



The Foster and Kinship Carers Association of Tasmania warmly invites you to the National Conference 'Find the Care in Caring' from 21–23 September 2022 in Hobart, Tasmania. We look forward to seeing you next year.



Our Mission

To advocate for the rights, needs and wellbeing of volunteer foster and kinship carers to ensure we recruit, train, retain and support them for the good of our community and to ensure their voices are heard and their rights upheld.

Who we are

The National Foster and Kinship Care Collective (NFKCC) is a voluntary cooperative of state and territory foster and kinship care associations. As peak bodies, we are the trusted specialists and resource services for our foster and kinship carers.

Representing the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia, our organisations represent more than 45,000 carers looking after more than 70,000 children and young people in care.

Sadly, while carer numbers are decreasing, the number of vulnerable children and young people coming into the system is increasing. We have joined forces to make sure that the voices of volunteer foster and kinship carers are heard and their rights are upheld.

Our Vision

A country where foster and kinship carers are properly supported to deliver home-based care to vulnerable children and young people.

Our Values

- * **Persistence:** We are persistent and direct in our advocacy
- * **Understanding:** We listen to and value the opinions of our members
- * **Wellbeing-focused:** We consider all aspects of wellbeing in our advocacy both individual and systemic
- * **Collaboration:** We work collaboratively to amplify carer voices
- * **Recognition:** We recognise and celebrate the vital work of our carers including the true impact they have on the wider community.

What we do

As individual state and territory agencies, we represent, advocate and lobby for a better home-based care* system. Together, our voice is amplified.

Foster and kinship carers are the unsung heroes of our communities; providing love, support and a safe place for vulnerable children and young people across the country. Our carers open their homes and their hearts and we want that contribution to be recognised in meaningful ways.

Our foster and kinship carers are essential to children and young people who come from challenging family situations having a chance at a fulfilling and healthy life. They need the right policies, legislation and support – physical, emotional and financial – to keep doing what they do.

We exist to make that a reality for them no matter where they live.

**In this document we use the term home-based care to mean out-of-home care or family-based care.*



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Our 7 key action areas

As the National Foster and Kinship Care Collective, we have 7 key action areas to focus on over the next five years to improve our sector.

1.

RAISING THE STATUS OF AUSTRALIAN FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARERS

Volunteer carers should be recognised for the vital work they do. They should be respected, valued and honoured by the community and the government agencies they are providing services for.

Our carers are raising the next generation of Australians and they should be celebrated as such – financially and emotionally.

2.

APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION FOR AUSTRALIAN FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARERS

Caring for children and young people comes at a cost. Our carers need to be appropriately compensated for their work and their resources without judgement or carers' motivations being questioned.

Standardising payments and processes for approval and reimbursement need to be considered as do the areas of superannuation, tax concessions and extended care (eg HomeStretch).

3.

WELLBEING FOR AUSTRALIAN FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARERS

Caring for vulnerable children and young people can be emotionally and physically taxing. It's essential that our carers are offered sufficient mental health and physical health support to ensure their own self-care.

Access to expertise in areas affecting care is also essential. This expertise in areas of disability, behavioural support and parenting can help make the adjustment to care smoother and make maintaining a successful placement more likely.

4.

RESPITE ACCESS FOR AUSTRALIAN FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARERS

Respite care needs to be offered for all carers, particularly those living with children and young people with complex needs.

This respite needs to be appropriate, flexible and reliable. Most importantly, accessing respite needs to be de-stigmatised and considered as a normal and healthy part of providing care.

5.

CULTURAL CONNECTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES

With many children and young people coming into care being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and not enough Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers, it is essential that carers are supported to provide cultural connection activities.

This includes education, training and support for carers to meet their obligations as outlined by child protection agencies and widely recognised as an essential part of foster and kinship care.

6.

HIGH QUALITY, CONSISTENT, TRAUMA-INFORMED TRAINING FOR ALL CHILD PROTECTION STAKEHOLDERS

Many of the children and young people in care have complex backgrounds marked by trauma. How that trauma is dealt with at both an agency and a foster and kinship carer level is critical to establishing and maintaining a successful placement.

Carers from across Australia need to be trained and supported to identify trauma (including vicarious trauma), trauma responses and behaviours, what to do when this trauma arises and how to advocate for their child to get specialist support and assistance.

7.

DISABILITY ACCESS AND SUPPORT

A large number of children going into foster and kinship care have some level of physical or intellectual disability, mental health condition, other developmental delay or processing disorder. In some cases, these disabilities may not be known to the carer or the child until a child or young person is already in their care.

A streamlined process for carers to get their child or young person into a disability service or assessment is vital for their development and independence in adulthood. We consider it such an issue for our carers that we believe priority access should be given.