



child protection a fresh start.

CONFIDENTIAL

A fresh start: for foster and kinship carers

Foster and kinship carers are one of the government's most important allies in the child protection system. Thank you for your tireless support for the children and young people in your members' care. In recognition of this vital role, the Minister for Education and Child Development would like to personally outline some pivotal changes for foster and kinship carers that she believes would be of particular interest to *Connecting Foster Carers*.

As you know, Minister Close has long advocated that a key priority of the new system must be to reduce the number of children in emergency and commercial care, as this environment provides the least support and stability to children and their developmental needs. Where possible, children will be relocated into foster care. To support this, carers will receive better support in their roles and in their interactions with the government. There will also be more support for children leaving care, helping them successfully transition from care to adult life.

The Children and Young People (Safety) Bill is the government's consultation Bill to amend the *Children's Protection Act*. Combined with the government's response to the Nyland Royal Commission Report, this Bill contains exciting changes to better support foster and kinship carers.

- **Child Safety and Wellbeing Advisory Panel:** To ensure that the voice and experiences of carers are heard, foster and kinship carers will be represented on the Child Safety and Wellbeing Advisory Panel by Connecting Foster Carers as the nominated body.
- **Other Person Guardianship (Long Term Guardianship):** *The life they deserve* recommended significant reform to the Other Person Guardianship process. These changes will be implemented in the Children and Young People (Safety) Bill, and will make it easier for a carer to obtain long term guardianship of their foster or kinship child.
- **Four carer relationship managers** will be engaged to provide carers with support dealing with government processes and procedures. These relationship managers will provide carers with information about their rights and responsibilities, support better day-to-day decision making arrangements, and ensure that the contributions of carers are valued.
- **Access to information and decision-making rights:** A number of changes will be made to provide foster and kinship carers with more information about children coming into their care, and improved decision-making rights.
- **Attend Court as a party to proceedings:** This will continue under the new Bill. Carers may make an application to the court to be joined as a party to proceedings. It is up to the Court to decide whether a party is joined or not.
- **Make submissions to the Court with respect to a child or young person (even if not party to proceedings)** Foster and kinship carers will have the ability to make submissions to the Court about the child or children in their care.



child protection a fresh start.

- **Right to appeal decisions by the Chief Executive at South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT)** for the first time, SACAT will be granted jurisdiction to review decisions made by the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection. Foster and kinship carers will be able to apply to SACAT for an independent review of decisions made by the Chief Executive, including applications for OPG (soon to be called 'long term care'), involvement in decision-making processes, the approval of carers, assistance for persons leaving care and funeral arrangements for children and young people in care.
- **Family group conferencing:** carers may be able to attend the family group conference, along with the child or young person, members of the child or young person's family, and the child's advocate.
- **Internal review:** The Department for Child Protection is also working closely with carers to conduct a targeted internal review of kinship and foster care. This review aims to find ways to better support and promote family-based out-of-home care for children. It focuses on the needs of foster, kinship and specific child-only carers, creating strategies to better attract, retain and support them in their vital work.

Minister Close looks forward to strengthening the Minister's Office and Department for Child Protection's close working relationship with Connecting Foster Carers. We look forward to discussing these exciting new changes in person in the near future.