



Connecting Foster Carers – SA Inc

The peak body for foster and kinship carers in South Australia

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Foster and kinship carers risk prison and fines under new Bill

Connecting Foster Carers – SA Inc (CFC-SA) is submitting a response to the draft *Children and Young People (Safety) Bill 2016 (SA)* seeking changes to address, protect and improve carers' rights.

CFC-SA CEO Amanda Porter states: "CFC-SA supports the introduction of new legislation and celebrates the inclusion and acknowledgement of carers as an essential part of the child protection system. Foster and kinship carers currently provide family-based care for over 80 per cent of the children in care and getting it right for carers means better outcomes for all children and young people."

CFC-SA is seeking further amendments to ensure carers are not at any risk of being imprisoned for any term, or fined for any sum, beyond those imposed on the public generally. In addition, CFC-SA proposes the right of carers to be heard to be absolute, subject to the best interests of the child or young person, and not discretionary.

Previously, CFC-SA has successfully advocated for the inclusion of carers' rights to challenge decisions that affect them and the children in their care at the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT). CFC-SA now seeks a provision to allow for urgent hearings at SACAT in relation to matters that arise from the new legislation.

"In many cases the strongest relationship a child or young person in care forms is the relationship with their carer. CFC-SA believes that if the government wants to recruit and retain volunteer carers to care for the most vulnerable children and young people in secure, stable, inexpensive home based care, then the government must protect and empower carers for the benefit of the children and young people for whom they care," Ms Porter said.

The full response submitted by CFC-SA is available via their website: www.cfc-sa.org.au .

Carers and members of the community who want to have their say on the draft Bill can do so via the YourSay website until 5pm Friday 27 January 2017.

Media enquiries:

Amanda Porter
Chief Executive Officer
Connecting Foster Carers – SA Inc

M: 0447 428 167
E: amanda@cfc-sa.org.au
W: www.cfc-sa.org.au