home language (speaking English at home had a positive influence);
- attendance at preschool transition activities;
- The presence of a familiar playmate in the same class.



### Carers financial support guide

As the school year gets underway, we wish carers and their school aged children well in 2019!

Read the financial guide to ensure you are receiving all the correct supports available, particularly review the state school relief section.

[www.services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-10/Financial-support-guide-for-home-based-carers.docx](http://www.services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-10/Financial-support-guide-for-home-based-carers.docx)



**16TH - 24TH  
MARCH 2019  
IS CULTURAL  
DIVERSITY  
WEEK IN  
VICTORIA**

It is our state's largest multicultural celebration, featuring an exciting program of festivals and events across metropolitan and regional areas. Proudly presented by the Victorian Multicultural Commission, with support from the Victorian Government, the Week invites Victorians to embrace and celebrate our cultural diversity.

**Are you caring for a child from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background? Would you like to learn more about the child's culture, as well as other cultures?**

The Foster Care Association believes that CALD children in care should be supported to maintain links with their culture, religion, and language; this in turn will foster a more positive sense of self, identity and pride of their heritage. It will contribute to their sense of belonging. Every child wants to belong.

**This year's theme: Proud to Belong:** For more information about cultural events near you see here:

[www.culturaldiversityweek.vic.gov.au/home/whats-on/](http://www.culturaldiversityweek.vic.gov.au/home/whats-on/)

## CARING FOR CARERS PROGRAM



**Above:** Katie, Tessa, Sara and Deb at the Retreat in December 2018 received overwhelming feedback about the immediate and long lasting take home benefits of this wellbeing initiative through the Caring for Carers Program

Alongside FCAV's core work in advocacy and information for our members across the sector, the Caring for Carers Program has been devised to consolidate FCAV's carer celebration and wellbeing offering. This attention to carer wellbeing is a focus on the compassion fatigue and burnout that carers are at risk of themselves as they manage the care of young people in a complex system.

**“It means the world. Not just to get away and the learnings but being valued and the sense that we're in this with other people, other carers and that people support us and the program and what we are providing the children in our care, that means alot. Mel, Foster Carer and retreat participant, Dec 2018.”**

To give an opportunity to the community to acknowledge the vital work they do that often goes unnoticed, FCAV has introduced a Caring for the Carers Program in 2019. This program will include three different measures; overnight Carers Retreats, daytime Long Lunches and a Thank You Bank of gifts and giveaways.

One of two pilot retreats was held in December 2018 and participants included kinship and foster carers. The feedback from carers was so positive, the organisation wants to offer a Carer Retreat each year to provide more carers with this valuable, and often overlooked, time-out experience.

### Take home self-care tools for carers

- The practice and development of strategies to be better equipped to manage daily life
- Building personal resilience and improved emotional awareness about themselves and the children in their care
- Gain insight into finding support and navigating the home-based care system
- Develop connections with other carers for shared experiences

The Retreats are run by experienced facilitators and trainers with extensive experience in supporting carers, running training and wellness activities.

### A place at a Retreat for each carer includes:

- Overnight accommodation
- All meals over 2 days
- Massage and pamper pack
- Facilitators and staff

We look forward to bringing you updates on the Program and next Retreat or long lunch soon.

# Carer Voices: BEING HEARD

## UPDATE - CARER STRATEGY OUT OF POCKET EXPENSES

An identified priority of FCAV advocacy coming through Carer Advisory Groups and within the Carer Strategy, is for action to clarify and reform the reimburseable expenses process that so often leaves carers out of pocket or chasing paper trails.

Carers are increasingly expected to fund many expenses out of their own pocket due to a lack of clarity about what the two key sources of funding for expenses incurred in providing home based care (care allowance and the supplementary Client Support Funding Framework) are intended to cover.

Carers refer to expenses which are not covered by the care allowance, but which they may be required to pay in order to promote the welfare and wellbeing of a child, as out of pocket expenses. DHHS refers to these expenses as client expenses under the Client Support Funding Framework.

These expenses include a broad range of costs such as medical/medication needs, allied health services, as well as costs for extra-curricular activities like art, music and sport. It can also include the indirect expenses incurred when accessing services or undertaking activities, such as transport costs (this is particularly an issue for regional carers).

Carers have identified inconsistent assessment and reimbursement of out of pocket expense claims as an important systemic issue that requires urgent review.

The Foster Care Association's Carer Strategy continues to drive reform and a solutions based discussion paper will be discussed during the upcoming Carer Advisory Group meetings with DHHS.

[www.services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/statewide-client-support-funding-framework-fact-sheet-carers-word](http://www.services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/statewide-client-support-funding-framework-fact-sheet-carers-word)



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## CARERS' VOICES: access to health for kids in care update

Thank you to those of you who completed the Carers' Voices Health survey online!

We had a fantastic response of almost 300 carers across Victoria completing the online survey, and we were able to conduct phone interviews. Analysis of the survey results has begun, and we can see already that the most frequently accessed health services for children or young people in foster/kinship care are GPs, dentists and paediatricians. It appears that mental health services are the most difficult to access. We are also finding that financial and bureaucratic (red-tape) issues can make it harder to access the right health services. We are about to start analysis of the interviews and we are looking forward to updating you later in 2019 and reporting our results in scientific journals and to policy makers.

## Introduction from MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION, Luke Donnellan



**Above:** FCAV was pleased to secure an early 2019 meeting with Minister Donnellan (second from right) who was receptive to the priorities of improved support to foster carers

I'd like to introduce myself as the Minister for Child Protection. I have been in the Victorian Parliament since 2002 and I look forward to working with the FCAV and carers to help improve the lives of vulnerable children and young people. I understand that there can be no higher priority than improving the circumstances of children in care, and I am committed to listening to carers to hear how this can be best achieved.

I am also well aware of the vital role that foster carers play in providing loving homes for vulnerable children and young people. Your contribution is immeasurable and we are committed to supporting you with the funding, education and assistance you need to provide the best care possible. I have already met with Foster Care Association of Victoria CEO Katie Hooper and I look forward to meeting with carers across the state to hear from you about your experiences and how the Victorian Government can continue to give you the support and services that you deserve.

Luke Donnellan MP



## HOME STRETCH UPDATE



In September 2018, the Victorian Government announced \$11.6 million to roll out Home Stretch over the next five years. Starting in the first half of 2019, Home Stretch will be available to

250 young people, offering a more gradual and supported transition from out-of-home care to independent living.

Through the Home Stretch program, young people and their kinship and foster carers will have the option of the young person remaining with their carer up to the age of 21 years. Young people leaving residential care will be eligible for an accommodation allowance up to 21 years of age.

The Home Stretch model will include three components; continuation of carer allowance or an accommodation allowance, case work support, and brokerage to facilitate access to education, employment and health and wellbeing supports.

# Carer COMMUNITY & SKILLS

## carer • KAFÉ training

Kinship and Foster Care Education



## CARER KAFÉ UPDATE - 2019 CALENDAR

Carer KaFE is excited to share our brand new calendar which you will find enclosed in this newsletter or can access online at :

[carerkafe.org.au/training/calendar-view](http://carerkafe.org.au/training/calendar-view)

For 2019 Carer KaFE has 23 new learning and development topics. We celebrated the launch this month with carers and agency staff at Welcome to Thornbury by sampling two of the new topics 'Love of Learning' and 'Fostering Resilience'. Have a look at the calendar to find face-to-face sessions in your area, and online options.

Thanks to additional DHHS funding Carer KaFE is excited to announce that a second round of Mini Scholarships were allocated to statutory kinship and accredited foster carers in 2018, to study in the first semester of 2019. Carer KaFE has had the privilege of offering 14 new Carers\* the opportunity to complete a unit of accredited training relevant to their care role, which has the potential to go towards further formal qualifications and subsequent career opportunities. The scholarship recipients have chosen unit topics that advance the knowledge they have gained from the Carer KaFE training calendar, ranging from

foundational psychology, trauma and attachment, play therapy, Aboriginal cultural competence, and child welfare. Interestingly, 93% of recipients have chosen to study online, which indicates the importance of flexible learning options when juggling, work, study and caring for kids in home based care.

Carer KaFE also received funding to assist our 2017 Scholarship Alumni to continue on with their learning and development paths. Five of the seven carers who previously received scholarships applied, and were granted further scholarships to complete an additional unit of accredited study.

Make sure you sign up to our social media outlets to keep in the loop about upcoming scholarship opportunities in semester two of 2019, opportunities to attend three conferences this year, camps, and other great learning and development opportunities. Sign up to our email list online at [carerkafe.org.au](http://carerkafe.org.au) to receive our newsletter, and add us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/carerkafe](http://www.facebook.com/carerkafe) to stay up to date!

## Raising Expectations

Is a young person in your care thinking about study this year?

Raising Expectations is supporting more young people with a care background to study at TAFE and university.

Federation and La Trobe Universities offer financial, academic and personal supports for care leaver students. For more information, visit:

- Federation Uni or contact Pearl Goodwin-Burns, Care Leaver Coordinator on [p.goodwin-burns@federation.edu.au](mailto:p.goodwin-burns@federation.edu.au).
- La Trobe Uni or call **1300 135 045**. LTU is offering a \$500 bursary to future undergraduate and first year undergraduate students.

Swinburne University of Technology is also joining the Raising Expectations collaboration in 2019. More information will be coming soon.

There are also a number of free TAFE courses available from January 2019, make sure you check them out.

And on Friday 10 May, 2019, check out REACH for La Trobe (in Bendigo). Head along to experience a taste of university life and hear about the journey to higher education from La Trobe students with a care background. View the full event flyer here.

### Skills First Youth Access Initiative

For young people (up to age 22) who have been/or are on a Child Protection Order, Family Court Order or a Youth Justice Order, the Skills First Youth Access Initiative can help them study at TAFE with no tuition fees.

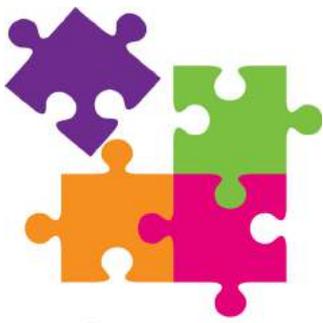
For more information, visit the website or call **131 823**.

### Education Guide for Carers of Children Living in Out-of-Home Care in Victoria

Fostering a love of learning and having high educational expectations and aspirations for all children and young people is vital. Check out the Centre's Education Guide at [www.cfecfw.asn.au/education-guide-for-carers-of-children-living-in-out-of-home-care-in-victoria/](http://www.cfecfw.asn.au/education-guide-for-carers-of-children-living-in-out-of-home-care-in-victoria/)

For more information on any of these initiatives contact [Joanna.Humphries@cfecfw.asn.au](mailto:Joanna.Humphries@cfecfw.asn.au) or **9094 3509**.





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foster care  
association  
of victoria

## Contact us

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## Stay in touch with the Foster Care Association online:



[facebook.com/fostercarevictoria](https://www.facebook.com/fostercarevictoria)



[@vicfostercare](https://twitter.com/vicfostercare)

## Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Victoria and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.



[www.fcav.org.au](http://www.fcav.org.au)

ABN: 30 747 101 099



### Youth Participation

Be Heard. Make a difference. Meet other care legends in the East. Share your ideas. Help CREATE system change.

Your CREATE crew with Eastern carer agencies and the department of health and human services (DHHS) in the East want to hear from you! young people in care in the East through the East project. Share your ideas and insights. Meet other legend young people in care! You can help make a difference!

Hit us up to get involved and be kept in the loop! Let Luke know on: 9918 0002 mobile: 0431 220 052 or email: [luke.westwick@create.org.au](mailto:luke.westwick@create.org.au)



### Club Create

Moved recently? Got a new number? Want to change your preference between email or postal delivery for the clubCREATE magazine?

You can now update your clubCREATE details online or call us on 1800 655 105 or 9918 0002

Email: [update@create.org.au](mailto:update@create.org.au)

Sign up now and be kept in the loop!



### CREATE Conference

CREATE's biannual Voices in Action Conference will be back in 2019! Held at the iconic Melbourne Zoo, this conference will tackle important issues identified by children and young people with a care experience. Check out the Voices in Action Conference website <https://voicesinaction.create.org.au> to learn more.

## Did you know?

The FCAV newsletter is now quarterly. If you are not on the mailing list to receive our regular e-news updates in between times, send us an email at:

[admin@fcav.org.au](mailto:admin@fcav.org.au)



FCAV is grateful for the continuing support of the Cummins team who donate in kind to the mailout of this newsletter