



**Government
of South Australia**

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Treasurer

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Ms Fiona Endacott
Chief Executive Officer
Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA
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Dear Ms Endacott

I refer to the correspondence from Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA about South Australian election commitments.

Please find attached a consolidated response on behalf of the government to your questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Rob Lucas'.

Hon Rob Lucas MLC
Treasurer

2 February 2022

2022 South Australian election

Response to Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA

The Marshall Liberal Government truly values the incredibly important contribution foster and kinship carers and their families make to lives of South Australia's most vulnerable children and young people every day by providing a safe and loving home.

Recently, the Government announced the largest foster and kinship carer payment increase in over a decade injecting more than \$19 million over the next four years to increase base and respite carer payments.

From January 1, 2022, carers will receive an increase of \$50 per fortnight to assist with the day-to-day costs of caring for a child or young person in care under the age of 16.

This funding commitment is in addition to a range of Government child protection initiatives that are delivering better support to our children, young people and their carers, such as extending carer payments for young people up to age 21, delivering new non-government school scholarships and piloting new evidence based child protection programs.

The Government is committed to continuing to deliver better support and improve outcomes for children, young people and their carers.

In response to CF&KC – SA Election Commitments:

1. Whole of Government Approach to addressing the needs of children and young people under Guardianship.

The Government is committed to a whole of government approach to child protection. We announced our whole of government child protection strategy, *Safe and well: Supporting families, protecting children* on the 12 November 2020. As part of this strategy, we have three focus areas:

- Supporting families at risk of entering the child protection system to safely care for their children;
- Protecting children from harm including when they are in care; and
- Investing in children and young people in care and leaving care to provide them with opportunities for a bright future.

Through the release of our new *Investing in their future initiative* we have worked across government and with non-government providers to pursue priority access and expand new services and programs available for children and young people in care with a particular focus upon education, health and therapeutic services. For example:

- we have secured 200 scholarships through Catholic education, and other scholarships with specialist independent schools;
- entered into a partnership with the Australian Dental Foundation to provide additional dental and orthodontic services up to age 25; and

- extended free Ambulance cover to care leavers up to the age of 21.

Work continues to progress in relation to the next phase of *Investing in their future*.

2. Foster and Kinship carer payments and support

As outlined above, the Government recently announced the largest foster and kinship carer payment increase in over a decade injecting more than \$19 million over the next four years to increase base and respite carer payments.

From January 1, 2022, carers will receive an increase of \$50 per fortnight to assist with the day-to-day costs of caring for a child or young person in care under the age of 16.

We are committed to reshaping the care system through the implementation of *Every effort for every child: South Australia's strategy for children and young people in care 2020-2023*. As part of this strategy our government has committed to the review of the Complexity Assessment Tool and special needs loading tools, as well as continued to work with all jurisdictions regarding the true costs of caring for children.

The Government is committed to growing family based care options for children and young people and increasing the number of Aboriginal children and young people placed with kin, consistent with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. This includes increasing the number of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to support new kinship carers of Aboriginal children and young people.

Under this Government we:

- Commenced the Stability in Family Based Care program and extended carer payments for eligible carers and young people up to 21 years of age;
- Recently announced extended existing supports to young people up to age 21 years in both non-family based and family based placements through the *Next Steps: Stability Post Care* program.
- Provide carer subsidy and quarterly education grants to carers of young people completing education or training until achieving their qualifications or the age of 25 years through the Over Education Initiative.
- Recently announced APY Lands Kinship Carers support to be delivered in partnership with the NPY Women's Council.
- Significantly increased funding for Exceptional Resource Funding which provides additional financial support to families and carers to meet the particular care needs of an individual child or young person.

A range of other initiatives are in place to provide supports to foster and kinship carers including:

- A Carer Recruitment and Retention Taskforce, a partnership between the Department for Child Protection (DCP) and NGO care providers to review, advise and develop shared strategies on recruitment and retention of family based carers;

- A more streamlined approach to foster care recruitment, assessment and training;
- Reform of the DCP Kinship Care program; and
- Provision of information to carers through the website carer portal.

3. Respite support for carer families

The Government is working to increase the availability of respite supports for carers, including by increasing the recruitment of more carers specifically for respite, streamlining assessment processes, working with out of home care providers, and streamlining carer support and respite payments payments to ensure there are consistent payment processes with a single payment enquiry contacts for all carers.

Work continues to progress to provide flexible respite as part of the existing Departmental recruitment and retention taskforce. We have also recently announced the trialling of the Mockingbird Family program in SA to better support and retain carers and the trial of a new model of specialist family based care, Treatment Foster Care Oregon.

4. Support for young people and their carer families to age 25

The Government is committed to providing additional support to young people and their carer families. As mentioned, our Government announced on 1 January 2019, the Stability in Family Based Care Program, extending carer payments for eligible carers and young people up to 21 years of age.

In the 2021-22 State Budget we announced \$2.7 million over the next four years for the *Next Steps: Stability Post Care* program which provides increased support for young people up to age 21 leaving care.

In addition, we have the over 18 education initiative which provides the carer subsidy and quarterly education grants to carers of young people completing education or training until achieving their qualification or the age of 25 years.

The Government also supports service agencies to provide post care services such as counselling and mentoring support, as well as initiatives such as the Transition to Independent Living Allowance and the Dame Roma Mitchell Fund.

These programs all help to support young people in family-based care over 18 years of age to achieve their potential and recognises the importance of developing life and social skills.

5. Legislative review

On the 12 May 2021, the *Children and Young People (Safety) (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2020* was introduced to strengthen the effective and efficient operation of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*. These included amendments to ensure those involved in the administration of the legislation act in the best interest of children and young people; to more fully articulate the Aboriginal Child

Placement Principle; and to provide a more streamlined pathway for permanency options, including open adoption from care.

The Bill was developed following extensive consultation, which including the peak agency, Connecting Foster and Kinship Care SA Inc. who provided feedback in relation to review rights. These amendments were incorporated into the Bill in consultation with the peak agency.

The Bill is currently before the Legislative Council. Further opportunities to review the *Children and Young People Safety Act 2017* will be available in 2022 as part of the four year legislative review process.

6. Research into foster and kinship care, innovation and best practice

The Government announced in 2020 a 3 year partnership with the Australian Centre for Child Protection to fund research relevant to the South Australian child protection context including areas that will impact upon and support family based carers.

In addition, we continue to fund and implement innovative programs that create stability for our children and young people so they can thrive and reach their full potential. For example, our government has funded programs such as Treatment Foster Care Oregon and Mockingbird Family programs.

7. Collaborate with peak representative body for foster and kinship carers

The Government has a strong working relationship with the peak agency and recognises, respects, supports and values the work of foster and kinship carers across our State.

To that effect, our Government entered into a new 3 year agreement with Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA Inc. to provide a voice for carers in South Australia and to provide advice to government regarding legislation, policy, procedure and practice.

This is in addition to our Statement of Commitment to work in partnership and to support our carers. This commitment was established between DCP, Connecting Foster Kinship Carers SA Inc, and Child and Family Focus SA. It outlines the foundation principles that contribute to a strong partnership approach between family-based carers, government and the sector to ensure that children under guardianship receive high-quality care and to work together to achieve ongoing improvements and better delivery of services.

The Government looks forward to continuing to work with Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA Inc. to further support our foster and kinship carers and ensure that children and young people thrive and reach their full potential in life.