



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **CF&KC-SA Building on Successes for Carers**

Following the success of this year's National Foster & Kinship Care conference, hosted by Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA (CF&KC-SA) and the confirmation of funding for a further three years of the organisation's Carer Advocacy Service, the peak representative body for family based carers has laid out plans and commitments for the immediate future.

"We've achieved a great deal in the last few years," says CF&KC-SA chair Megan Hender, "but we can't rest on our laurels or simply consolidate our gains. The needs of carers, and the children they care for, are so great, we must push further into areas that benefit them.

"Our operational mantra is collaborative assertive advocacy, and that's what we'll be doing - in several directions," says Ms Hender.

Referencing the disproportionate number of Aboriginal children in care, she nominates greater engagement with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities as a priority for CF&KC-SA.

"Slowly but surely we're developing a positive dialogue with Aboriginal community, leaders and organisations, and we need to turn that into encouragement of families to come forward as foster or kinship carers. The Department of Child Protection's Aboriginal Placement Principle is impossible to satisfy without more Aboriginal carers, and we need to attract new carers."

Last month's national conference, with more than 400 participants, had several lasting benefits that can be built upon for the assistance of carers.

"For a start, we now have a bank of collateral information that will be accessible online for 12 months," Ms Hender says. "And we now have very positive relationships with foster and kinship care organisations nationally, as well as with organisations in other care sectors, that are developing into a national collective. And that means we can pull together a national lobbying effort on issues such as carer payments and respite care."

Ms Hender and CF&KC-SA CEO Fiona Endacott are also determined to build on the organisation's nascent relationships with the legal fraternity, which have led to development of Carer Guides outlining carer rights, a Legal Manual for Carer Advocates, and preparation of a list of lawyers prepared to assist carers pro bono.

"It's an area that's been a bug-bear for carers," says Ms Hender. "They simply haven't been able to afford legal advice on important matters affecting their care arrangements. Now we can put carers in touch with lawyers who have an interest and experience in child protection, including some who're prepared to waive their fees."

Recalling CF&KC-SA's major achievements of the last few years, Ms Endacott nominated the collaboration with Bradford Institute of Advanced Education and Skilling SA to deliver

diploma courses in Community Services, from which 77 carers have graduated and for many of whom "life-changing opportunities" have resulted.

Another highlight has been CF&KC-SA's contribution to a recent legislative review, where successful lobbying by the organisation led to a strengthening of carers' rights.

"As well, there's been our Statement of Commitment, in collaboration with DCP and the Minister for Child Protection, which has been a long-term aspiration of the carer community, and the strengthening of the carer voice through research projects in conjunction with South Australia's three major universities.

"To maintain momentum on all of these projects we need the continued engagement of carers," says Ms Endacott. "We have an ongoing hunger for information about carers and caring. That's why we do surveys, pull together reference groups on key issues, and talk to carers every day about their lives, about their problems and their little wins, and just about their incredible dedication to the children in their care."

For further comment or information please call Fiona Endacott on 0447422328.