

Connecting Foster Carers – SA Inc (CFC-SA) is the peak body for foster and kinship carers in South Australia. Representing over 700 member households, CFC-SA has been advocating for changes which bring improvements for carers and acknowledges the important role of foster and kinship families, who care for 84% of the children and young people under guardianship in their own homes and are an essential part of the child protection system.

Yesterday CFC-SA received a communication from Minister Close's office highlighting specific areas within the Government's response to the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission report: *The life they deserve* (Nyland Report), and reviewed the full response released yesterday in the report, Child protection: *A fresh start*.

CFC-SA is pleased to see additional resources allocated towards foster and kinship care, and that opportunities for further review and improvements are being considered. CFC-SA congratulates Premier Weatherill and Minister Close on the introduction of the draft consultation *Children and Young People (Safety) Bill 2016* to parliament yesterday.

CFC-SA is thrilled to note that its advocacy efforts have been heard with the proposed inclusion of carers' rights to challenge decisions that affect them and the children in their care in the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT). CFC-SA are the only organisation who advocated for this important change and this inclusion has been made despite this recommendation being omitted by the Nyland Report. Kelly Ryan, CFC-SA board member and lawyer, states that 'subject to provisions of the Bill, carers may have the right to appeal decision that affect them and the children in their care to an independent, binding authority, something that has not been available to carers in SA until now.'

It appears that the Bill will also mean that carers will have an entitlement to access information about a child when a child is placed within their family. This is an issue carers have identified for a long time, and change will ensure more positive impacts for both children and carers.

In addition, there are some areas that CFC-SA will continue to address and seek further clarification. Two areas have been identified, firstly the government's intention to employ four departmental employees to act as relationship managers with carers. Given there is a conflict of interest when departmental employees seek to advise carers in relation to complaints against the department for whom they work, research demonstrates carers have a distrust for departmental employees and the Nyland Report recommended an independent organisation be funded to provide these services; CFC-SA is of the view that it would be better placed to advocate for carers and communicate with the department in this regard. The second area relates to the Bill - while proposes to allow the Youth Court to join carers as parties to proceedings at its discretion, CFC-SA believes this should be an absolute right and not discretionary.

CFC-SA looks forward to exploring areas impacting carers and developing improved foster and kinship strategies with the government and other agencies. CFC-SA's CEO, Amanda Porter has accepted the invitation to join the Child Safety and Wellbeing Panel and CFC-SA looks forward to working in partnership with government and other non-government bodies on child protection reform.

CFC-SA is hosting a General Meeting on Tuesday 6 December with special guest speaker Cathy Taylor, Chief Executive of Department for Child Protection. All foster and kinship carers and interested persons welcome. Details on CFC-SA website: www.cfc-sa.org.au.

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