



Government
of South Australia

Hon Susan Close MP

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C/o Ms Amanda Porter
CEO
Connecting Foster Carers
PO Box 2052
PROSPECT SA 5082

Dear South Australian foster and kinship carers,

I would like to wish everyone a happy Foster and Kinship Carers' Week and take this opportunity to thank our carers for their invaluable contribution.

Carers provide a safe, caring and stable home environment for children and young people who have been through so much in their young lives.

The Department for Child Protection is undergoing significant reform following the Nyland Royal Commission. We have engaged with many of you regarding this reform and in particular, our Out of Home Care strategy.

Specific focus groups for carers were held earlier this year, as well as a Facebook Live session and a phone-in session. I would like to thank all the carers that took the time to provide valued input at these events.

I am committed to improving the way the department works with carers and, while we have a very long way to go, am pleased that we are slowly making some progress.

We know we need to give greater support to carers, as well as creating space for their voices in decision-making about the children in their care.

Since July 2017 we have new processes in place to better support the transfer of children under my guardianship to Other Person Guardianship (OPG).

We have three additional staff dedicated to OPG assessments and this is helping our proactive approach to identifying if OPG is in the best interests of each child in family-based care.

Minister for Education and Child Development
Minister for Higher Education and Skills

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There is also a new OPG Panel where the Child and Family Welfare Association of SA, Aboriginal Family Support Services and the department come together when required to provide independent oversight of OPG decisions. It is my intention that more children are placed under OPG, when it is safe to do so, and that this happens much quicker than it has.

The State Government has also passed through Parliament the new *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, which grants further rights to foster and kinship carers, promotes permanency and stability and encourages decision making as early as possible. Importantly, this includes a right for you to apply to the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) for review of certain decisions made by the Chief Executive. I want our department to be more transparent in its dealings with you and this is a very important part of that.

We are also putting a lot of effort and focus into moving children currently in commercial care to family-based care. To do this, the department needs more foster and kinship carers and to better understand your capacity as carers.

I have heard from numerous carers that they have room for more children than they are currently allowed. I have asked the department to discuss this with our non-government service providers and with you as the carer experts.

I look forward to further celebrating the extraordinary efforts of our foster and kinship carers at the Department for Child Protection's seventh annual central carer's dinner on Thursday 14 September 2017, and hope that carers are able to attend one of the events that are taking place across the week in various other locations.

I also encourage all little ones to take part in our inaugural drawing and writing competition. For more information please visit: <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/children-care/foster-and-kinship-carers-week-2017/say-thank-you-competition>.

Thank you for caring.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Susan Close'.

Susan Close
Minister for Education and Child Development

11 / 9 / 2017

