

2019 National Foster and Kinship Care Conference

By Kathy Tapley

I would like to thank Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA. for the opportunity to attend the National Conference in Perth.

When I applied for the opportunity I honestly thought I wouldn't have a chance, so when Fiona called me to say that I had been selected I was shocked and in state of disbelief.

I arrived at the Airport and was introduced to the four lovely ladies that I would share the experience with, Fiona, Donna, Fleur, and Karen. Instantly I felt comfortable and supported for the journey across the country.

When we arrived at the Rendezvous Hotel at Scarborough, I was amazed by the location, the hotel and the room I had been provided, I felt so special.

There were some amazing speakers, the ones I was most impacted by, **Karl O'Callaghan** and the **Kids from Create**.

Karl discussed real life experience of being a carer, and the impacts on family life, the challenges and triumphs of his journey as Carer. It was refreshing to hear from a dad's perspective of the issues Carers have. I feel so often we are listening to the Mums but forget the Dads need support too.

The Kids from Create were amazing with sharing their stories and what they would like to see change with the system and their care experience. I gained so much from listening to this group of Kids that gave me strength to keep going as a Kinship carer.

Saturday Night function was amazing and my cheeks ached from the laughter, I laughed so much, I cried. I until then didn't realize how much I hadn't been laughing. I had an amazing night with Fiona, Donna, Fleur and Karen. Thank you so much girls for an amazing night.

In closing as a Kinship Carer you often feel isolated, challenged, fighting an uphill battle,

Becoming a Kinship Carer has divided my family and the support I once had is no longer there, the relationship with my sibling and extended family is at times strained because my husband and I couldn't stand by and let the children be absorbed in the system.

So thank you to **Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA** we now have a new support team and the experiences gained of the 2019 conference will stay with me for a very long time.