

The Contribution Carers Make to Child Protection and Their Rights

Liana Buchanan, Victorian Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People

“How International Kinship Care creates Equity in Permanency”

Damon Martin

“Enabling children and young people in care to be at school: Have your say! Workshop 1”

Daryl Higgins

“Challenges and Opportunities for carers nurturing multicultural children’s cultural connections”

Stacy Blythe

“NDIS Plan Reassessments Explained Workshop”

Karen Dimmock

“What does a successful shared parenting arrangement look like? Workshop”

Denise Boyd

“Carers and the Law Panel Discussion”

Liana Buchanan & Fleur Ward

Facilitator: Anne McLeish

“Tik Tok, Instagram and Snapchat - it’s time to learn what young people are really doing online”

Vesna Ubiparipovic

Vesna’s presentation highlighted the impact of social media on young people, in particular the ever-growing risks of sexual exploitation and radicalisation that can occur when the wrong individuals connect with our state’s vulnerable children.

Resources:

Free webinars for carers/parents:

- [Schedule](#)
- [Website](#)
- The [eSafety website](#) has so many resources. As well as information, guides and webinars for carers/parents, the site also has age appropriate videos and other resources that can be shared with children and young people.

“Working Towards Cultural Confidence (LORE) Workshop”

Elaine Tanaka

“Grief & Loss: Supporting Foster Carer Families through Placement Terminations”

Margaret Kertesz & Summah Hemming

“Transition to Community: The most “culturally competent” approach to Home Based Care”

Anthony Raitman & Shannon Mackie

“Learning and Development as a Wellbeing Strategy for Carers Workshop”

Anne McLeish

“A Toolkit for Transitions: Hands-on Workshop to Support Carers and Children Process Grief and Loss in their Fostering Journey”

Linda Blyth & Zoe Cummings

“Supporting Foster and Kinship Carers of Infants in Out-of- Home Care”

Stacy Blythe

“Caring for the Carers: Addressing Mental Health in the Foster and Permanent Care Systems”

Jake Iaria

- Jake shared the impact of caring on carers’ mental health and wellbeing, through quotes from carers that were so powerful and so moving.
- So many carers and sector workers in the audience could relate to these impacts on carers’ mental health as a direct result of their caring role.
- Highlighting both the need and incredible value of FCAV’s Carer Assistance Program (CAP) which provides therapeutic support for Victorian Foster and Permanent carers.

Resources:

- [FCAV Carer Assistance Program \(info and referral form\)](#)
- [PCA Families Supports, CAP info and referral link](#)
- FCAV: (03) 9416 4292
- PCA Families: (03) 9020 1833
- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

“Keeping children and families safe and together: Victoria’s evidence-informed family preservation and reunification model”

DFFH

“Connecting Carers - Peer-Led Empowerment - Foster Care Connect”

Natalie Pryor

“Integrating placement and intensive family and therapeutic support: Loddon Care Hub”

Jo Farrelly

“Using evidence to inform decision making and support for children in foster care”

Edith Loch

“Child & Family Peak Panel: Preserving a Vital System - tackling Australia's foster carer shortage Panel Discussion”

Jamie Crosby, Lisa J. Griffiths, Tom Allsop & Anita Le Lay

Facilitator: Jarrod Edwards

- Each of the panellists acknowledged that the current carer allowance is insufficient and needs to be urgently addressed.
- The statistics presented on both a state-by-state and national basis highlighted the number of foster carers leaving the system exceeded the number of foster carers entering. It also highlighted this is a difficulty faced internationally.
- The statistics also highlighted an increased number of young people entering residential care, including some children as young as 5 years of age.
- Whilst panellists were able to point to some state specific plans and preparations to improve this – what our current carers need now more than anything is urgent action.
- We could hear the raw emotion in the voices of the carers when they asked questions to the panel, both with their personal experiences and ideas of how to move forward.
- A quote that resonated came from Tom Allsop (CEO PeakCare QLD), who discussed results of research undertaken into the challenges carers face. He advised he later spoke with a carer about these results, who advised ‘I could have told you this 10 years ago.’

“Heartache and Birdsong”

Sam Bloom

- This was an emotional experience for all who attended.
- Like many in the audience we’re sure, we were moved by Sam’s experiences of adversity, and inspired by her passion and drive to continue to seek out opportunities to do what she loved.
- Rebuilding and reframing her connection with nature, and the ocean in particular, has led to some of her amazing accomplishments to date.
- A standout for us was Sam’s raw honesty in stating that she still has her down days, and that she may never fully come to terms with her accident – and that this is OK. It was truly a testament to how shifting one’s mindset, alongside the support of those closest to you (be they human or magpie), could help you find the way forward through the worst of times.

“Supports for young people leaving care, and those caring for them”

“Supporting Young People on Permanent Care Orders in Transitioning to Independence Panel”

Discussion Facilitators: Paula Westhead & Tish McLean-Neil

- Focus on Better Futures and Home Stretch, including a panel discussion with a young person who had been supported via the program.
- The sessions included information on what financial offerings were available – both to carers and the young person (once transitioning to independent living) – as well as what their Better Futures worker could support with.
- The young person, Jas, who had been supported by the program, spoke of supports she had received to obtain housing in her local area, financial support for obtaining white goods for her new home, as well as to assist her in completing her studies in Paramedicine (e.g., stationary, laptop, etc.).

“Building our capacity to support the grief experiences of children and young people”

Louise Hall

“Nourishing Minds: The Intersection of Nutrition and Neurodiversity in Children”

Nikki Valentini

“A Positive Mindset Even In The Face Of Trauma and Grief”

Jacinta Foster-Raimondo

“On-Demand: Filling the Gaps in Training and Support for Foster and Kinship Carers”

Noel Macnamara

Noel spoke of the real need to improve training and support for foster and kinship carers and indeed for more training around understanding trauma informed care.

“‘Caring Conversations’ - an innovative approach to providing support, knowledge & skill development for Kinship Carers”

Adela Holmes

Adela has begun a new Kinship Support Group with Uniting, called Caring Conversations and aimed to provide support, knowledge & skill development for their Kinship Carers. The kinship carers have found it very beneficial, and feedback is positive as each session provides learning, but they are also connecting with each other. They are looking to roll out similar groups across the different divisions for the Uniting Kinship carers.

The kinship carers in the room spoke of how valuable this would be for all as they often feel quite alone and without any support.

“OurSPACE WA – Carer Counselling and Support Service: Innovative approaches to holistic support for carers”

Shaun Chandran & Ané Bryden

- A program very similar to FCAV/s CAP which is wonderful to see and we look forward to connecting and discussing our respective programs.

Resources:

- [OurSPACE WA Carer info sheet #1](#)
- [OurSPACE WA info flyer](#)

“A Care Team Approach: Addressing Relational Trauma, Attachment and Supporting Children to Return Home”

Jennifer Boyle

“Fueling Success: The Power of Diet and Nutrition for Energy, Mood, Mental Health, and Resilience”

Nikki Valentini

“Carers and Children’s Law in Victoria”

Fleur Ward

- Highlighted the relevant laws for carers to be aware of.
- Explained the historical changes that have resulted in the current shift in power to the Department.
- Presented on carer rights and potential legal remedies for carers.
- Spoke about suggestions for legislative reform.
- We heard from fantastic advocates in Ms Heather Baird and Ms Lauren Keim, both calling for change and rallying carers to get involved.

Stay tuned to FCAV socials for more on this topic!

“Bigger Ears Bigger Hearts”

Karen Dimmock

“Enhancing school attendance for students in OOHC”

Emma Meale

“Recognising and addressing trauma and grief in children and those caring for them Workshop”

Jessie Lobley & Ray Carroll

- Heartbreaking stories directly from carers sharing how they and the children they care for have been so let down by the system that was supposed to support them.

“Yarn-Crafternoon with Sammy Trist and AJ Williams- Tchen: A VACCA space that celebrates carers, supports growth in knowledge and connection to culture Workshop”

Kylie Groen

Amazing session with Sammy and AJ. The workshop was incredible as we painted gum leaves with different coloured ochre paints and listened to AJ speak about his experience of being removed from his family during the 1970’s highlighting that the stolen generation was not that long ago. Despite this experience AJ has been nominated in the 2024 Australian of the Year awards, he has also been awarded AASW Excellence Award and has worked in the field for over 30 years supporting the Aboriginal community and helped to raise awareness of mental health literacy.

“Creating Chrysalis! Sharing our journey to create a transformation hub at Key Assets Australia”

Jamie Hodgson, Lucy Thornton & Aislinn Bury

“A view from the inside: how kinship carers’ experience services supporting their care journey”

Lynne McPherson & Noel Macnamara

“Achieving national recognition and support for all kinship care families – both informal and formal”

Meredith Kiraly

“Success stories in kinship care: Reflections on the caregiving environment, system characteristics, and workforce qualities”

Fatin Shabbar

“Establishing Carers, Children and Families in a supportive community – MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY Panel Discussion”

Glenda Quinn, Paul Quinn, Michele Creed, Kate Badham, Sarah Daykin, Jess Herdman & Julie Critchley

Facilitator: Chris Skinner

“MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ is an innovative way to structure the support and supervision provided to foster and kinship carers to create caring homes, inclusive of family, culture and community.”

Resources:

- [Information about the Mockingbird Family model of care](#)

“Supporting Neurodivergent children and young people in Kinship, Permanent and Foster Care”

Dr Emma Goodall, South Australia’s Office for Autism

Resources:

- <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/>

“DCP Kinship Care Program reform - inclusive, compassionate, targeted and respectful support for Kinship Carers”

Louisa Sillet

“Providing foster carers with the knowledge, tools and confidence to develop emotional intelligence through participation in Tuning in to Kids & Teens”

Gail Walton

“A Cry for Help: Evidence from a Review of Statutory Kinship Care in Victoria”

Juliette Borenstein

“When Yes Mean YES: A carer’s guide to consent conversations with young people”

Belinda Lorek & Austin Bell

“Cultural Plans in Action – Reconnection, Healing and Growth”

Sophie Johnson

“Digital Life Story Work for Children in Care”

Emma Stirling

“Towards Radically Better Support for Kinship Carers: Sharing insights, ideas and opportunities Workshop”

Lucy Thornton, Aislinn Bury & Perrie Ballantyne