



MEDIA RELEASE:

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Report Finds SA Foster & Kinship Carers Inadequately Compensated

A report entitled 'The True Cost of Foster & Kinship Caring in South Australia' has found that carers in the State don't believe they're receiving adequate funding to cover the costs of children in care.

Other key findings of the report are that carers have been "paying out of their own pockets for decades", and that base payment rates and special needs loadings have "not been sufficiently justified" by the Department for Child Protection.

The report, prepared by Bachelor of Social Sciences under-graduate Emma Feagan for her final course assessment, and commissioned by peak body Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA (CF&KC-SA) via an internship, is based on a survey of 194 carers who have 333 children in their care. The carers had been a foster or kinship parent for between five and nine years and eight per cent of those surveyed were Aboriginal.

Ms Feagan found it was difficult to settle on a single adequate payment for carers because of the complexity of individual circumstances, but she made it clear carers regularly paid for the medical, clothing and entertainment needs of children in their care from their personal resources, and that DCP was often reluctant to reimburse costs they'd agreed to cover.

Carers also stated that there was a lack of respite care - for carers and children - for children with special needs, and that there was no superannuation payment, even though many of them had to quit jobs and become full-time carers.

She pointed out that children in care were some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in SA, "carrying trauma that will take years of patience, understanding and resources to heal their misfortunes".

To reinforce the point that child protection is a system under severe strain, she quotes Child Protection Minister Rachel Sanderson from an ABC News report in 2018 : "Child protection in South Australia is not working. We're paying a lot of money to get very poor outcomes."

Ms Feagan found that compensation to carers in SA was the third lowest of any jurisdiction in Australia, and that further studies on carer compensation would be useful.

"The importance of research on the topic can not go understated," she wrote. "The State Government is reliant upon the steady recruitment of passionate, committed and reliable individuals who are motivated by a desire to make a difference in the lives of children and young people in need. Yet all the evidence suggests that the financial strain placed upon them is both pressing and long-standing. To attract new carers, and retain existing ones, the financial questions around providing for foster/kinship children and young people need to be addressed."

CF&KC-SA Chief Executive Fiona Endacott congratulated and thanked Ms Feagan for her report, which has been provided to Ms Sanderson and other concerned Parliamentarians.

For further comment or information please call Fiona Endacott, CEO of CF&KC-SA on 0447 422 328.