



CARING TOGETHER

Information and news for foster and kinship carers in South Australia



Message from the Chief Executive

Dear carers

I am honoured to take on the role of Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection.

Before I take this opportunity to introduce myself, I'd like to thank you for all you do to support children and young people in South Australia.

Your inspiring contribution to provide a loving home, and the key role you play in ensuring children reach their full potential does not go unnoticed.

I am keen to meet as many of you as I can, to hear directly about how we can better make sure you are informed, supported, consulted, valued and respected.

As for me, I have spent much of my career working with diverse communities across the education, health and corrections systems in both Australia and the UK, and have experienced the child protection system from many angles.

Most recently, I have been a Senior Executive as Head of the Office of the Early Years. A key focus was bringing together support and services for children and young people, and I will draw on this experience in my new role.

Within all complex systems, we need to look for opportunities where we can make significant change, which will be one of my biggest priorities. I'm pleased to see that much work is underway to progress the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Foster and Kinship Care and I look forward to helping to guide this.

This edition of *Caring Together* gives focus to recent events marking National Reconciliation Week and National Sorry Day, recognising the important opportunity for reflection that they offer our sector. We still have so much work to do to close the gap for Aboriginal children and young people in our state, and I am deeply committed to keeping this at the forefront of DCP's work.

I hope that you enjoy reading.

Jackie Bray

Chief Executive, Department for Child Protection



Dear Carers

Thank you for your ongoing, remarkable commitment to caring for children and young people – you are a crucial part of the child protection and family support system.

As DCP welcomes Jackie Bray and drives forward new initiatives to support and empower you in your caring roles, I am optimistic about what lies ahead.

With cost of living pressures continuing to take hold, I am so pleased that we have been able to deliver an increase to foster and kinship carer payments. You can read more about this change, and other 2023 State Budget initiatives for child protection, on page 6.

I was also delighted to recently announce the creation of a Carer Council, which you can read about in more detail in this edition of *Caring Together* on page 6. The need for strong and genuine consultation with carers was recommended by Dr Fiona Arney in her report on the Independent Inquiry into Foster and Kinship Care. The establishment of the Carer Council directly responds to her recommendation. We have much to learn from your experiences and wisdom, and I am deeply committed to listening to you and acting as the Carer Council gets underway and beyond. Thank you to Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA for their stewardship of this important body.

Our work progressing Dr Arney's recommendations builds on and aligns with other recent initiatives, including the establishment of the Child Protection Expert Group, to help drive long-term change in child protection, and the review of South Australia's child protection legislation. The report on the review's consultation process was tabled in State Parliament in March. I look forward to continuing conversations with you as we work towards introducing changes to the legislation and to supporting and empowering you in your vital caring role.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy reading this edition of *Caring Together*!

Thank you again for all that you do to make a positive difference in the lives of children and young people.

The Hon Katrine Hildyard MP
Minister for Child Protection



National Sorry Day – a time for reflection

National Sorry Day was held on 26 May to reflect on the ongoing impacts of the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and communities, known as 'The Stolen Generations'.

It marked the eve of National Reconciliation Week and was a time to reflect on the intergenerational trauma and grief of the Stolen Generations caused by historical injustices. It is important to think deeply about the role we can play in the healing of Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants, through working with and supporting Aboriginal families towards the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

The department is working more with independent Aboriginal community organisations to ensure the voices of children and young people and their families are heard and being listened to as we work together to find solutions to keep Aboriginal children safely at home.

Involving Aboriginal people in decision making that affects them is a significant step toward reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and young people in care. This is an important target within the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and one of the priorities in the department's strategic plan.

For more about National Sorry Day, visit Reconciliation Australia's website:
reconciliation.org.au





Be a voice for reconciliation

National Reconciliation Week took place between 27 May and 3 June, with cultural activities held across the state.

This year's theme was Be a Voice for Generations, encouraging Australians to be a voice for reconciliation during our everyday lives – where we live, work and socialise.

The Department for Child Protection's offices hosted events throughout the week celebrating communities' shared histories, culture and achievements and exploring how each of us can join the national reconciliation effort.

Among the highlights for DCP was the Indigenous Round local football match hosted by Salisbury North Football Club, sponsored by the department.

The event took place Saturday 27 May, and was organised by former Norwood, Port Adelaide and Glenelg player Eugene Warrior, featuring an Elders' lunch, a meet and greet with Aboriginal football players and family activities.

Throughout the year, the department is guided by the DCP Reconciliation Action Plan. Recent initiatives have included children, young people and staff completing artworks and participating in boomerang painting and throwing, as well as cooking lessons featuring native food. A Kurna and Ngarrindjeri cultural connection day was held in April, which included cultural teachings, dance and language. Uncle Moogy Sumner led the workshops, which aimed to enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's wellbeing and help them strengthen their cultural identity.

Peak body for Aboriginal children and young people

The development of an independent peak body for Aboriginal children and young people in South Australia is underway.

In response to sustained advocacy from Aboriginal community leaders, this long-anticipated independent body will be part of a \$3.2 million investment from the state government to empower Aboriginal community-led decision making on issues affecting Aboriginal children and young people. This is a critical move in genuinely hearing the voices, aspirations and priorities of Aboriginal children and young people.

The investment follows a report from SNAICC – the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people at the national level – which supported a community-led consultation process around the peak body in South Australia.

Once established, the peak body will be responsible for:

- Partnering with government to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the child protection system, including in care.
- Increasing the footprint of the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) sector to provide services to Aboriginal children, young people and families.
- Maintaining a clear focus on protecting and promoting the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people.

The state government's commitment to establish a peak body for Aboriginal children and young people is included in the South Australian Implementation Plan to support the achievement of Target 12 of Closing the Gap, which seeks to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care by 45% by 2031.



Trauma training brings opportunities

When Aimee took on the care of her second cousin, she wanted him to have the same opportunities as any other child, despite the trauma he had experienced.

Aimee says it was vital she and wife Bronwyn were aware of how that trauma would affect his behaviour – and a new free online course has helped broaden their understanding.

The course, *Caring for children and young people with trauma*, is available free of charge to all foster and kinship carers in South Australia, and has been commissioned by the Department for Child Protection (DCP) and developed by the Australian Childhood Foundation's Centre for Excellence in Therapeutic Care.

"We really wanted to go in with as much knowledge as we could so that he doesn't get lost – so he gets the support he needs through every stage of his life and through every challenge that he has," Aimee says.

"We want him to have the best opportunities and the chance to make something of himself. It was really important for us to have the tools behind us to ensure that happens for him.

"We were looking for (training) relevant not just now or when he's 7 or 8 but something that would help us move through all his ages."

Aimee has completed the online program, which helps carers develop their knowledge and skills to provide trauma-responsive care to children and young people, assisting with their recovery and healing.



Kinship carers Bronwyn (left) and Aimee

The course also helps develop a better understanding of neurobiology, and the impact trauma has on child development.

The program includes separate courses for foster and kinship carers, responding to the unique variations in family-based carers' roles. A third course is being developed specifically for Aboriginal carers.

Aimee says the program helped her understand aspects of trauma and how it affects children, and it was convenient for her to access from her own home in the state's South-East.

"It was really good that it could be done at my own pace, and I didn't have to be in a structured classroom setting," she says.

Carers who have not already registered their interest in the **Caring for children and young people with trauma** course can do so online.

Spotlight on...

the DCP Disability and Development Program

DCP's Disability and Development Program is marking its 5-year milestone.

DCP's Disability and Development Program plays a critical role in supporting the developmental and disability related needs of children and young people in care. The program has three multi-disciplinary teams – the Therapeutic Carer Support Team, the Specialist Services Team and the Regional Disability Team. Allied health professionals in the program include psychologists, occupational therapists, developmental educators, speech pathologists and social workers with specialist skills in children and young people's development.

The Regional Disability Team works to support eligible children and young people to access the

National Disability Insurance Scheme and the specialist services it funds.

As foster carers and kinship carers, understanding and responding to the developmental, disability and trauma needs of the children and young people you care for can be challenging at times. The Therapeutic Carer Support Team recognises this and uses its expertise in child development to provide support to family-based carers who are experiencing these challenges. You can read more about the work of this team on page 6 in a Q&A with DCP Senior Clinician, Rene Stefanou, from the Therapeutic Carer Support Team.

The Specialist Services Team plays a similar role in supporting residential care workers around the needs of the young people living in residential care settings.

If you believe that this program is relevant to a child or young person in your care, please discuss this with your child's case worker.

Signs of developmental delay in children aged 0-5 years

Developmental delay means that a child has not gained the skills that are expected by a certain age. Delays can occur with speech and language, thinking and learning, movement and balance, and social or emotional abilities.

There are lots of reasons why a child might experience developmental delay, including neglect, traumatic experiences, and disability. Children in care are more likely to experience developmental delays and these are more likely to be identified late.

Early intervention is key so that children with developmental delays can access the right supports to grow their skills and thrive. DCP has produced a checklist of potential signs of delay or disability. You can access the list via this [link](#).

If you are noticing things that worry you, let your child's case worker know about your concerns so that an assessment can be organised and referrals for support can be put in place.

Supporting carers when children and young people are missing or absent

We know that when a child or young person is not where they should be it can be a stressful time for carers. Children and young people can be very vulnerable in these situations. Even if we know where the child or young person is, they may still be at risk and need continued support to help them to return to placement.

DCP has produced a video and a fact sheet for carers to support them in knowing what to do if a child or young person they are caring for is missing or absent. The **video** and **fact sheet** can be accessed on the DCP online platform for carers.

You should always contact South Australia Police on 000 if you are concerned that the child or young person is in immediate or life threatening danger and contact DCP after to let them know. Your foster care support worker or kinship care worker can also support you with understanding what to do.



Helping children kick goals through sport

Sport and physical activity are an important part of a child's development – but meeting their cost can be challenging, at times.

There are several state government initiatives that may help the children you care for access sports programs, allowing them to connect with their peers, forge new friendships and improve their time management skills.

The Sports Vouchers scheme allows parents and carers to save up to \$100 a year per child on sports, dance and learn to swim fees. These are available for children across South Australia from reception to Year 9.

The vouchers are among initiatives promoted under the Department for Child Protection's Investing in their future initiative, which gives priority access to services for children and young people with a care experience.

For more information on the Sports Vouchers program, such as eligibility and approved providers, or to download a voucher, visit sportsvouchers.sa.gov.au.

The Department for Child Protection is also partnering with the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing and regional organisations to develop new pathways for children and young people to access sport.

In the South-East, state government funding will go towards linking children in care with local sports clubs, based on their interests, through the help of the Limestone Coast Local Government Association.

In the Port Lincoln region, the department is partnering with West Coast Youth Community Service to help connect young adolescent females in care with sporting and recreation communities.

This will involve reducing barriers such as fees and the cost of equipment, along with addressing transport issues.

Roving Reporter



with

Rene Stefanou

Senior Clinician,
Therapeutic Carer Support Team



We spoke to Senior Clinician, Rene Stefanou from DCP's Therapeutic Carer Support Team. Rene's role involves providing a therapeutic approach to supporting kinship and foster carers around the developmental needs of the children and young people in their care.

What sort of support do you provide to carers as a Therapeutic Support Team worker?

Our team provides valuable support to foster carers and kinship carers. This assistance is vital in ensuring our carers feel they have the knowledge and confidence to provide care to children and young people with very complex developmental needs and trauma histories. If there is a diagnosed disability, the team also helps carers to understand and support specific developmental needs.

Why is your role important for carers?

Many children in care have experienced some level of developmental trauma and a large proportion of children and young people in care have a disability or developmental delay. Their complex developmental needs and behaviours can at times be difficult to make sense of. Carers often need additional therapeutic and developmental support around these complexities. The support the Disability and Development Program Therapeutic Carer Support Team provides focuses on strengthening carer-child relationships and promoting good developmental outcomes for children and young people in care.

New Carer Council to be established

Family-based carers in South Australia will soon have a dedicated platform to support ongoing reform of the child protection system through a new Carer Council.

The Carer Council is a key recommendation from Dr Fiona Arney's Independent Inquiry into Foster and Kinship Care, and recognises the need for strong and genuine consultation with carers.

12 current carers will be appointed by the Minister for Child Protection and will include kinship and foster carers from both metropolitan and regional areas. Aboriginal carers will also form part of the membership.

The state government has engaged Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA, as the peak advocacy body for family-based carers in SA, to establish and provide ongoing support to the Carer Council.

You can reach out to them directly at carercouncil@cfc-sa.org.au for more information on membership.

Carer payments to increase

Foster and kinship carers will receive additional payments to assist with cost of living pressures, as part of the 2023 State Budget.

From 1 July, family-based carers in South Australia will receive an additional \$50 per fortnight for each child in their care under the age of 16. The changes to the carer payment scheme also incorporate a 4.8 per cent payment boost to all carers.

Overall, the 2023-24 State Budget provides a \$216.6 million boost for the state's child protection system, including investments in early intervention, better support for families and responding to recent child protection reviews.

The budget expenditure includes \$4 million to increase the number of kinship care assessments undertaken, ensuring kinship placements are explored for children and young people to support them in keeping strong connections with family and culture.

Child safety and family violence in the spotlight

Speakers from across the country converged in Adelaide earlier this year to discuss child safety and domestic and Aboriginal family violence.

KWY Aboriginal Corporation hosted the National Aboriginal Child Safety and Domestic Violence Summit 2023: Strong Families, Safer Children from 29-31 March at the Pullman Hotel.

KWY Chief Executive Officer Craig Rigney said speakers brought together their diverse perspectives on child safety, which he labelled "one of the most critical issues facing our nation today".

The event stimulated discussions regarding addressing national challenges, he said, "paving the way for a brighter, safer future for all Australians".

"The summit shed light on the importance of kinship care within the child protection sector, as a crucial aspect of protecting and supporting Aboriginal children and recognising the unique needs and strengths of kinship carers," Mr Rigney said. "(It) provided an important platform for meaningful dialogue and collaboration towards improving the lives and outcomes of Aboriginal children and families."

KWY provides services and support in a range of areas including domestic and family violence, child protection, youth work and kinship care.

Minister for Child Protection Katrine Hildyard was among keynote speakers at the summit.



Department for Child Protection Far North Office Manager Victoria Cobb

The program featured the Flame of Change Unifying Support (FOCUS) Awards and a Gala Dinner, showcasing the work of individuals and organisations in the areas of domestic and family violence, child protection and homelessness.

DCP Far North Office Manager Victoria Cobb won the award for Outstanding Achievement by an Individual in the Child Protection sector.

Ms Cobb's recent work includes representing DCP in the development of a new service centre in Umuwa for the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands. This service will provide space for government staff from agencies and services including South Australia Police, the Department for Child Protection and SA Health's Child Protection Services, to collaborate.

Ms Cobb also initiated and organised Pitjantjatjara language and cultural classes with Iwiri Aboriginal Corporation and UniSA to be delivered to the Far North DCP team.



In the news

Family magazine *Kiddo* shared the stories of carers Robert, Crystal and Wesley, and Sean and Amanda, as part of an in-depth focus on the power of foster care.

You can read their story on **Kiddo's website**

KIDDO

OPENING YOUR HEART AND HOME

THE POWER OF FOSTER CARE

Becoming a foster carer is an incredible way to make a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable children and young people in South Australia. Foster care is vital to provide safe and stable homes to children who are unable to live with their birth families. As a foster carer, you can provide a child with a nurturing environment that helps them feel secure and loved. This can transform their wellbeing and help children reach their full potential.





Noticeboard

Ambulance cover for young people up to 21 years

A reminder young people transitioning from care can access ambulance cover for emergency hospital transport until they turn 21, under an agreement with the SA Ambulance Service.

It's all part of our Investing in their future initiative which gives children and young people with a care experience priority access to a range of services. This includes services from health, education and housing to recreational activities, training and employment

For more information, speak with your DCP case worker or visit the **Ambulance cover page**.

Change to the service delivery model

Thank you to the carers who provided feedback about the recent changes to the boundary realignment of some DCP offices.

By now, all carers affected have been contacted by their case manager or a representative from their new office.

We understand that any changes to your case management arrangements can cause concern and we're committed to working with you to make the transition as smooth as possible.

If you have any questions at all about this process, or would like more information, please speak to your DCP office manager.



CFKC-SA Membership

As a foster or kinship carer, did you know you are eligible for free membership of Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA, the peak representative body for carers in South Australia?

Sign up today to access free advocacy, information and support, as well as opportunities to connect with other carers across the state.

As a member, you will be invited to provide your voice to shape and improve the child protection system for foster and kinship carer families across SA.

To find out more, scan the QR code, visit cfc-sa.org.au or call **1800 732 272**.



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