Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

Election Priorities 2026



Foster and Kinship Care

Updated 4 August 2026

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare is the peak body for child and family services in Tasmania and Victoria. For over 100 years, the Centre has advocated for the rights and wellbeing of children, young people and families, ensuring their right to be heard, to be safe, to access education and to remain connected to family, community and culture.

Election Priority

Increase foster care and kinship care allowances to fully cover the true costs of caring for a child and invest in the supports carers need to provide safe, stable and nurturing homes for the children they care for.

What this looks like

- Increase foster and kinship care allowances to reflect the true cost of care, matching the rising cost of living and indexed to the household rate of inflation.
- Invest in foster and kinship carer retention through enhanced training, mentoring, peer support networks and therapeutic supports.
- Recognise foster and kinship carers as essential partners in the care team and decision making and improve the sharing of information needed to support children safely and effectively.
- Improve access to health, dental, mental health and therapeutic services for children and young people in care.
- Strengthen Aboriginal led responses and implementation of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle.
- Strengthen whole of government accountability for outcomes for children and young people in care through Victoria's corporate parenting framework

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Background

Foster and kinship carers provide safe, stable and nurturing homes for thousands of Victorian children and young people who cannot safely live with their parents. Family based carer delivers better outcomes for children and young people by supporting their wellbeing, development, education and connection to family, community and culture. However, Victoria's foster and kinship care system is under increasing pressure, with growing challenges recruiting and retaining carers and rising demand for placements with increasingly complex needs.

Many carers support children and young people who have experienced trauma, neglect, family violence, disability and mental health challenges. At the same time rising cost of living pressures and the increasing emotional and practical demands of caring mean many carers report that current care allowances do not adequately meet the true costs of care. Carers also report feeling undervalued and insufficiently recognised as key partners in supporting children's wellbeing and development.

When suitable family-based placements cannot be found, children may experience placement instability, separation from siblings, family and community, or placement in more intensive and costly care settings. Investing in foster and kinship carers through adequate financial support, therapeutic services, peer support, training and stronger partnerships with carers will help improve recruitment and retention, strengthen placement stability and deliver better outcomes for children and young people. A sustainable and well-supported carer workforce is critical to Victoria's ability to meet its responsibilities as a corporate parent and ensure every child in care can grow up in a safe, stable and nurturing home.

First Nations

First Nations children and young people remain significantly overrepresented in Victoria's child protection and out-of-home care systems. While important progress has been made through implementation of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and the transfer of authority to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), further investment is needed to strengthen Aboriginal-led decision-making and culturally connected care. As at March 2026, 73.2% of Aboriginal children in care were placed with relatives, kin, other Aboriginal carers or in Aboriginal residential care, and 529 children were under the care of ACCOs through the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program. Continued investment is needed to support Aboriginal children and young people to remain connected to family, community, Country and culture.

Key data



9100

Victorian children and young people are living in out-of-home care.



1200

children live in foster care.



2.9 million

hours of active care annually, valued at approx. $80 million.



$454 million

saved by avoiding more expensive alternative care

- Victoria base care allowances are the lowest in the country at $473.66 per fortnight for the first age range (0 – 7 years) compared to $697 per fortnight for the first age range (0-4 years) in New South Wales.
- Kinship care supports more than 7,400 children, while approximately 1,200 children live in foster care placements (March 2026).
- Victoria's 1,825 foster carers generate an estimated $533 million in economic value each year through unpaid caregiving and avoided costs to the child protection system (CUBE report, March 2022).
- 94.1% of children and young people in care experienced two or fewer placements in the previous 12 months, demonstrating the importance of stable care arrangements and well-supported carers.
- 73.2% of Aboriginal children in care were placed with relatives, kin, other Aboriginal carers or in Aboriginal residential care, supporting cultural connection and implementation of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle.
- 529 children were under the care of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations under the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program as at March 2026.
- The FCAV Carer Snapshot for 2026 shows that at March 2026 Victoria had 1553 active foster carer households and 549 non-active foster carer households, with 338 foster carer household undertaking accreditation training. New accreditations (276 in 2025) are not matching the number of foster carer households exiting (294 in 2025).

Key Programs

Fostering Connections - www.fosteringconnections.com.au

Fostering Connections is a sector-led initiative developed in collaboration with Victoria's 24 foster care agencies. Together, we work to support, strengthen, and promote foster care across the state. Fostering Connections leads the state's foster care recruitment, generates valuable data and insights to inform strategies, and ensures a seamless pathway for carers to connect with local agencies.

Foster Care Association of Victoria - www.fcav.org.au

The Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) is the peak body for Victorian foster carers. For over 30 years, the FCAV as a carer-led, not-for-profit organisation, has been working towards better outcomes for foster carers and the children and young people in their care.

Kinship Carers Victoria - https://kinshipcarersvictoria.org/

Kinship Carers Victoria is the peak body representing kinship carers across Victoria. The organisation advocates for the rights, recognition and support of kinship carers and the children and young people in their care. Kinship Carers Victoria provides information, resources, training, peer support and systemic advocacy to strengthen kinship care and improve outcomes for children and families.

Key Research

- Rapid Review: Foster Care Recruitment and Retention (Centre for Excellence)
- Valuing something that really matters: The economic value of foster care in Victoria (Cube)
- Fostering Children with a Disability in Victoria Report (Centre for Excellence)
- FCAV Foster Carer Snapshot 2026 https://www.fcav.org.au/assets/2026-foster-carer-snapshot-report.pdf
- Enhancing the Attraction and Retention of Foster Carers in Victoria: Policy Considerations - https://www.ozchild.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/OzChild-The-Centre-BWA-2024_07_MSDIPolicyBrief_v2.pdf
- Report on Government Services 2024-25: Child Protection - https://cfecfw.org.au/rogs-2024-25-child-protection-services-what-it-means-for-children-and-young-people/
- Out-of-Home Care Services (Victorian Auditor-General's Office) https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/out-home-care-services