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Press Release

Foster Care Week 2021 highlights “disrespect” shown to carers

Volunteer foster carers are paying for access to crucial services for their foster children out of their own pocket. Dealing with the long-term mental health and education consequences of COVID 19 will make current under funding of essential support services much worse. Current funding arrangements won't help carers get the necessary support services for their children once the pandemic is over. (Foster Care Week - 12-18 September 2021)

Access to support services such as counselling, paediatrics and dental and education are underfunded leaving carers to make the difficult choices about whether to pay for services themselves. As a result carers feel disrespected and undervalued for the volunteer services they provide.

“I didn't realise that when I agreed to volunteer my time and my home that I would also be volunteering my bank account.” **Krissy Robinson, Foster carer**

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing 2021 Carer Census indicates that in practice, many carers don't have the practical supports necessary to enable them to provide the best possible care. Data from the Carer Census reveals that:

- 75% of foster carers report that having a child in care has had a negative impact on their finances.
- 59% of foster carers report that they regularly use their own money to pay for child related expenses.
- 55% of foster carers report that they have challenges navigating child protection systems and processes

“Foster care is the only volunteer service I know of, where people are expected to use their own money and pay for the privilege of volunteering. I am sick of chasing Child Protection for a refund of something I shouldn't have had to pay for in the first place.” **Krissy Robinson, Foster carer**

“Carers often don't have the basics such as birth certificates and Medicare cards and feel financial pressure to pay for health and education expenses that aren't covered by the care allowance. The COVID 19 pandemic has heightened these problems.

What foster carers want is respect that is demonstrated by deeds not words.” **Samantha Hauge, CEO, Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV).**

“I feel confident in providing care but the roadblocks in the system mean that I often don't have the basics like Medicare cards, birth certificates and funding for therapy supports to do the job. They don't seem to be considered a high priority. And then to add insult to injury I often have to pay for essential health and education services. It's a really insulting and disrespectful way to treat a volunteer. How is the system going to cope when it has to pick up the pieces after COVID?” **Krissy Robinson, Foster carer**



Minister for Child Protection, Luke Donnellan thanked foster carers for providing vulnerable children with the best quality care amid the challenges of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic while working from home and providing online schooling. “The government has listened to carers and has recently developed streamlined arrangements for registering births and obtaining birth certificates with the Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages. I have previously committed to working on a reformed client expenses framework and have heard carers concerns.” **Minister for Child Protection, Luke Donnellan**

Featured foster carers are available for interview and photograph opportunities (children in care must remain unidentifiable in any images). Foster carer details on request.

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