



FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION
OF THE A.C.T. (INC.)

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Supporting ACT Foster, Relative and Kin carers and the children they care for

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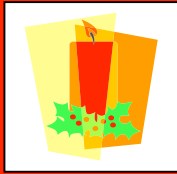
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Christmas 2005 Newsletter

As I look back on the achievements of 2006, I have been impressed by the energy and commitment of foster carers and pleased with the progress that has been made to support you.

Foster Care Week in September recognised the important role foster carers fulfil in our community. I believe it is important to celebrate and for the community to recognise the invaluable service that foster carers provide. It was wonderful that so many ACT children and young people in care and their carer families enjoyed the picnic at the National Zoo and Aquarium, and other events, as part of the week's celebrations.

This year the launch of the Indigenous Foster Care Program in the ACT was a monumental step for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, children and young people in care, and indeed, the whole ACT community.

Thank you to those who gave their comments on the draft Handbook for Foster Carers. The feedback is being reviewed at the moment, before the handbook is published early next year. I am sure the handbook will be a valuable reference for foster carers.

As the end of the year approaches I would like to take the opportunity to thank foster carers for all that you do for the children and young people in your care and for making an enormous difference to the lives of these children and young people.

My best wishes to you and you families for an enjoyable and safe Christmas.

Katy Gallagher
Minister for Children, Youth and Family Support

December 2005

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ACKNOWLEDGING FOSTER CARERS

As Christmas approaches I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the important role foster carers have in our community. The community owes foster and kinship carers a great debt of gratitude. We are fortunate that we have members of our community who are committed to opening their homes and hearts to children and young people who need 'a home away from home'.

We have approximately 350 children and young people in out-of-home care in the ACT and 85 per cent of these children are in foster or kinship care. Children and young people who come into care have experienced a degree of trauma. Foster parents are often required to show great patience and skill in responding to their needs. Without the dedication and contribution of foster carers, the lives of these children and young people would be very different.

Needless to say, we must maintain our focus to ensure we can continue to provide care to those young people who need it. There will, of course, be challenges in the coming year. We will need to be actively recruiting, developing and retaining foster carers. We will continue to engage with the ACT community to ensure we achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people in care. Finally, we remain determined to ensure that the people who care for them are recognised for their valuable contribution and are well supported.

Let me take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and safe Christmas holiday season. I would like to thank you for the contribution you have made to the lives of many children and young people and I look forward to working with you in the coming year.

Sandra Lambert
Chief Executive Officer
Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

LOOKING BACK ON THE ASSOCIATION'S WORK IN 2005

I absolutely cannot believe that here we are at Christmas once again. This has been an absolutely jam packed year for your Association and I would like to share with you just some of the highlights.

In addition to our regular meetings with Katy Gallagher, Minister for Community Services; Sandra Lambert, the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services; Lou Denley, the Executive Director of the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support; Directors of all of the Non Government Agencies: Galilee, Barnardos, Marymead and Life

without Barriers, we have been out and about the Eastern States.

In February we travelled to Melbourne for an Australian Foster Care Association (AFCA) meeting to advance improvements for children in care and their foster and kinship carers across Australia. We are pleased to report that we feel AFCA has been influential in having the foster caring work of single foster parents recognised as a valuable and essential community service. Without this recognition single foster parents would have been obliged to participate in Welfare to Work and this would invariably have meant that a number of our single foster parents would not have been able to continue fostering.

In July a large party of carers flew to Alice Springs for the National Foster Care Conference and National Recognition Awards...and no it was not just a good time. Before the Conference we took part in the National Foster Care Plan meetings aimed at improving standards across Australia. The National Conference was wonderful. I never fail to be inspired by the people I meet and the innovative and progressive programs helping children and families. Our particular thanks to Marymead for assisting a number of their carers to attend this conference

In August Cheryl Walford and myself accompanied two young people to the Face-to-Face Conference in Brisbane which highlighted the needs of young people transitioning out of care.

In September we held our annual Foster Care Week lunch at the Hellenic Club. More than 100 carers and workers attended and we welcomed Sandra Lambert to her first luncheon. She was happy to present to two of our ACT carers their National Recognition Awards for more than 20 years service to fostering.



At the end of October, with the help of a grant from the Children's Week Committee, we were able to obtain funding for a day outing at the National Zoo and Aquarium for all foster and kinship carers and their families. The rather gloomy day did not dampen anyone's spirits and we all stood out with our purple ribbons and the children's painted faces as we took over the zoo. Many lovely reunions took place and Sandra Lambert came down to talk personally to many carers about their issues. All the NGO's contributed something to the day and we were very encouraged to receive more

than 300 RSVP's. We are hoping this will become an annual event as it has proved so popular.

Currently, one of our carer families is fund raising for the FCA by lighting their home in Callabonna Street Kaleen. Even Santa drops in every evening. If you are out enjoying the Christmas lights at this time of year, drop in and introduce yourself.

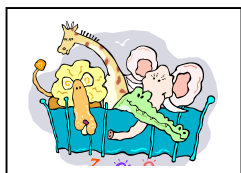
We hope you are finding the information in the newsletter useful and please drop us a line if there is anything we can assist you with.

Have a Happy Christmas and I hope 2006 is good to each and everyone.

Regards
Sue Mannion
President

Children and Young People in Care, Enjoy a Day at the Zoo

Many children and young people in care and their carer families enjoyed a picnic at the National Zoo and Aquarium, thanks to a Grant from the ACT Children's Week Committee and sponsorship from the Foster Care Association of the ACT and the National Zoo and Aquarium.



The picnic, an initiative of the Foster Care Association of the ACT, was held late in the year as a part of the 2005 Children's Week activities in the ACT.

In a truly collaborative effort, the Foster Care Association was assisted in its preparations by staff and volunteers from Galilee, Marymead, Barnardo's, the CREATE Foundation, the Indigenous Foster Care Unit, and the Training and Community Education team of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support.

"Staff from a number of agencies assisted on the day in welcoming families and providing information and treats for the children and young people," said Foster Care Association President, Sue Mannion.

"The feedback from families was very positive, with many noting that it was an activity they may not have been able to access previously due to the cost," Sue said.

"Overall, 68 families attended, including 154 children and young people and 119 adults, including a good number of kinship carers and foster carers from each agency.

"All in all, the event provided both recognition to children and young people in care and their carers, while providing an opportunity for families to network, build informal supports, and a fun day out for all."

It is hoped that the activity can become an annual event.

For more information about these events contact Susan Pellegrino on 6207 1405. For more information on foster caring please contact Sue Mannion at the Foster Care Association of the ACT on 6288 5994.

CRISIS CARE FOR SIBLING GROUPS - CAN YOU HELP?

Something to think about.....currently the department is facing a huge problem providing crisis care for sibling groups and as you are probably aware Christmas time is a very stressful time for many birth families.

Perhaps you have a long term placement and might like to consider being available to help out in emergencies? Even being able to accommodate one extra child for a short time would assist greatly.

These placements would be time limited and on an emergency basis only. If you think you might like to help out please contact your agency case worker now and talk it over.

SPECIAL NEEDS SUBSIDY FOR FOSTER CARERS

The Office for Children, Youth and Family Support has advised that the policy relating to the review of special needs subsidy provided to foster carers is being altered.

Currently the Care and Protection Manual outlines the need to review subsidy payments on a three monthly basis. The new policy means that once a level has been agreed, this level will be maintained for the duration of the placement. The subsidy level will be in accordance with the rates outlined in the Care and Protection manual. Should the subsidy level need to be increased (based on the needs of the child), the new rate will be sustained.

Emergency subsidy rates, which are currently paid to carers who receive less than 24 hours notice of placement, will continue to be paid at the higher rate for a maximum period of 21 days following the emergency

placement. As is current practice, should the placement continue past 21 days, the subsidy level will drop to the standard subsidy rate, unless a special needs rate has been agreed.

Children and young people moving to Enduring Parental Responsibility orders will be considered separately as a range of issues relating to agency involvement, ongoing financial commitment and supports are yet to be finalised.

This revised policy will be communicated to all Care and Protection staff and will be formally updated when the manual is reviewed.

WE ARE AVAILABLE – EVEN OVER THE HOLIDAYS

The Association is funded by the ACT Office of Children, Youth and Family Support to support all foster, relative and kinship carers. Please feel free to contact us at any time. We are available to assist carers in their caring roles, facilitate access to and provide information about the out of home care system, provide peer support, or just be an ear when you want a chat. You can contact us at any time on either 62885994 or 62411665, or via email at fcaact@bigpond.com. During holiday periods we sometimes get a little busy at times, but please leave a message on one of the numbers and we will get back to you as soon as we can.



CARER TRAINING UPDATE

We continue to work with The Office and Agencies to introduce quality standard training for foster carers. Agreement has been reached that training should be nationally accredited, which is something the association has been endorsing from the beginning. This means that, once carers have completed their training they will receive a statement of attainment which will be recognised throughout Australia. With nationally accredited training, the content and standards are set to ensure consistency of quality regardless of who is delivering the training.

Rick Vivian from The Office is currently researching the appropriate accredited units that would be appropriate for foster carers and looking at any gaps we may need to fill to adequately train Carers to take on their role. The Planning Group will meet again in the New Year.



UPDATE WOMEN'S CARER SUPPORT INITIATIVE

Training under the Women's Carer Support Initiative, funded by the ACT Chief Minister's Department, was due to commence this year, but unfortunately we have had some delays. The training has been rescheduled to March 2006 and all those who have enquired will receive letters confirming dates and venue in late January 2006.

The project will train volunteers willing to support Foster Carers in the ACT in basic counselling skills to establish a volunteer team to provide ongoing support for ACT Foster Carers. The chief aim is to set up a system that will spread the carer support load more evenly and establish an ongoing system for carer support into the future.

The training in basic counselling skills will be run over 3 sessions of 4 hours each. Anyone who would like to participate but has not yet volunteered should contact Julie on tel: 0404 043 602 or email fcaact@bigpond.com.



FOSTER CARER SUPPORT SURVEY

Dr Ross Gurney is currently conducting a follow-up survey on the national study for support for foster carers which was conducted in 2001. The purpose of the new survey is to determine whether any progress has been made. We will include a copy of the survey with the next newsletter and hope you will participate by completing the survey and returning it to Ross. We want to make sure that the sector sees a true picture of support currently received by carers in Canberra and region.

Thumbs UP!

To Dawson Ruhl and Marymead who paid for so many of their Carers to attend the national Conference in Alice Springs this year. We really appreciate the support in such practical (\$) terms.



To the Prings once again for raising money for the Association with their wonderful Christmas Lights display.



To Annette Kelly-Egerton and Barnardos for requesting the Office to include some training early in 2006 which focuses specifically on the needs of Carers. Bev has passed several suggestions for topics on to The Office.

JEN MACINTOSH SPEAKING ON ATTACHMENT

Dr. Jen Macintosh will be conducting a half day seminar and 1½ day clinical workshop entitled "Attachment: Embracing Current Understandings" on 27 and 28 February 2006. The aim of this training is to strengthen participant's knowledge and skills in the understanding, identification and treatment of children with disrupted attachments.

Jenn is a clinical child psychologist, family therapist, and research and training consultant. She is adjunct Senior lecturer at both Melbourne and La Trobe Universities.

Jenn's research and clinical practice has focused on the needs of children in the face of family trauma. She is well regarded for her ability to articulate the child's experience of family trauma and loss and is well known for her strong advocacy on the rights of children to psychological safety, particularly in the face of family trauma and change.

The half day seminar is designed for anyone working with children and the longer workshop is for those working with children in a clinical setting. Cost for half day workshop is \$55.00. The full 2 day training includes both the seminar and the workshop and costs \$220.00.

Further details and registration forms can be obtained from Anna Huber at Marymead, where the seminars will be held.

Email: programs@marymead.org.au

Tel: (02) 6162 5800



CARERS SUPPORT GROUP

This is **your personal invitation** to come along and enjoy a cuppa, some great morning tea and enjoy the company and companionship of other carers in a relaxed, social setting.



**FIRST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH
NORTHSIDE AND SOUTHSIDE
10.00am – 12.00pm**

BEGINS FEBRUARY 2006

**CHILDREN WELCOME & ASSISTANCE
WITH TRANSPORT IF NEEDED**

We meet in Carers' homes, Northside and Southside, on a rotating basis – bring something yummy to share for morning tea.

**Contact Raelene on 6241-1049 or Kiren on
0412 892453 for details**

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SHINE FOR FOSTER CARE

On 3 December at 7.30pm, the Christmas lights were turned on at David and Lorraine Pring's house in Callabonna Street, Kaleen. This is an annual event for the Prings who generously use the opportunity to raise money for foster care.

Do yourself a favour and drive past – the Christmas lights are spectacular as usual.

THANK YOU TO RAE

Kiren has asked me to include a big thank you to Rae Gerstenberg who has been the mainstay and chief contact for the Carer's Support Group over the past 3 months as Kiren has been tied up with the care of a young baby. Thank you, Rae, for your time and opening your home up to us all each month.



FAREWELL TO ROS STEWART

It is with sadness we bid farewell to Ros Stewart, Team Leader of Foster Care at Marymead. Ros is off to the UK for 12 months with her family in January 2006. Sue and Bev attended Ros' farewell recently and thanked Ros on behalf of the Association, for all her hard work and co-operation over the many years of our relationship.

We welcome Liz Preston who will be taking over in Ros' absence and wish Ros well during her time overseas.

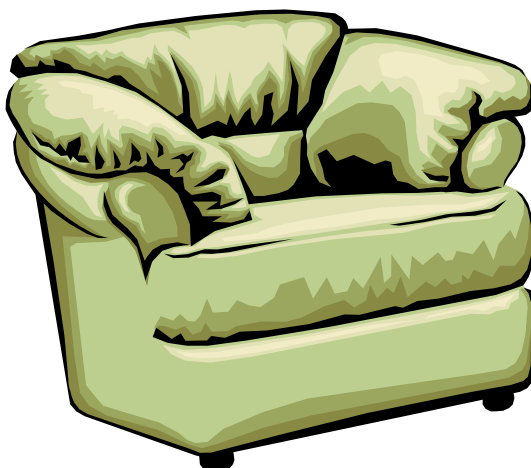
Our next newsletter will be out in January – February 2006

Foster Care Association Meetings 2006

Take the opportunity to:

Meet other Foster Carers,
Support and be supported by other Carers,
Learn more about what's happening within Foster Care,
Spend social time with others who REALLY understand about Foster Care.

Come along to our monthly meetings



We have a chair reserved for you and even some supper to go with it!

All carers welcomed

For meeting dates and venues contact Sue on 6288-5994, Bev or David on 6241-1665 or email: fcaact@bigpond.com

The Foster Care Association of the ACT wishes all Carers and children a merry Christmas and happy and prosperous New Year



**ACT FOSTER CARE SUBSIDIES
RATES PER WEEK**

As at 1 January 2006

WITH 2.5% Increase

AGE 0-17 YEARS	0-4 years	5-7 years	8-11 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
Basic Foster Care Subsidy	\$117.35	\$126.80	\$148.05	\$165.15	\$200.25
Pocket Money	\$ -	\$6.25	\$8.15	\$13.60	\$16.35
Total Subsidy	\$117.35	\$133.05	\$156.20	\$178.75	\$216.60

SPECIAL NEEDS SUBSIDY- Age Group: 0-4 Years

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5
	25% loading	50% loading	75% loading	100% loading	150% loading
Foster Care Subsidy	\$117.35	\$117.35	\$117.35	\$117.35	\$117.35
Loading	\$29.34	\$58.68	\$88.01	\$117.35	\$176.03
Total Subsidy	\$146.70	\$176.05	\$205.35	\$234.70	\$293.40

SPECIAL NEEDS SUBSIDY- Age Group: 5-7 Years

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5
	25% loading	50% loading	75% loading	100% loading	150% loading
Foster Care Subsidy	\$133.05	\$133.05	\$133.05	\$133.05	\$133.05
Loading	\$33.26	\$66.53	\$99.79	\$133.05	\$199.58
Total Subsidy	\$166.30	\$199.60	\$232.85	\$266.10	\$332.65

SPECIAL NEEDS SUBSIDY- Age Group: 8-11 Years

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5
	25% loading	50% loading	75% loading	100% loading	150% loading
Foster Care Subsidy	\$156.20	\$156.20	\$156.20	\$156.20	\$156.20
Loading	\$39.05	\$78.10	\$117.15	\$156.20	\$234.30
Total Subsidy	\$195.25	\$234.30	\$273.35	\$312.40	\$390.50

SPECIAL NEEDS SUBSIDY- Age Group: 12-14 Years

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5
	25% loading	50% loading	75% loading	100% loading	150% loading
Foster Care Subsidy	\$178.75	\$178.75	\$178.75	\$178.75	\$178.75
Loading	\$44.69	\$89.38	\$134.06	\$178.75	\$268.13
Total Subsidy	\$223.45	\$268.15	\$312.80	\$357.50	\$446.90

SPECIAL NEEDS SUBSIDY- Age Group: 15-17 Years

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5
	25% loading	50% loading	75% loading	100% loading	150% loading
Foster Care Subsidy	\$216.60	\$216.60	\$216.60	\$216.60	\$216.60
Loading	\$54.15	\$108.30	\$162.45	\$216.60	\$324.90
Total Subsidy	\$270.75	\$324.90	\$379.05	\$433.20	\$541.50

SPECIALIST FOSTER CARE SUBSIDY

	0-4 years	5-7 years	8-11 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
Foster Care Subsidy	\$117.35	\$133.05	\$156.20	\$178.75	\$216.60
Loading (200%)	\$234.70	\$266.10	\$312.40	\$357.50	\$433.20
Total Subsidy	\$352.05	\$399.15	\$468.60	\$536.25	\$649.80

POCKET MONEY RATES PER WEEK

All Foster care subsidy rates include a rate of pocket money to be paid to the child in care

Age	Amount
0-4 years	Nil
5-7 years	\$6.25
8-11 years	\$8.15

Age	Amount
12-14 years	\$13.60
15-17 years	\$16.35

RESIDENTIAL CARE SUBSIDY- RATES PER WEEK

0-11 years	\$140.30
12-17 years	\$171.00

EMERGENCY CARE SUBSIDY - RATE FOR FIRST 21 NIGHTS

	per day	per week
0-17 years	\$44.45	\$311.05

PLANNED/RESPITE PLACEMENTS - RATE FOR FIRST SEVEN NIGHTS

	per day	per week
0-17 years	\$34.85	\$244.05