

## Managing Children's Behaviour

I recently attended a "revolutionary" 5 x 2.5 hours workshop I believe is beneficial to any parent, new or otherwise. The results are instant. I was so impressed that I have enrolled again commencing on 8th May, only this time I am taking 5 friends. Learn some positive strategies to guide children's behaviour and improve relationships. Don't get mad. Use that energy and time in altering the way you construct your sentences. It truly is fascinating. I have worked with children as a Youth Worker for 5 years and this was new information. Please phone **1300 733 606** for further details and ask for the clinic at Enfield, Marion or Elizabeth. The course is free of charge and a creche is available. ■

Shirley Toker (Secretary)

## Foster Carer National Recognition Awards

For application forms and information please email, download or write to:

(self-nominations accepted)

Connecting Foster Carers  
PO BOX Box 288  
KILBURN SA 5084  
enquiries@cfc-sa.org.au  
www.cfc-sa.org.au

## Good News

*Additional \$75 Foster Carer Payments For Emergency Placements*

On 11 September 2005 at the Adelaide Zoo launch of the Foster Carers Charter, Hon Jay Weatherill, Minister for Families and Communities, announced foster carers accepting emergency placements would receive an additional \$75.00 for each placement. The payment has commenced as of 17 February 2006.

The payment is in recognition of when foster carers take children and young people into their homes with little notice. Often extra commitment, flexibility and resources are needed. The Emergency Placement Payment is a one off payment of \$75.00 each time an emergency placement is agreed to. This means that the Families SA (formerly CYFS) social worker, the carer and the alternative care service provider must all agree to the placement starting for the payment to be issued. The payment does not affect other subsidies foster carers receive, and the payment is

not in lieu of items reimbursed by the Families SA District Centres through their incidental payments to assist carers in emergency situations.

The emergency payments are part of a trial and will be reviewed at 12 months from their commencement.

For more information please contact the Families SA Children's Payment section on 8304 0126. ■



The **Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Chris Ellison**, has launched a resource kit to assist teachers and parents to recognise and combat bullying behaviours among younger children:  
[www.crimeprevention.gov.au/agd/www/npcphone.nsf/Page/Bullying\\_Among\\_Young\\_Children](http://www.crimeprevention.gov.au/agd/www/npcphone.nsf/Page/Bullying_Among_Young_Children)

Conference presentations by Clearinghouse staff to the Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in Wellington, NZ are available at:  
[www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/papers/papersmenu.html](http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/papers/papersmenu.html)

AIFS Seminar presentation: Presentation from the recent AIFS seminar by Associate Professor Moira Carmody on *Sexual assault prevention education: How far have we come?* is available at:  
[www.aifs.gov.au/institute/seminars/seminarpapers.html#carmody](http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/seminars/seminarpapers.html#carmody)

The recruitment, retention and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander foster carers by Nick Richardson, Leah Bromfield and Daryl Higgins:  
[www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/2005/reports/litreview/litreview.html](http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/2005/reports/litreview/litreview.html)

Enhancing out-of-home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people by Daryl Higgins, Leah Bromfield and Nick Richardson:  
[www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/2005/reports/empirical/empirical.html](http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/2005/reports/empirical/empirical.html)

*Visions of a Child Friendly Community* has been produced to support NAPC National Child Protection Week campaign theme: Child Friendly Communities Prevent Abuse and Neglect of Children. A copy of this publication is available on the NAPCAN NSW website:  
[www.napcan.org.au/NSW/index.htm](http://www.napcan.org.au/NSW/index.htm)

### CFC-SA WEBSITE

**WWW.** [www.cfc-sa.org.au](http://www.cfc-sa.org.au)

Visit our website for updates and info

email

[enquiries@cfc-sa.org.au](mailto:enquiries@cfc-sa.org.au)

# Connecting Foster Carers - SA Inc.



"Together we can make a difference"

ISSUE 5 - WINTER 2006

# Welcome

Hello and Welcome to the new season.

If you are reading this newsletter then you are a Foster Carer/Parent. I'm not telling you anything you don't already know: how PRECIOUS you are, and the difference your choice to become a Foster Carer is making, firstly to the child or children in your care and secondly to the community.

Connecting Foster Carers - SA is comprised of a group of Foster Carers. We voluntarily attend regular meetings representing the concerns and issues to appropriate agencies in the hope they will support us in making the much needed CHANGES.

The foundational work is still in progress. We conducted our first Annual General Meeting in December which was successfully supported. For the previous two years we have been establishing this foundation and proudly report that our reputation amongst Foster Carers and Governmental Agencies is developing and strengthening. OUR VOICE IS BEING HEARD.

CFC - SA strongly advocate for transparency in all representation. We are a diverse collection of honest and passionate people who stand behind our Mission Statement, believing that "Together we CAN make a difference" and knowing that with your support we can boast "Together we WILL make a difference", to OUR final achievement "Together we ARE making a difference."

We have met regularly with the Minister and have a commitment from his office to support and promote transparency between agencies. We have regular contact with Pam Simmons, the Guardian for children and young people in care, who is very passionate about working together to make that difference. We intend to build the partnership to seek better outcomes for carers and the children we care for. Recently we organised a "Focus Group." The "focus" was on the "Charter of Rights for children and young people in care." There was feedback from young people who participated in this project. Our children had clearly identified the need for a partnership approach between their "parents" and social workers. We discussed many issues including "Providing Information to Children and Foster Carers when and before they enter care" as well as the need for Professional Development Training in our District Offices. Young people have voiced their opinions to the Office of the Guardian and have offered their services to visit District Offices as part of the training. CFC - SA raised the importance for Agencies and Government to use any opportunity available to promote that with these rights come responsibilities.

Foster Carers and "accountability" are synonymous, and yet in many cases responsibility or accountability from the young person within the home environment is unsupported. Feedback from Carers reveal they feel disempowered from this lack of support. Inconsistencies within the Legal and Judicial systems do not promote accountability and/or responsibility of the young person. These inconsistencies aggravate what Carers perceive to be the difference between a successful and unsuccessful placement.

Make no mistake - the issues we need to be dealing with on YOUR behalf are numerous. Knowing which issues to prioritise and focus on will be our next challenge, as well as maintaining those we already support. We hope to break down the barriers as we "journey into new territory." We would love to hear from you and have you come and join us. Membership is without cost. Please fill out the membership form on our website, or call us for an application form, it's free! The greater our numbers the greater our voice. ■

Shirley Toker (Secretary)

## INSIDE

Help!

My Child is a Teenager!

How to Fight Allegations

Peer Support

Foster Parenting Crisis

# South East Corner

The new year started off busy for carers in the South East. With the usual transitioning back into school and getting back into routine, which are usually difficult times for children and families in this sector. There were two specific training seminars organised as well.

The first was on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Sue Miers, with her husband as roady, travelled to Mt Gambier to present a series of 5 workshops. Although the plan was to originally have her for carers only, it was decided that the information on FAS needed to be heard by the whole community and especially those in the Early Childhood, Health and Alternative care sectors. We also put on sessions in 2 of our local high schools. Over the two days, we were delighted with the response and interest in the topic, with over 130 people attending. It was great to see the same information being presented and received by all professionals and carers across the sectors, whom all play vital roles in the support and stabilisation of children in care. A great website on this topic is [www.nofasard.org](http://www.nofasard.org). Many thanks go to Regional Health in Mt Gambier who fully sponsored the event.

In March, a group of carers travelled to Adelaide for a seminar on "Attachment" presented by Psychologist Daniel Hughes. This full day seminar was very informative and we all came away with new knowledge and a renewed vigor in helping our children, (maybe I should speak for myself on that one). There were also many resources available on the day with Erica Menheere Thompson helping us decide which resources would be more appropriate for which sectors. There is a website available with loads of info and links at [www.attachmentresources.com](http://www.attachmentresources.com) so log on and see for yourself.

Our next local CFC get together is on March the 5th. Alan March from our local Families SA office is coming to meet the carers and answer any questions we may have as well as share a little about himself. Although you will receive this newsletter after this date, I hope to see you there or at our next meeting which you will all hear about shortly. If in the meantime you would like to catch up with me to find out what else is happening or just for a chat, I can be contacted via CFC's freephone number **1800 732 272** or for you email fans on [enquiries@cfc-sa.org.au](mailto:enquiries@cfc-sa.org.au).

Thanks guys for all your hard work and perseverance in this sometimes crazy world in which we dare enter when we sign up to be foster parents. ■

Amanda Wayne  
South East Representative / Board member

## The Superhero's Journey

Supporting positive leaving care & transition experiences

A short report on the FACE to FACE\*  
4th NATIONAL FORUM

In August 2005, **Face to Face** convened a national forum in Brisbane bringing a unique perspective to the discussion of better outcomes for young people as they leave care. 199 people from all states and territories participated including 32 young people, 16 carers, 104 non-government service providers, 34 government service providers and policy staff.

Face to Face is a national partnership forum of consumers, governments, carers and service providers, involved in the out of home care sector for children and young people. The partnership is convened by **CREATE Foundation** and supported by a National Steering Committee of stakeholder representatives from States and Territories. The principles of Face to Face - collaboration, participation, partnership and learning - provide a framework through which to seek a range of innovative solutions to known issues within the care system. The key outcomes of the forum included:

A snapshot of Leaving care across Australia - States and Territories provided a current picture of leaving care in their respective jurisdictions including policy and legislative requirements, initiatives supporting leaving care practice, specific leaving care services, and approaches to measuring outcomes and success for young people.

Experiences of leaving care - Many of the young people participating in the forum shared their stories and experiences of leaving care. Young people's stories provided a foundation for the forum to focus its endeavors and achieve its aims. Their stories provided first hand insight into the experiences young people face when transitioning from care and the lead up to this important life event. These experiences included:

- Feeling nervous and scared about moving out on your own
- Not feeling prepared when moving out
- Not being able to find suitable accommodation and services to assist in finding somewhere to live
- Foster Carers provided ongoing support well after the age of 18
- Some had completed independent living skills courses whilst others were taught these skills by their carers, and others who had no preparation at all
- Selling their ideas and needs to caseworkers with the hope of having their needs met
- Relying on shelters and emergency accommodation
- Falling into the cycle of drugs and dealers

## Help! My child is becoming a teenager!

*This article was written by popular parenting expert Michael Grose. For great ideas on how to raise kids visit [www.parentingideas.com.au](http://www.parentingideas.com.au)*

"Mother nature is providential. She gives us twelve years to develop a love for our children before turning them into teenagers." *William Galvin*

If your child has just become an adolescent you may be a little anxious and confused. After the relatively relaxed and easy years of middle childhood, adolescence can be quite a shock for some parents. You may be wondering why your child's once-extensive vocabulary has been reduced to a few Neanderthal type grunts. Or why your child's smile has been replaced by a permanent scowl or an upturned lip. Perhaps you are thinking that the "A" in Adolescent stands for Attitude, and it is not all positive. Teenagers can be difficult to fathom at times, leaving the most capable parents scratching their heads in surprise.

Adolescents have a poor public image. Some media coverage of young people would make you think most teenagers are drug-crazed, sexually rampant gorillas intent on creating mayhem. Take note that the majority of kids make it through adolescence unscathed, although they will invariably give their parents and teachers a few headaches along the way.

It helps for parents to know what is normal and what's not. Following is a list of common problems, behaviours or issues that many parents of adolescents currently encounter. [See the rest of this article on our website: [www.cfc-sa.org.au](http://www.cfc-sa.org.au)]

## What is Attachment Disorder?

*I believe this information to be true, but cannot back it with research. Unfortunately, very little research has been done to help children like my son. Perhaps that will change. None of this information should be taken as a means for a diagnosis.*

Reactive Attachment Disorder is a very real illness. Children with Reactive Attachment Disorder are reacting to events in their early life that may include neglect, abuse, or something more subtle (see causes below). Due to these events, many children are unable to attach to a primary caregiver and go through the normal development that children must go through to function in relationships. My explanation is simplified but may be helpful. It does not replace a diagnosis from an attachment therapist.

In the first two years of life, children go through healthy attachment cycles. The first and second year attachment cycles. A healthy first year attachment cycle looks like this:



As the baby has a need and signals that need by crying, the mother (primary caregiver) comes and soothes her baby and meets his needs. If this cycle is repeated over and over again and the baby's needs are consistently met in the proper way by

the same caregiver, the baby often learns to trust. He will then be able to continue on in his development. Now, take a look at the disturbed attachment cycle:



Comparing the Healthy Attachment Cycle to the Disturbed Attachment Cycle, you can see how the baby has a need, cries, but this time, the need is not met by his mother/primary caregiver, or met

inconsistently, or there are different caregivers who are not attuned to this particular baby. Sometimes the baby's cries go unanswered as in the case of neglect or the baby's cries are met with a slap as in the case of physical abuse. Whatever the cause, the baby's needs are not met in a consistent, appropriate way. (See Potential Causes).

Instead of learning to trust like the baby who experiences a Healthy Attachment Cycle, this baby learns the world is unsafe and that he must take care of himself. Instead of trust, rage develops and is internalized. He learns he must be in charge of his life for his very survival. Is it any wonder a child with reactive attachment disorder feels the need to be in control? He thinks his very life depends on it. But if the child has successfully gone through the Healthy Attachment Cycle during his first year of life, then he most likely will be able to go through the Second Year Secure Attachment Cycle:

The Second Year Secure Attachment Cycle helps a child accept limits on his behaviour. By going through these two attachment cycles the child learns to trust, engage in reciprocity, to regulate his emotions. It is here he starts to develop a conscience, self-esteem, empathy, the foundations for logical thinking, etc. A breakdown in these two cycles damages all the relationships he has for the rest of his life. Unless interventions are made. When the first cycle breaks down, the child cannot do the second year. To expect the child to function as a typical child when his normal development was completely stunted back in infant/toddlerhood is not rational. We must take them back and help them redo these steps. ■

# Foster Parenting Shortage Crisis

COLIN JAMES

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FALLING numbers of foster carers are forcing the State Government to use hire cars and taxis to transport vulnerable young children to private agency workers in hotels, motels and apartments. Peak foster carer groups have met the Department of Families and Communities to question why private sub-contractors increasingly are being used to provide emergency transport or care for the state's most at-risk children, who frequently include infants and toddlers.

Connecting Foster Carers SA spokesman Stephen Hodges said his organisation and other foster carer groups were concerned the use of private sub-contractors was jeopardising children's safety. "Most people would expect that the children most in need of urgent care are being looked after by foster carers or government social workers," he said. "As more and more foster carers drop out of the system and the Government keeps cutting funding to the department, these kids are being looked after by private agencies instead.

"It's reaching the point where there just aren't enough foster carers left who can take kids at short notice, especially those who have serious problems. This means they are being picked up by taxis and hire cars and taken to motels, apartments and other places where the agency people look after them for thousands of dollars a week."

Mr Hodges said yesterday all foster carers were police checked before they were registered with the State Government and received training from the Department of Families and Communities. "What is concerning us is whether the Government can ensure that the various individuals it is now using to look after the children do not present a danger and are trained," he said. "This includes taxi drivers, hire car drivers and agency staff, who either drive the kids on their own in their cars or look after them in motels, apartments and rental housing."

Mr Hodges said there had been incidents in the past six months where one child had been left on a driveway waiting for a foster carer to arrive home, taxi drivers had refused to take children because trips were too short and other children had been kept for several weeks in motels or apartments with paid agency staff.

In one recent incident, one teenage male who was placed with a private agency in the southern suburbs reportedly went missing for three weeks before the

agency contacted Government authorities amid fears it would lose its contract.

A Government spokeswoman said Impressions, the principal hire car company contracted by the State Government to transport at-risk children, conducted police checks and provided specialised training for its drivers.

Asked what police checks were being conducted on taxi drivers used to transport children, the spokeswoman said taxis were "rarely used" and "all taxi drivers are police checked on entry".

"It is the policy of Families SA that staff accompany younger children when, on the rare occasion, they are used," she said.

The spokeswoman said police checks also were conducted by two of the main non-government agencies providing emergency short-term care for children "in motels, hotels, apartments, rented housing and similar accommodation"- Alabricare and Nanny SA.

Families and Communities Minister Jay Weatherill said the Government was using private childcare agencies to provide emergency accommodation because increasing numbers of children were requiring state care.

"Many of these children and young people have high and complex needs and often require emergency after hours placements," he said. "This often means they are not able to be placed with other children or young people. Therefore, these agencies are engaged to provide emergency short term care pending identification of more appropriate and supportive placement options."

Mr Weatherill said the Government was "continually investigating and introducing means to reduce the need for such accommodation".

"The fundamental solution to pressure on our foster care system is to better support families to ensure there are less children coming into the system," he said.

The Department of Families and Communities - recently renamed "Families SA" at an unknown cost to taxpayers - estimated the total annual cost of providing short-term emergency accommodation and other support services for at-risk children was estimated to be \$1.6 million. ■

**Research and the challenges ahead** - Australian researchers creatively presented what they had found through their research. Areas covered included the needs and experience of young people in care, the costs of meeting and not meeting those needs, the factors that impact on young people achieving positive outcomes, and what is needed to improve those outcomes.

**A Blueprint for leaving care was developed** - Key elements involved in preparing young people for leaving care, supporting their transition and providing post care support.

**Moving forward** - four pathways for progressing the leaving care blueprint were developed around policy, targeted services, practice, and learning and outcomes. States and Territories made a commitment to action and a national commitment to action was planned through national peak bodies.

Key recommendations arising from the forum were:

Young people in care and post care should have access to the same opportunities as other young people in the community.

Leaving care is a process, not an event. Planning for leaving care should start on entry to care, and should be responsive to the developmental needs of children and young people at different life stages and transition points.

Greater attention to stability of placements and relationships, consistency of school attended and educational attainment will improve outcomes for children and young people when they are in care and when they have left care. Young people's perception of security is critical to understanding stability.

Many young people will return to, or make contact with their families when they leave care. It is essential that contact be maintained between children and their families, and that opportunities are provided to assist children and young people to understand their separation and family history, and manage family relationships and conflicts.

Major practice themes highlighted included inclusive case planning, enhanced relationships between the young person and their worker, improving the knowledge and capacity of those caring for and working with young people leaving care, and ensuring the relevance of policy in practice.

Children and young people in care and those leaving care require access to a range of services provided or funded by Government, not just those provided directly or funded by statutory welfare departments. Further work is required in ensuring access and assisting other government departments in understanding and responding to the needs of children and young people in care and post care.

Specific areas of service delivery highlighted included greater educational and employment opportunities, greater access to and stability of housing, greater use of specialist programs (mentoring, empowerment and recreation based), progressive development of independent living skills, improved access to case files, and greater capacity to reconnect young people with their families.

There is urgent need to develop and collect baseline data in relation to young people leaving care and to identify indicators of successful transition from care.

A greater emphasis is required on evaluation and research to improve the evidence base for policy, service, and practice development, and thereby improve outcomes for young people leaving care.

Foster carers continuing to provide care and support for young people who have left care must be actively supported, including remuneration for costs providing such care and support.

The complete article and the National Snapshot on leaving care, and the full report of the Forum can be found at [www.create.org.au/f2f](http://www.create.org.au/f2f) or by contacting the FACE to FACE Coordinator:

Sharyn Low from Matrix On Board  
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web [www.create.org.au/f2f](http://www.create.org.au/f2f)

## STOP PRESS!

A brochure for the National Foster Carers Conference 2006 is enclosed. The conference will be held in Adelaide, and is facilitated by Australian Foster Carers Association, in partnership with State Peak Organisation CFC-SA, with additional funding and support through the Dept of Families & Communities.

The conference is an excellent example of various organisations across alternative care working collaboratively to promote better outcomes in foster care. We have managed to secure a really excellent program for you, and hope to see as many of you as possible at the conference!

# Allegations by an Experienced Foster Carer (name supplied)

When we first enter the world of foster carering, we are excited, enthusiastic, naïve, willing and eager to meet the challenges that face us. We plunge into this endeavour with the expectations of making a better life for a child, and, sometimes a whole family. How many times throughout our foster parenting “career” do we hear the phrase “at risk children”? Do we ever hear “at risk foster carers”?

No. If prospective foster carers knew the perils that lurked inside this crazy world of caring for abused and neglected children, would many continue the recruitment process? I wouldn't think so. Still, I wonder why so many foster carers stay in a field that can turn our world upside down at the whim of one person. I am talking about erroneous allegations. An allegation of any nature is devastating and hard to pull one's self back into the mainstream of everyday life. We are never the same after an accusation...a little disappointed, frustrated, confused, embarrassed, hopefully much wiser, and that proverbial wall gets a little higher.

Accusations can happen to any of us at any time. The neighbour doesn't like foster children living next door to their “perfect” children; thinks it lowers property value. The foster child who thinks he/she will be sent back to live with their biological family if they convince the social worker the foster father has molested them or the foster mother hits them and deprives them of food. Vulnerability is a foster carer's middle name. We are always “at risk”.

As foster carers we are held to a higher standard. Fair? No! Our constitutional rights ensure innocence until proven guilty. Does this apply to foster carers? Yes! Is it upheld? No! Even with an “unfounded” allegation a foster carer can be secretly placed on a “no use” list and never receive placements again. There is no suit of armour to protect us from erroneous allegations.

But there are some steps we can take to minimise our chances of being accused.

## 1. Know the Rules

Familiarise yourself and your family with your agency's Policy and Practice Manual, and the out-of-home-care standards. Abide by those rules!

## 2. Research

Get as much information about the child before you accept placement. Such as (but not limited to!) the following checklist:

- Behavioral problems?
- Emotional problems?
- Medical attention needed?
- How many prior foster homes has he/she been in?
- Has he/she made allegations against previous carers?
- Ask to speak to the previous foster carer if coming from another foster home.
- School performance?
- Parental visitation?

## 3. Empowerment

Don't be afraid to say no to a placement that could put you at risk. Protecting your registration ensures care needed to the majority of children. Overindulging our pride by thinking we can save every child is of no benefit to anyone and can at times result in a serious allegation. *Examples:*

If you know the child being placed is sexually active/aggressive, don't take the child if you have children of the opposite sex. Do not make the mistake of thinking this applies only to teenagers....young children of both sexes act out sexually too. You especially don't want to leave a female alone with your husband or teenage son.

A child with many previous placements could and usually is the sign of a very difficult child. Ask to speak to the previous placements. If the worker will not facilitate a conversation, say no to the placement.

## 4. Document

- Jot down the events of the day in a notebook (one for each child). A notebook is best because computer records can be too easily changed. The notebook should be spiral (so pages can't be torn out), and have numbered pages. Keep records in ink, not pencil.
- Keep the notes even if the day is a replica of the day before. Include details of where other household members were during the day. Note any change in behaviour before and after a visit from a relative or social worker. Note all appointments involving that child, i.e. doctor, social worker visit, parent visits. Note too if the child phones or visits after the placement is over.
- Keep records for all placements, not just ones you have concerns about (psychiatric issues later in life can result in false allegations against you). Keep the records in a safe place always - allegations might arise in 30 years time!

## 5. Common Sense

A foster mother left her small children locked in the car for “just a few minutes” to pay a bill. When she came out police were breaking in to free the frightened (but unharmed) children. A foster carer who does not use appropriate judgment could be investigated and might face criminal charges. What does this do to children to be uprooted from a familiar environment and placed in yet another foster home?! A foster child shouldn't have to pay for a foster parent's lack of common sense.

## 6. Know and be Known

Know your child's social worker and let them know you.

## 7. Rules

Have *written* house rules, with copies to each new placement and each child's social worker. If there is a conflict with house rules, better to know before the child is left in your care.

## 8. Department

Never meet a Special Investigation Unit (SIU) investigator without a support person (who should tape/take notes, especially “before and after” meeting discussions).

Every year or two get a copy of your file from Families SA to ensure there are no undisclosed investigations about you, and that there are no findings recorded without your knowledge. You need the right to respond.

You should be provided *written* (without exception) allegations against you before any interview with Families SA or SIU. Ditto for outcomes of investigation. Consider having a lawyer present for any interviews that pertain to allegations. It's not cheap but could be much cheaper in the long run.

## 8. Support

Networking & support groups. Your foster carer associations are excellent vehicles for disseminating information.

Being accused of wrong-doing is an occupational hazard. If you are ever accused, be it erroneous or true, get support and help from someone you trust. Keep conversation among only vested parties. “Loose lips sink ships”. The same holds true if you are a confidant. However, as caregivers we are *obligated* to report to Families SA any situation where a child is unsafe, including situations pertaining to any allegation.

It is difficult to stay in a system that fails to support its key players against allegations, especially when those allegations can tear apart families. Innocent foster carers and their young children have been removed from their homes due to claims of child molest. They also run the risk of criminal prosecution. We can minimise those risks, but we must protect our families first. When we can do that and extend our hands, our homes, our families to less fortunate children and their families, then we are truly blessed.

# Peer Support

CFC has begun working with the assignment of exploring ways Foster carers can support each other.

Many surveys done around Australia have proven and found that the best kind of support comes from people who have walked through the same challenges you are dealing with at present. It's often very helpful to be able to share with someone who has been where you are and come out the other side better for the experience. Connecting Foster Carers SA (CFC-SA) would like to find ways to help facilitate these kinds of experiences.

There are a number of ways this can happen. Almost exactly half of you who have registered so far are on email and can be sent information easily this way. If you have internet access you probably know about “chat rooms”, and we are looking at the possibility of using our website for one of these. This would enable you to chat with other carers from all over the state about whatever is on your mind and to generally network with other carers.

Another way for you to connect with others is by sharing a cuppa with carers who live nearby to you. Please call us or email if you'd like to see any of this happen. You can email [enquiries@cfc-sa.org.au](mailto:enquiries@cfc-sa.org.au) or phone **1800 732 272**. We look forward to hearing from you if you're keen to connect in this way. ■

## A Carer's Voice

Re: Connecting Foster Carers - SA

To whom it may concern,

I am sending this email in deep gratitude for CFC-SA's invaluable input into the meeting conducted here in my home with regard to the great stress put upon my family by the CYFS Office. Without CFC-SA's help I seriously doubt that we would still be in our role as foster carers. CFC-SA was able to bring perspective and practicality into a situation that seemed nothing short of hopeless to us. CFC-SA was able to shed light and sensibility without the emotion that can so easily cloud the thinking of over stressed, under supported carers.

Many thanks CFC-SA. Keep up the good work. We really appreciate your tireless work.

Angela (Foster Carer)