



# Connecting Foster Carers – SA Inc

advocate support connect inform

serving aboriginal, relative, kin and foster carers in South Australia

## CFC-SA Inc AGM: October 23, 2013

### Chairperson Report: Jo Jarvis

This AGM signifies 12 months since I have been in the position of Chair for CFC-SA Inc. What a ride! I thank Maureen Madden for building such an excellent rapport with the sector which I have been able to continue. Maureen unfortunately resigned from Board in July this year. We miss her experience, wisdom and integrity.

Gemma Noone served the Board and Carers for 10 months, resigning late August. Her skills with the newsletter, Family Fun Day activities, raising the perspective of single carers, and energy were much appreciated.

Naomi Hicks also joined the Board for a couple of months. Unfortunately, due to family reasons, she was not able to continue.

I wish these 3 wonderful women all the best in the future and am richer for having spent time with them.

Foster Care in South Australia has seen a 9% rise in the financial years 2011 to 2012: 2584 children being supported by Families SA as at 30 June 2012. 85.2% on GOM 18 orders. <sup>1</sup>

As at our last newsletter publication, there were approx 2,400 families providing care to children and young people in SA. Our current funding = \$82,140 per year. This equates to \$34.23 per family per year to provide our services.

The needs of Foster and Kinship families continue to grow, with calls to our 1800 number rising to 241 last financial year (as at June 30 2013). This is a 110% increase since June 30 2012 (114 calls).

Current CFC-SA Inc membership is 512; 16% increase since last AGM (442 members).

### **Carer Support**

Growth in calls to our 1800 number has been significant. More regional carers are calling this year.

Website contacts have dropped to 37 from 64 last year.

Topics raised via these mediums and direct contact with Caring families include (in order of frequency):

- Concern re Families SA staff practice is number 1, with this topic representing approx 40%. Carers not being included in decision making, feeling bullied, not being heard



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regarding impact on children, disagreeing with recorded notes of meetings, having children removed with limited (and at times no) discussion, limited opportunity to present their perspective and lack of avenue to address poor FSA practice have been the key issues.

- Lack of support by Agency approx 16%. Key issues: Support workers not advocating for family, insufficient relevant training (inc. Orientation), lack of suitable respite and subsequent burnout, changes to programs and staff causing anxiety for families, esp Kinship.
- Care Concerns & Special Investigation is next, representing approx 14%.
- The balance is general enquiries on topics such as Financial/Centrelink, Becoming a Carer, OHS, Superannuation, OPG, Freedom of Information.

Support was also offered via:

- Groups gathering regularly around metro area inc Southern Playgroup, Grandparents in city, Western suburbs, Glenelg and Hills.
- Family Fun Day in January in City in place of December Christmas Party. 65 people attended – lower than we anticipated.
- Recharge #3 in June with John & Stacy Blythe in June. 230 people attended. 51 Workers in the Sector attended, representing 10 Organisations. One couple traveled all the way from Quorn due to positive feedback from previous event. An accommodation voucher donated by Arkaba Hotel was given to them.
- Regional visits to Port Pirie and Kadina during Carers Week in August
- Speaking with Carers at Carers Week Dinner in August
- Hosting opportunities for Carers to gather together with FSA leaders and raise their concerns (x3)
- Information Sessions:
  - Consents and Decision in Oct 2012
  - SERU session in June 2013
- Upgrade of Website. The new website went live in January 2013. Limited time and ability hindered content being added. Kate Copeland was hired in June to do this and is doing a brilliant job.

## Sector Support

There has been much happening within the sector this past year, with the Families SA redesign starting in January. The impact on Staff, Agencies, Caring families and Children has been significant. We trust once the dust settles good practice will be seen.

CFC advocate for the needs of carers in many ways.

Over the past year we have met with Leaders from FSA and NGOs and attended the following groups/meetings:



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- Carer Assessment and Review Working Group including contributing to the development of practice guides.
- Resicare Director seeking ways to build connections between young people and families. These discussions ended when Dana Shen left the role.
- Office of Guardian inquiry into Impact of Moving Placements. Invitation was extended to CFC members also.
- Care Concern Unit: Review with Policy Director Tony Kemp. We also met with CCU Manager Catherine Harmon and Shirley Smith on this. It is a complex topic and one that needs clearer practice guides for staff and agencies. We will continue to advocate for this area as it impacts harshly on families exposed.
- Regular involvement with Kinship Care Working Group, Families SA office Staff/Carer gatherings in Hills and Aberfoyle Park.
- CAFWA monthly including Partnership in Practice Forums with Families SA leaders, and Community Cafe Conference. This group provides a good opportunity to raise Carers perspective at Agency level.
- CREATE. Promotion of their events, involvement with their Report Card.
- Kinship Care Working Group
- Family Based Care Forums and Working groups
- Helping Hands
- Dept Education and Child Development Research via Square Holes
- Meet with Minister Portolesi and Minister Rankine and staff, including recently considering possibility of Foster/Kin families accessing SA Civil Appeals Tribunal. Legislation is currently before Legislative Council. Both NSW and QLD have these.
- Membership on Anglicare and Life Without Barriers Reference Groups in SA
- Membership on Life without Barriers National Reference Group
- Families SA leaders re redesign
- Families SA Customer Liason re concerns, system and communication strategies

## **Other Activities:**

During October 2012 10 delegates attended the National Foster Care Conference in Melbourne; 6 Board members, 4 CFC members

20 people were nominated to attend Clipsal V8 Car racing at the Premier's invitation

Met with Steve James (Acatar) re support for Care Concerns

Met with Ivan Raymond re possibility of Training

Have been participating with Australian Peak Foster Care Body (Australian Foster and Kinship Care Partnership) via quarterly teleconference and email

Exploring alternative Office space, possibly with CREATE in Jan 2014

CFC-SA Inc's current Contract expires at June 30 2014. Hopefully this will provide opportunity for increasing our services and practice.



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Things to explore and aim for over the coming 12 months:

At a Board level: Set a clear strategic plan and strategies, including appointing staff. Move to a more suitable Office space, amend our Constitution and create new logo and promotional material.

Re Carer Support: Consider ways to improve training and support for carers; hosting training as able including rolling training opportunities out to Regional areas.

Continue to build a strong sense of respectful partnership between Govt, Agency and Caring families and seek ways to repair damaged relationships.

The Families SA redesign has great potential with its family focus and solution based casework. I believe continuing to build our profile and bringing the Carers perspective in all areas should be our priority for the coming year.

Thank you to all the Board members over the past year for your support and commitment. It's together we can make a difference.

Jo Jarvis  
Chair

<sup>1</sup> Figures from [gcyp.sa.gov.au](http://gcyp.sa.gov.au) "Statistics about children in Care"