

FCAV NEWS IN YOUR HANDS
FOR THE LAST TIME ...

WE'RE GOING PAPERLESS



Please register an email with us
www.fcav.org.au/membership
[/update-details](#)
(03) 9416 4292

- Foster Care Week 2020
- Birth Registration Win
- COVID-19



Are you a Victorian foster carer? Make sure you're signed up as an FCAV member. We're the peak body for over 4,000 carers across Victoria, working towards better outcomes for foster carers and the children in their care. Membership is free! Join now to enjoy member benefits, connect with like-minded people and keep up to date with sector news and training opportunities.

Visit our website to join now!
www.fcav.org.au/membership/join

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 information online at www.fcav.org.au



The FCAV is funded through the State Government of Victoria, our subscribers and generous donors.



MESSAGE from the CEO

Welcome to the last edition of the paper based FCAV newsletter. In one sense, it is the end of an era to cease production of this publication as a mailout to your letterbox. However, it has become a prohibitive cost for the organisation and we hope you'll agree, sending you all the same quality news, updates, legislation changes, events and training and carer giveaways in our new E-news format will be a more carbon friendly approach.

You will receive this every 2 months to the email address you've supplied to FCAV. If you haven't yet, or you're not sure if you've provided an updated email address for each carer in your household, please go to www.fcav.org.au/membership/update-details asap to ensure you get your newsletter.

It was fantastic to have celebrated #CareDay20 on 21st February, highlighting the achievements of our young people with a care experience. Thank you again to MacKillop Family Services CEO, Dr Robyn Miller, for hosting a wonderful carer lunch on the day and particularly to Jarrod who spoke to carers and staff about his care journey.

Thank you to those carers who responded to our call for birth registration issues for the child/ren in your care. We have really good news from that advocacy on page 7.

The FCAV continues to drive our advocacy towards the goals outlined in the Carer Strategy. In particular, we are working with the Department to develop better information for both carers and agencies on CIMS investigations to clarify the process and make sure all parties understand their rights and obligations. We expect that the information will be available by middle of 2020.

Samantha Hauge

Chief Executive Officer, Foster Care Association of Victoria

In brief...

- Free car restraint checks for carers of young children are available through a new Kidsafe Victoria program. Find a point of service near you:
www.kidsafevic.com.au/road-safety/free-child-car-restraint-checking-program/
- **Raising Expectations** run by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare is expanding nationally. The results for young people speak for themselves. If you have a young person in your care who is considering tertiary education, check out the Education Guide for Carers here:
www.cfecfw.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Education-Guide_June-2019.pdf
- **Access Keys - customised accessibility guides** - Providing convenient information events and venues, Access Keys are universally designed to suit a wide range of audiences of all ages, their parents and carers as well as individuals who would like an improved level of pre-visit information. More information:
www.fcav.org.au/news/access-keys

CARER GIVEAWAYS | ENTER NOW TO WIN...

SUPPORT FOR CARERS IN FIRE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

The FCAV is giving away 2 x \$100 Visa gift card vouchers and 1 x \$30 Woolworths gift voucher to carer families living in regional or rural communities hit by fires this summer. To be in to win, please email: competition@fcav.org.au, use the subject header 'Gift voucher' and in the body of the email tell us where you live. Please include your name, phone number, address and agency.

Best of luck!



Resources for children post Bushfires

The FCAV has 6 copies of the book 'Birdie and the Fire' to give away. Whether you and the children in your care were directly impacted or had a heightened awareness of the danger during the fire season, Birdie's Tree has been designed to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children aged 0-4 through severe weather events and other natural disasters. We are finding that children up to mid primary age enjoy the stories and games, while the information sheets and booklets can help parents and carers of all children who've been through a natural disaster.

Birdie's Tree Website has many resources you may find useful:

www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery.

To be in to win, please email: competition@fcav.org.au and use the subject header 'Birdie book'. In the body of the email tell us the ages of the child/ren in your care.

Please include your name, phone number, address and agency. Best of luck!



VACCAs My DEADLY CULTURE DIARY 2020 GIVEAWAY!

The FCAV is excited to have 4 x 2020 VACCA My Deadly Culture Diary 2020 to give away.

To be in to win please email competition@fcav.org.au and use the subject header 'Deadly Diary' and in the body of the email tell us why having one of these diaries would help you keep you on track. Please include your name, phone number, address and agency. Best of luck!



Foster Care Week takes place every year in the week incorporating the 2nd Sunday in September and this year we continue to advocate for the **#ValueofCarers**.

Stay up to date with events and celebrations to celebrate Foster Care Week via our website: www.fcav.org.au/fostercareweek, FCAV newsletters, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook pages.



Carer Information & Support Service

☎ 9416 4292

🌐 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 under Carer Resources to see the FCAV's range of Information Sheets. www.fcav.org.au/carers-support-service

INSIDE CISS SUPPORT: CIMS Process

BY BETTI GABRIEL, CARER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICE WORKER AT FCAV



The Carer Information and Support Service team provides support, information, and advocacy to foster carers calling the **Helpline: 9416 4292** about various issues. A large part of our work is supporting foster carers during the Client Incident Management System (CIMS) process that can be difficult and confusing for carers to navigate. It can also be a very distressing time for foster carers.

Many carers feel like they don't understand enough about the CIMS process, and in some cases it is not explained to them properly. They are not aware of their rights, and feel like they're already being judged guilty of the allegations.

From foster carer accounts, we know that the current process is not working and it needs to be reviewed. Carers would like this process to be fair, clear and swift.

In many cases foster carers will invite a CISS team member as their support person during the CIMS interview, to ensure the process runs based on the principles of procedural fairness. FCAV will provide feedback to the investigations team if required.

I supported some foster carers during a CIMS interview a couple of weeks ago and was impressed by how the investigator conducted himself and the interview. In many cases foster care agencies have an internal investigations team that leads investigations; in this case the investigator was independent of the agency.

The investigator introduced himself, and explained very clearly how the process was going to play out. He stated the allegations and informed both carers that they would be given the opportunity to respond to each allegation. He was very empathic, and validated that this process can be very distressing for carers. He offered them the opportunity to take a break at any time if they needed to. He made the carers feel at ease.

He gained carers' consent to record the interview and informed them that he would be taking notes. He also offered to send the recording to the carers, which they accepted. At the end of the interview he informed the carers that he would have his report completed within a week. This would be sent to the agency, and the carers would be notified of the outcome by the agency.

The foster carers had the opportunity to debrief after the interview. They were relieved that this part of the process was over. Overall, they felt heard, respected and that they had a fair hearing.

Although the CIMS process can be very stressful for foster carers, investigators can lessen the distress by being as transparent as possible, being clear about how the process runs, offering foster carers support, providing information in a timely manner and keeping carers informed throughout this process. Foster carers should also be made aware of the appeals processes. The FCAV continues to advocate for a simpler and more streamlined CIMS process for foster carers.

COVID-19 | Caring for yourself and others

At the time of going to print, the Australian Government declared the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Accordingly, the Federal and State Governments are adopting a precautionary approach in preparing for potential impacts to services. In keeping with this, the DHHS is taking a proactive approach in informing and supporting organisations, including FCAV and Agencies to ensure minimal impacts to service delivery continuity and wherever possible, contribute to the rapid and confident recovery of individuals, communities and services.

We recognise the critical role you as carers have in keeping children and young people safe and well, as is impacts of the outbreak of this virus are felt for you, your family and other household members. Consider your needs and that of those in your care, and to keep them front of mind while we navigate any challenges that might arise in the coming weeks and months. This will include working together with your agency and care teams.

Access the following links and familiarise yourself with up-to-date Federal and Victorian Health resources regarding

COVID-19 and the process governments are taking to contain the virus, including practical things to do to help minimise transmission. If you are concerned, call the Victorian Coronavirus Hotline on **1800 675 398**. For more information, visit: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus And/or the Commonwealth response at: www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert

As you will have seen in the media and possibly experienced yourself in going about your day to day activities, community members responses to reports regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19) are varied. To ensure you are responding and managing you and your household needs please refer to the resources and guides found in the above links and if you have any worries or concerns, liaise with your Agency as required.

We'll stay in contact with the DHHS and our Agency colleagues and update you as relevant information becomes available.

As always, FCAV is here to assist you as needed, so please don't hesitate to contact us.

Carer COMMUNITY & SKILLS

carer • KAFÉ

Kinship and Foster Care Education

2020 CALENDAR Please find enclosed this year's statewide Learning and Development calendar. We hope you find the sessions interesting and useful to you in your role as a carer. Remember: we can provide support for travel and babysitting to help you get to a session, so contact the host agency if you require this support.

More detail at www.carerkafe.org.au



SARAH NAISH (UK) COMING TO CARER KAFE!

Before attending the National Conference as the Keynote speaker, we have the privilege of hosting Sarah Naish, founder of the National Association of Therapeutic Parents, in two masterclasses:

- Monday 31st August 2020
- Wednesday 2nd September 2020



Times and locations will be confirmed soon – make sure you follow us on Facebook to keep up to date: www.facebook.com/carerkafe.

ABOUT THE TRAINER:

Sarah's Masterclass is focused on practical ways to provide safety (from the child's perspective), connection, cause and effect links and more whilst maintaining carers' health and well-being and overcoming compassion fatigue. It includes a copy of her latest book and online membership for all carers.

NEW SESSION FOR CARERS AND THEIR YOUNG PEOPLE FOSTERING RESILIENCE – YOUTH EDITION

Bring the young person/people in your care aged 9-18 to engage in resilience building exercises and work together to create a Resilience Action Plan. The session will be followed by a meal, giving young people a chance to hang out with each other and chat with Michael.



ABOUT THE TRAINER:

Michael Place spent nine years in the US care system, this experience gave him a passion for advocacy and change.

After care, Michael began his career as an educator and advocate for the LGBT community, winning an award from Janet Jackson. Michael now works as an International Public Speaker, Trainer and Resilience coach. He holds an MA in Trauma & Resilience from Antioch University in Los Angeles and a Graduate Certificate in Education from Monash University.

ONLINE TRAINING

For those carers who find it difficult to find time to attend training - grab a tea, put your feet up and check out our online training, including course modules, webinars and podcasts – available on our website: carerkafe.org.au/online-learning

Raising Expectations

Centre for Excellence
in Child and Family Welfare Inc.



YOUNG PEOPLE: LEARNING AND THE POWER OF POSSIBILITY WITH GRAY POEHNELL

Reflecting on last year's events hosted by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and the Department of Education and Training.

Raising Expectations and the Department of Education and Training held two workshops in October last year for professionals working with young people in care with visiting Canadian careers expert, Gray Poehnell. The workshops focused on young people in Out of Home Care, their learning and the power of possibility.

Workshops helped participants identify and apply strategies, tools and approaches to motivate and engage students in their learning and career education, including working with young people who have or are disconnecting from their learning, by starting with topics of interest and relevance to each individual, and identifying their connections to community, culture and other support networks. Shifting the language we use to foster hope, creativity and imagination to that which is person-centred, solution and strengths-focused, increases the opportunity for meaningful engagement.

Read more about the workshops and access practical resources via the OPEN portal: www.outcomes.org.au/blog/event-reflection-gray-poehnell-canadian-careers-expert/

Kym Peake attends FCAV BOARD MEETING



We were so pleased to have Kym Peake, Secretary of Department of Health and Human Services, attend the FCAV meeting of the FCAV Board of Directors on 11 February, 2020.

Kym heard from our CEO and Board members about the range of issues being advocated by the FCAV, including an overview of the Client Incident Management System (CIMS) process and its stressful impacts on carers, even when cleared of allegations. This included outlining the significant time commitment made by our

Carer Support Team when supporting carers through a CIMS investigation for which the FCAV is not specifically funded.

Kym heard from the Board in relation to the recently released Carer Strategy: *Strong carers, stronger children* and the need for funding to implement the improvements to services and supports for carers outlined in the Strategy.

The FCAV initiative to pursue collaboration with other key organisations to actively raise the issue of unregistered Births for children and young people in homebased care was also a focus.

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

The FCAV has attended meetings and had discussions with Community Service Organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in local bushfire zones this summer. It has been an exercise in shared skills and effective practice between agencies as they move from crisis to recovery. There will be lessons-learned in terms of logistical management and strengthened leaving early plans as we prepare for safe and effective responses to disaster in the future.

The FCAV has been offering advice and an independent source of counsel to some affected carer households via our Carer Support Team and we encourage you to contact them on the hotline: **9416 4292** over the next weeks and months with any questions related to the impact of the fires on your child/ren or young people and your caring role. The fall-out from shortened holidays, or extra financial outlay, stress, smoke, school closures or relocation may not yet even be apparent and recognising the recovery effort of families and communities in bushfire zones will be a long-term exercise. Agencies were responsible for advising the Victorian Government on the coordination of their individual efforts to keep families with children and young people in care safe and identified. The FCAV was so impressed by the allegiance and localised teamwork that went into ensuring every carer household and child in care was safe and accounted for and their ongoing support since.

The Victorian Government has put in place a new agency - Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV). The agency sits within the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Further updates regarding the work of Bushfire Recovery Victoria are available at www.vic.gov.au/brv.

We expect to hear from carers well into the year who may need support with the fallout of dislocation or re-traumatising for the children in their care this past summer.

Message from **MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION**, Luke Donnellan



All around Victoria every day, foster carers like you open their hearts and their homes to children and young people who can't live with their families. It is you who provides a safe and supportive home whether that is overnight or for several years.

We know the system isn't perfect and there is still more to be done to better support carers like you and the young people in your care. Additionally, we know that many more foster carers are needed.

To combat this, we recently launched Victoria's first ever strategy to better support home-based carers – Strong carers, stronger children: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/strong-carers-stronger-children

Developed for carers, by carers, this strategy acknowledges the challenges faced by carers.

It recognises the unique challenges faced by carers in meeting the complex needs of children and young people in care, and in providing a supportive home environment that creates positive outcomes.

The strategy sets out six goals to support carers to ensure they are well-informed and prepared, that they are provided with better support and training, and that they feel valued and empowered.

It also commits to maintaining children and young people's connection to their family where possible, finding appropriate care

arrangements and long-term stability for children and young people in care, either by reuniting them with their family or providing a permanent home.

Strong Carers, Stronger Children will be actioned over the next five years. It is one of many steps we are taking towards better supporting carers just like you and the children you care for.

On behalf of the Victorian Government and the whole community, thank you for your hard work and dedication. You are making a real difference to the lives of Victoria's most vulnerable children.

**The Hon Luke Donnellan MP
Minister for Child Protection**

Clarifying the Investigations Process

The FCAV has been working closely with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop detailed information for both carers and agencies to explain the interaction of the Client Incident Management System (CIMS), Reportable Conduct Scheme and the Suitability Panel Process. The material is being developed after both FCAV and the DHHS recognised the operation and interaction of the investigations processes across all the schemes was poorly understood. In particular it has been recognised that carers needed more detailed information so that they could better understand the different investigation stages and so that they could make informed choices. It is expected that DHHS will release the draft information package for public comment in the first half of 2020.

Announcing a new process for Birth Registrations

Following our extensive and forthright advocacy across the sector about the failure to identify and register births of some children in care in a timely manner, the DHHS will be actively looking into and addressing the cases identified by FCAV where a birth registration has not been gained.

In addition to taking action on the identified cases, we have met with the DHHS and advocated more broadly for widespread improvements to occur with Births, Deaths and Marriages to improve and streamline the birth registration process. The DHHS has agreed to promote with staff the importance of registering births and to consider the systemic barriers that may delay or prevent birth registration.

This is a major achievement to address systemic failure from the State for both the children and carers in exercising their human right to an identity. The FCAV welcomes the Department's willingness to work with the FCAV to address carer's concerns about this issue.

If you are, despite working with your agency and the child's case

manager, facing barriers and lengthy delays in gaining a birth registration please get in touch with the FCAV with the following details so that your case can be followed up:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Location
- Court order (if known)
- Agency (if relevant)

Please email Rowan Pulford with an inquiry: r.pulford@fcav.org.au including the above information for the child/ren or young people in your care or ring Rowan Pulford on **03 9416 4292** (Wednesday or Thursday) if you wish to discuss your case further.

Carer Voices | BEING HEARD



This International Women's Day, 8 March 2020, the Foster Care Association of Victoria highlighted the sacrifices women who provide foster care are often 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 salaries 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 rates at level one and two are below parity with other states for no obvious reason, and the majority of placements are assessed at level one" Samantha Hauge, CEO, 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? Read more in our Media Release here: www.fcav.org.au/news/media-iwd2020



fcav
foster care
association
of victoria

Contact us

Foster Care Association of Victoria
Level 1, 398 Smith Street
Collingwood Vic 3066
Telephone: (03) 9416 4292
Email: admin@fcav.org.au
Website: www.fcav.org.au

Stay in touch with the Foster Care Association online:



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.



clubCREATE is an exclusive club for children and young people aged 0 to 25 who are in care or have a care experience.

It connects children and young people together and links them to CREATE programs and services nationally. Best of all, it is FREE to join!

create.org.au/what-we-do/clubcreate/

FCAV recommends all children and young people with a care experience become members.

CREATE Your Future is a program run by CREATE specifically for their older members.

The CREATE Your Future Grants are now open! If you're 15–25 with a statutory care experience, you can apply for grants for education and training, IT, driving lessons and travel and conferences. Applications close 5pm May 8th. Head to: create.org.au/what-we-do/create-your-future-2/create-your-future-grants for more information or to apply!



Entertainment Book Fundraiser



The FCAV has teamed up the Entertainment Book as a way to fundraise for the organisation and provide carers and their supporters with a range of discounted family activities and events around the state.

If you plan to take the children to the movies, the aquarium, Luna

Park or out for dinner throughout the year, a membership may bring you great savings.

Carers, share with your friends, family and supporters so they can receive fantastic family discounts with the Entertainment Memberships. Remember, every membership sold also supports the work of the FCAV! Check out the new digital memberships here: www.entertainmentbook.com.au/orderbooks/95c6329

www.fcav.org.au

ABN: 30 747 101 099



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