



## MEDIA RELEASE

4 June 2020

### **Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers COVID-19 Impact Survey**

Shortly after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, peak representative body Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA took the initiative to conduct a COVID-19 Impact survey with the Carer community to identify key areas of concern.

Many reported anxiety about the direct threat the virus posed to their family at home and to their extended families. Many reported being confused about the rules for safe interaction and others reported spending much extra time and effort doing what they felt they needed to do to keep their families safe.

Having children at home in isolation presented difficulties for Carers. This was especially the case where children had diagnosed conditions and were deprived of the education, social interaction and the therapy that they needed. Many reported pressure in trying to provide suitable home schooling, due to cost and availability of necessary schooling equipment.

Carers generally accepted the need for social distancing rules and complied but many reported that they had done so at a personal cost. Feelings of disconnectedness and uncertainty were commonly reported by survey respondents. Carers felt challenged by separation from their usual supports and respite services and the loss of important relationships.

Financial worries, arising from employment insecurity, the extra costs of providing care and fear for the future were reported by nearly half of the carers.

“Two things that presented most strongly in the survey was the importance of information and resources for Carers and the need to maintain interpersonal relationships for ongoing mental health and wellbeing” said CF&KC-SA CEO Fiona Endacott.

“In our response, we have prioritised the maintenance of interpersonal relationships, replacing our Morning Teas with online events enabling Carers to connect with their peers and be informed on content relating directly to their caring needs.

“We transitioned our Education and Kinship Reference Groups to a virtual platform and listened to our Carers regarding the timing of when these sessions should be held, to ensure maximum engagement during these trying times.

“We have encouraged Carers to take greater advantage of the opportunity to chat with members of our Peer Support Network, too.

“To try to address the personal stress reported in the survey, resilience coach Michael

Place is sharing his insights and techniques for managing stress in times of crisis in a series that includes video and audio podcasts and a webinar.

“And, of course, we are working harder than ever with our Department and NGO colleagues on the on the need for respite, financial support and mental health support that our carers are raising with us,” she said.

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