

# fostering our future

ISSUE 39: WINTER

## ADHD & ODD:

WHAT DOES  
YOUR CHILD'S  
DIAGNOSIS  
MEAN?

Strengthening  
family contact

Keeping  
your kids  
healthy

ENSURING A  
SMOOTH  
TRANSITION

FROM PRIMARY TO HIGH SCHOOL



Family &  
Community  
Services



## Minister's Message

Welcome to the winter edition of the *Fostering Our Future* magazine.

As the recently appointed Minister for Family and Community Services (FACS), I look forward to working together with carers, other government departments, non-government organisations as well as the wider community to support families and vulnerable children within our community.

Recently I've been visiting carers and FACS frontline staff across NSW. I've learnt that these roles are challenging, yet also rewarding. We have had discussions around raising awareness of fostering in our community and improving the outcomes for children and young people in care. I am committed to making a positive difference in both these areas.

As a former high school teacher, I well understand the important role carers play during the formative schooling years. With the

school year well underway, this edition of *Fostering Our Future* answers frequently raised questions on education for children in care. There's also a feature article on helping children transition from primary to high school smoothly.

Maintaining a connection between children in care and their kinship families is important to maintaining a child's sense of identity. Coordinating contact can sometimes be difficult, but when the child's interests are put first it can be a positive experience for all, especially when strategies to deal with difficult situations are put into place prior to a contact visit. Read about one family's journey to make contact work on page 14.

Don't forget that Foster Care Week is happening from Sunday 13 to Saturday 20 September and I encourage everyone to participate. Turn to page 5 to find out more about the events and activities happening during the week. Foster Care Week is a time to celebrate the contributions carers make to the community as well as an opportunity to connect with other carers and services in your area.

Until the next edition, thank you for opening your homes and hearts to the children in your care.

**Brad Hazzard**

Minister for Family and Community Services

*Fostering our Future* can only continue to be a valuable resource with your feedback. If you'd like to see a particular topic covered, have an interesting story, or you wish to nominate a child in your care to be profiled confidentially, please email us at: [fostercarers@facs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:fostercarers@facs.nsw.gov.au).

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## ADHD and ODD: what does your child's diagnosis mean?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) are a set of diagnoses commonly given to children in care. It's important to know what they mean for everyday life.

### What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

ADHD is the well-known term for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. It's a medical condition where children act before they think, they have trouble focusing and can't sit still a lot of the time. On the other hand, children with ADHD will often

persist well with activities they love. They have the ability to use their energy in positive ways such as in sports (especially individual sports like running and swimming) or dancing.

### What is Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)?

Commonly known as ODD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder is a diagnosis given to children who won't do what they are asked. They are often quite angry towards authority figures such as parents, carers and teachers.

## Complex trauma is a common feature of ADHD and ODD

The features of both these diagnoses are seen in children with complex trauma. Children with complex trauma have suffered abuse and neglect at the hands of those who should care for them and this affects their brains.

Babies are born with immature brains which means they can't regulate their own emotional and physical states. They are dependent on the presence of another person in order to feel safe, calm and reassured. The growth of a baby's brain is shaped by its experiences of connection with a carer. If a baby doesn't have enough early experiences of emotional safety and reassurance, they can become overwhelmed by strong emotions, making it difficult for them to learn to soothe themselves later on in life.

### Let them know they are safe

Children who are overwhelmed by strong emotions may be diagnosed with ADHD. They are seen as fidgety or hyperactive because their bodies and minds are in constant motion and unable to control the strong emotions they are feeling. When they are required to sit still they begin to feel upset and may have flashbacks to traumatic experience from their past which trigger the fidgety or hyperactive behaviour.

To help them control these emotions or flashbacks, clearly tell them you will keep them safe. Let them know your home is a safe place. For example, tell them about how you lock the doors to prevent burglars from coming in or how you are always careful to make sure heavy things won't fall out of cupboards and hurt people. Remind them you have the doctor's phone number in your phone to contact easily in a case of an emergency. Use examples that will let the child know they are safe and simply tell them 'You are safe'.

### Build a positive relationship

Children in care diagnosed with ODD are often behaving the way they have seen adults behave. They may not understand the rules at home or at school and since they are often overwhelmed by their feelings they may explode. Building a relationship with them and being very clear about what you want them to do is important. Teach the child right from wrong with rewarding activities such as reading a story or playing with them in the backyard. These activities are soothing, and teach the child right from wrong. Remember the maltreatment affects both behaviour and concentration but the positive relationships make a difference. ♦

For more information visit  
[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)



# Save the date! The Kids in Care Cup is back

The Kids in Care Cup is on again in 2015 and promises to be bigger and better than ever.

Now in its third year, this hugely popular Aboriginal knockout footy tournament will take place on Saturday 19 September at Sid Parrish Park in Figtree, Wollongong, drawing men, women and children teams from all over NSW.

The day-long event will be supported with a state-wide media and promotional campaign by Fostering

NSW. This campaign aims to raise awareness about the need for more Aboriginal foster and kinship carers by reaching out to the wider Aboriginal community through its love of football.

To find out more, follow the Kids in Care Cup Facebook page or contact the organiser, Barry Lenihan at [capacity@absec.org.au](mailto:capacity@absec.org.au). ◆



## Foster Care Week 2015

Foster Care Week runs this year from Sunday 13 to Saturday 19 September.

This annual celebration acknowledges the wonderful contribution made by foster carers across NSW. Agencies and regional groups around the state will be holding events to thank carers for the love, nurture and support they give every day to children and young people in care.

### The Foster Care Picnic Day

The much-anticipated Foster Care Week Picnic kicks off Foster Care Week in Sydney, and will be held again at Lizard Log Pavilion and Amphitheatre in Abbotsbury, on Sunday 13 September 2015.

ACWA is proud to host this wonderful annual event. All foster families are invited to join in the fun!

This year the stage is set for a fantastic day, with plenty of green open space, games, rides and even an animal farm to keep families entertained! The day will be topped off with a delicious lunch and there's plenty of parking, with the venue opening an additional car park just for picnic guests, along with priority accessible parking.



All children and young people in foster families, both kids in care and their foster siblings, are encouraged to explore the theme 'Growing Together' by entering the Foster Care Week Art/Prose and colouring-in competitions. Competition winners will be announced, and prizes awarded, at the Foster Care Week picnic day. Look out for entry forms on page 8 in this edition of Fostering Our Future.

Find out more please contact Liz Potten, ACWA's Foster Care Week Coordinator on 02 9281 4602 or email: [fcw@acwa.asn.au](mailto:fcw@acwa.asn.au) ◆



## Ensuring a smooth transition to high school

The move from primary to high school is a major milestone for children. It's a time of big changes in their development, education and life. It's an especially important time for children in out-of-home care as they may find change quite challenging and will need help adjusting. They'll also need support throughout Year 6 to help them settle in well.

### Starting a conversation about school

You might begin the conversation by talking about having more than one teacher in Year 7 and what that might be like. Then you could explain about changing classrooms between lessons and not being with the same friends in all lessons.

Talk to the teachers and find out what the school is doing to help children make the transition. You can also ask about things you can do at home to help make this step easier for your child. You could ask about the curriculum and new subjects that they

will be learning in Year 7 so you can help them find out more so they can prepare for the changes ahead. They can get ahead of the game if they know about the languages they will learn and the practical subjects they will study as well as the sports they will play.

Attending open days and orientation programs is a big help – children get familiar with the school's location, buildings and meet other children who will be starting Year 7.

### Get organised for the first day

Children often worry about getting lost at high school, so to help you can download a school map from their website and go to the school on the weekend or when there is a fete or open day. Walking around the playground and pointing out each building and what it is used for from the map helps children become familiar with the school before they begin and helps to ease any fears they may have.

### Forming new friendships

Many children start secondary school expecting to make new friends. Some children make friends easily, others find this difficult for a variety of reasons. You know your child best and will know whether they will find approaching children they don't know and starting up a conversation simple, or an uncomfortable or difficult experience.

If your child has some difficulties, encourage them to:

- ◆ learn to become approachable, this can include simple things like saying hello, smiling and not appearing too anxious
- ◆ look for someone else who may also seem shy and talk to them – your child may find them easier to approach
- ◆ encourage your child to ask questions about the person, like 'what school did you go to last year', 'do you like music / maths / running (whatever your child is interested in)', 'what's your favourite subject this year', 'why do you like it'? These questions are non-threatening and can help your child start conversations more easily
- ◆ listen to what others are saying around them – your child may find that they are talking about something they are interested in or know about
- ◆ suggest that they look for an opening before saying something, even if they are feeling self-conscious or awkward.

## Building your child's confidence

One way you can help is by building your child's confidence. You can do this by openly acknowledging the things they do well. It doesn't need to be anything particularly special, it can be as simple as telling your child that you value them and appreciate their qualities, such as how well they help around the house or how thoughtful they are. This will go a long way to building and maintaining your child's confidence.

## Ask and listen

Talk to your child about going to secondary school as often as you think is needed over the months. Ask your child what they think it will be like. Do they expect they'll have more homework? Will they learn more things? Are they expecting to enjoy themselves? Do they feel safe and at ease? What do they think their teachers will be like? What do they think the other kids in the classes will be like? What are they most looking forward to?

Listening to your child talk may give you some indication of their concerns. If they have concerns, discuss their options. Let them know that you take these seriously and are there to help. All the time you spend preparing your child for high school is time well spent because if they enjoy their schooling they are much more likely to do well.

## Mobile phones

Entering Year 7 is often the time children are provided with their own mobile phone and when they start to use or expand their 'social media' network.

Mobile phones are a great way for children to stay in touch. They allow users to make calls, take photos, play games, send texts (SMS) and images (MMS) and access the internet. While mobile phones provide immediate contact and can be fun to use, 24/7 access and portability means you may not always be available to supervise.

Mobile use can expose children to potential risks including:

- ◆ excessive costs from calls, text, premium services and downloads
- ◆ unsupervised internet access free of parental controls and filters
- ◆ access to GPS and Bluetooth capabilities which may enable others to locate them
- ◆ receipt of unwanted content including possible offensive or cyberbullying content

- ◆ the ability to share images of themselves, including naked or 'sexting' images.

Talk to your child about how and when to use their phone and help them understand the different fees and charges and the features. It's worth checking the terms and conditions, such as what happens if your child loses the handset, the contract length and charges for different types of services including SMSs, phone calls and internet access.

## Social media

While social networking offers many benefits, there are risks. Sometimes children can forget who they are communicating with online and who might see the information they post.

It can be easier for children and teens to say and do things online that they might not do offline. It can also be easier to talk to strangers online than it is offline, and they may confide too much in people they don't know well.

It is important that children understand the risks associated with disclosing information about themselves online and know how to manage both their privacy and online 'friends'.

As a carer it's important to consider if the child or teenager is old enough for social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Tumblr, Twitter, Kik etc. Most high profile social networking sites ask users set up a profile with photos and information about themselves. The age of 13 is the minimum user age required by Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Tumblr and Twitter. Kik recommends users are 17 years or older.

If the child in your care is 13+ you should still consider the following before agreeing to unsupervised access:

- ◆ Is your child able to withstand taunts from others?
- ◆ Does your child understand what is safe to put online?
- ◆ Does your child know how to report abuse and offensive or pornographic content?
- ◆ Are you going to supervise or 'friend' your child on social sites – for example - do you know how to join Instagram?
- ◆ How do I talk to my child about my concerns? ◆

For more information visit [www.cybersmart.gov.au](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au)



FOSTERING NSW

# FOSTER CARE WEEK

13-19 September 2015

## Writing/Art Competition



This competition is open to all children and young people who are in care or part of a foster family

Be Creative! Have Fun!

For the chance to win some great prizes all you have to do is draw or paint a picture or write a poem or story on the theme of:



**“Growing together...”**

Please provide your:

Name of child/young person \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Fostering Agency \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Will you be attending the Picnic Day? (please circle) YES / NO

**Please do NOT put your name and address on the writing/art as names will be kept confidential when winners are displayed - put any personal details on this form.**

Post or email your entries to:

Foster Care Week  
Association of Children's Welfare Agencies  
Locked Bag 13  
Haymarket NSW 1240  
Email: fcw@acwa.asn.au

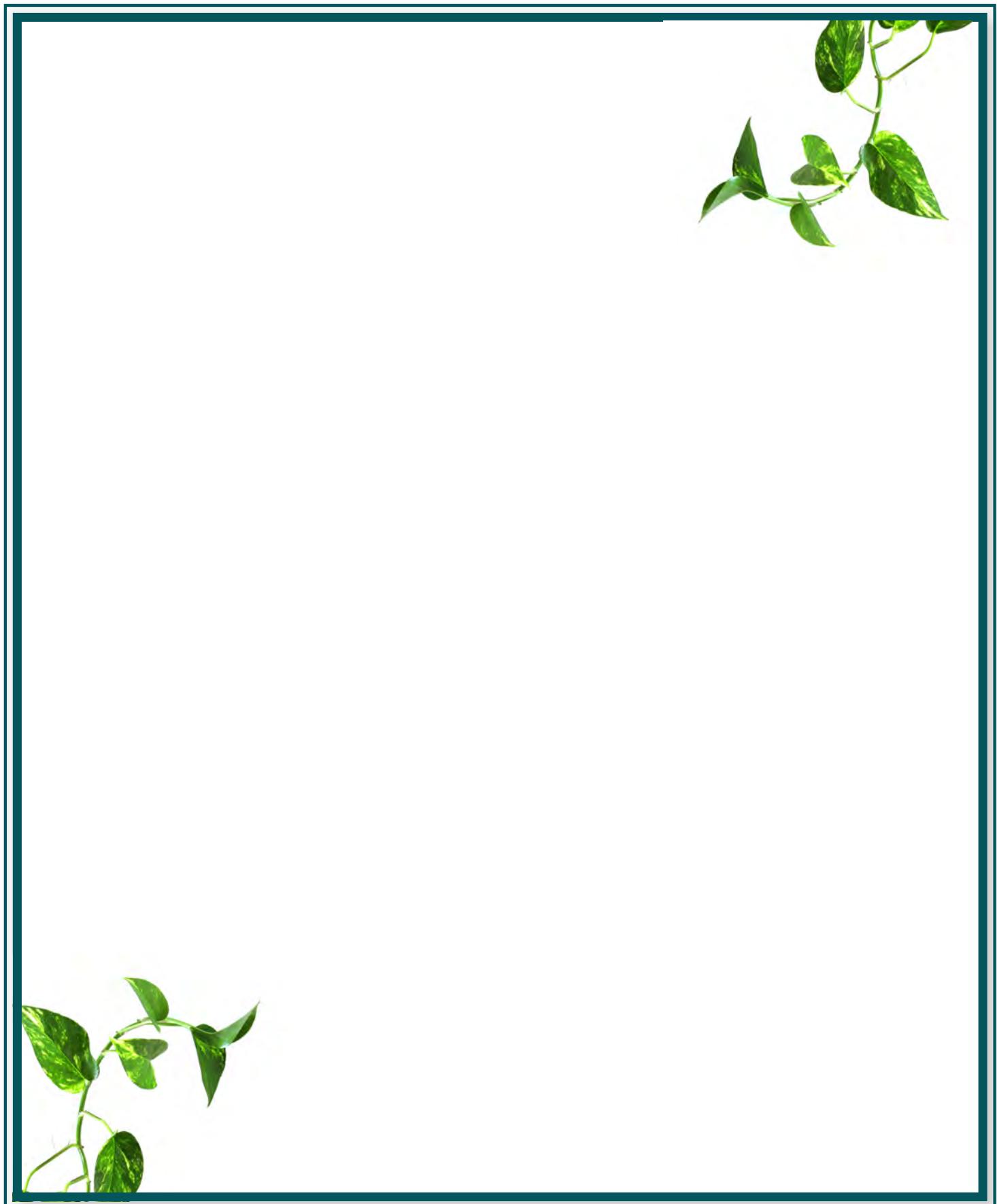


**Entries Close 21 August.**

Winners will receive their prizes at the Foster Care Week Picnic Day on **Saturday 13 September**. Talk to your agency for details. Good Luck! Have fun getting your entry together and thanks for being a part of Foster Care Week. See: [www.acwa.asn.au/fcrc/fcw2015.html](http://www.acwa.asn.au/fcrc/fcw2015.html)

*Please note that any material submitted remains the property of the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies and the Foster Care Week Committee and may be used for promotional material. We are not able to return entries. Names will be confidential. Please do not put your name/address on the art/poetry sheet.*

# GROWING TOGETHER





FOSTERING NSW

# FOSTER CARE WEEK

13-19 September 2015



## COLOURING COMPETITION

This competition is open to all children and young people who are in care or are part of a foster family

Be Creative! Have fun!

For the chance to win some great prizes all you have to do is be creative with the picture

Colour it in, include captions or a story, turn it into a collage or other artwork - the only limit is your imagination!

Please provide your:

Name of child/young person \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Fostering Agency \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Will you be attending the Picnic Day? (please circle) YES / NO

**Please do NOT put your name and address on the your artwork as names will be kept confidential when winners are displayed - put any personal details on this form.**

Post or email your entries to:

Foster Care Week  
Association of Children's Welfare Agencies  
Locked Bag 13  
Haymarket NSW 1240  
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# How to support your kids at school - your questions answered

Now the school year is well underway, many carers are thinking about how to best support the children they care for with their schooling.

Here are some common questions and answers. The answers may help you better understand some of the NSW public education services:

**The child I care for has just started high school this year. I am concerned about his learning progress and the amount of work he needs to complete in Year 7, what should I do?**

Primary to high school marks a significant transition point for any child. If not already done so, it would be helpful to request an Education Plan Review. Previously identified learning goals from primary school may no longer be relevant. Ask the teacher or year coordinator to arrange an education planning meeting so that you can meet key staff members and discuss any concerns. It's also a good opportunity for the student to participate and help identify their strengths.

**I am caring for an Aboriginal girl who is completing Year 10. She is finding some of the work challenging and I am worried about how she will manage next year with her senior studies, what should I do?**

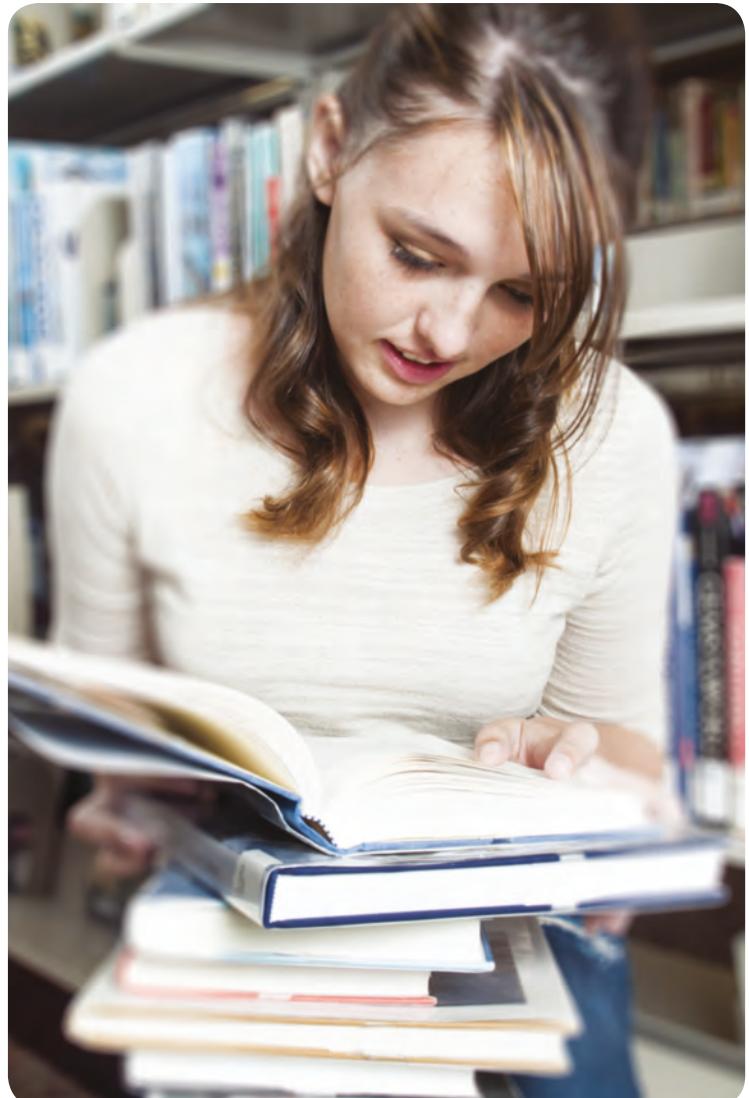
The NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) offers targeted funding referred to as the Norta Norta program to Aboriginal senior students to support them to complete their HSC. The funding is designed to provide Aboriginal students with paid tuition support, which must only be provided by a qualified tutor and generally delivered outside of school hours. Applications for the 2016 school year close on the Friday 18 September, 2015. Talk to your school for more information.

*Note: Some high schools also have 'homework clubs' while other children may respond well to having a tutor for support – talk to your caseworker if you think this might be a useful option.*

**I am caring for a Year 1 student who is struggling with his reading. He has no other disabilities or visual impairment. His reading abilities have been assessed by the school and they are going to place him into the Reading Recovery program, what is this?**

Reading Recovery is a research-based in-school program which aims to accelerate literacy learning and reduce reading and writing difficulties. The program targets those students performing in the lowest 20 per cent of Year 1. The program involves daily one-to-one tutoring with a fully qualified school teacher. It's available at most schools for eligible students and can be a very positive experience for the child and their carers. ♦

For more information visit [www.schools.nsw.edu.au](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au)



# Grandparent Group sharing the journey

Becoming a carer for your grandchildren is often unexpected and can bring up a range of feelings and emotions. Connecting to a support group can offer new friendships as well as an opportunity to share your journey with others.

There are several grandparent support groups across NSW – the Northern Beaches (Sydney) Grandparent Group being a successful one. Supporting grandparents was central in their formation and a dedicated partnership between Connecting Carers NSW (CCNSW) and Relationship Australia has contributed to the success of the group.

'CCNSW were aware there were grandparents caring for their grandchildren who would benefit from our support and connections with other grandparents in other similar situations', said Sandra Kessler, Connecting Carers NSW, Metro Central Coordinator.

## Foster Care Awareness at Mardi Gras Fair Day

More than 80,000 people attended the 2015 Fair Day picnic at Victoria Park, Glebe, to celebrate diversity and that families come in all shapes and sizes.

Amongst the celebration were a range of foster care agencies with the clear message that gay and lesbian community members are encouraged to enquire about becoming foster carers.

The response to agencies was very positive with a constant stream of interest throughout the day. Often same sex couples are unaware that they have the opportunity to foster, making active recruitment and awareness raising very important.

The Northern Beaches group formed in November 2014 and is made up of a mix of grandparents who have informal arrangements or guardianships, or share parental responsibility with birth parents. This group gets together on the first Monday of each month during school term. 'It is not always about receiving advice. It's also about hearing other stories and knowing that you are not alone' said one grandparent about their experience of the group.

Grandparents often have difficulties with lack of respite and understanding, isolation as well as confusing systems to navigate. The group meets for a coffee and a chat and allows members to build local connections and relationships', said Sandra.

CCNSW has been able to provide support, advocacy, CCNSW 24 hour support line 1300 794 653 connections, information sessions and resources to the Grandparents.

For more information or if you would like to form your own peer group, visit the Connecting Carers NSW website at [www.connectingcarers.nsw.com.au](http://www.connectingcarers.nsw.com.au)

*'It is great to be connected to someone who cares'*  
– member of the Northern Beaches Grandparent Group. ♦

According to Kate Flannery, Manager Fostering NSW, same sex couples are increasingly forming an important part of the foster care system as Australian families become more fluid and the pool of traditional families shrinking.

The experience was so positive that all agencies plan to return again to next year's Fair Day. ♦





## Strengthening family contact

Contact isn't always easy.

We look at three children who had a better experience of contact when their kinship carers and birth family committed to the kids coming first.

Linda\* and Brian\* are aunt and uncle to three Aboriginal children aged three, four and 11. In July 2013 the case management of this Aboriginal family moved to out of home care agency Barnados.

At that time the children had six family visits each year with their mother, father and three adult siblings. Sadly, the family relationships had broken down resulting in children being transported by Barnados staff to visits and no communication between the aunt and the children's birth family.

Barnados case workers spoke to the family about their philosophy of supporting families to work together for the best interest of the children.

'We expressed our desire to work with the kinship carers in a supportive way, and our belief in families being able to be together without having intrusive agency involvement whenever possible,' explained Jenny Howes, Barnados centre manager.

'Both sides of the family agreed that they wished the visits to go ahead without any agency involvement, however, they also expressed concern about the other side causing difficulties.'

In July 2013 the first visit took place since case management had transferred to Barnados. This

was attended by Barnados caseworkers, birth parents, adult siblings, the aunt and uncle and the three children.

'This visit was the first occasion the birth parents and carers had met together since the children were placed 18 months previously. To help manage these relationships, Barnados ensured there was good preparation and conversations before and after the visit - which allowed both sides to plan and debrief,' said a caseworker.

Barnados used these strategies to reaffirm the visits were held to allow the children to have a positive experience with their family members. When the visits became tense, both sides were gently reminded that all parties were committed to the children enjoying the company of their family members and issues were to be discussed at another time.

On one occasion the birth mother took offence to the youngest child referring to aunty as 'mum'. Barnados were able to diffuse the situation and the visit ended peacefully.

Barnados has worked consistently with the family to rebuild the relationships and ensure visits are positive for the children. In August 2014 the family had their first visit without a Barnados caseworker or staff member being present. The birth family continue to arrange and supervise their own visits. Although the birth parents are now not always in attendance at visits, the adult siblings remain committed to attending each visit.

'We really hope this can continue and concerns can be addressed along the way so that the children and family can enjoy ongoing visits - including birthdays, Christmas and other family events.'

*Note: The names in this article have been changed for privacy protection. ♦*

# Are there changes happening in your household?

Make sure you let your caseworker know of anyone new is residing in your home.

FACS carers are required to notify their caseworker as soon as possible of any additional or new household members residing within the home. A change in new residents living in your household will trigger a carer review.

## Who is a household member?

A person (adult over the age of 18, young person or child) who lives in your home is called a household member. Someone who lives in a structure adjoining your home (e.g. a granny flat or caravan), or a person who regularly stays at your home overnight or long periods of time is considered a household member. It is also possible for a person to live at more than one home.

There are a number of factors to determine whether or not someone lives in your home. These include (but are not limited to):

- ◆ the amount of time the person spends at your home
- ◆ how frequently they stay
- ◆ whether or not their staying at the home is a regular or usual arrangement whether the arrangement will be ongoing.

**Remember –** Any adults living in the home will need to complete a Working with Children Check (WWCC), as it will be against the law for FACS to continue its placement of children and young people in your household if the WWCC is not completed.

For more information please contact your caseworker or local FACS Community Services Centre. ♦

# The Child Care Benefit and Rebate explained

Quality child care can have a positive impact on your child's development, language, social skills and behaviour. We explore how the Benefit and Rebate can assist you with the costs of child care.

## Child Care Benefit

The Child Care Benefit assists you with the cost of approved or registered child care. This can include assistance with preschool, long day care, family day care, occasional care, vacation care or after school care.

Registered care can include care provided by grandparents, relatives, friends or nannies who are registered as carers with Centrelink.

To be eligible, children should be attending approved or registered child care. If you are eligible for the Child Care Benefit, it is paid directly to the child care service and this in turn reduces the fees.

## Child Care Rebate

The Child Care Rebate assists if you are working, studying or training with out-of-pocket child care costs. This is paid in addition to the Child Care Benefit and is not income tested.

If child care is part of your FACS approved case plan, FACS may assist you with the cost of child care by paying the 'gap' between any Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate received and the full child care fees. You will need to apply for the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate from Centrelink. ♦



# Working together: Making the transition to Anglicare Riverina

Joan\* has been caring for Sam\* and Rachel\* for more than three years, since they were removed from their family and during that time she was supported by Family and Community Services (FACS).

Late last year, Joan transferred from FACS with Sam and Rachel to Anglicare Riverina – an accredited foster care agency in the Wagga area.

The carer received an invitation to attend a case conference meeting at Anglicare, attended by the child's mother, case manager and out-of-home care coordinator.

'During this conference the carer spoke about how much she felt supported by Anglicare and acknowledged and commended the assistance she had received,' said Heidi Freeland, OOHC Case Management Coordinator for Anglicare.

'Joan felt that as a result of the high-level case management, involvement and engagement there

had been a number of issues resolved for her and the placement more generally.'

Anglicare Riverina is currently supporting more than 60 foster carers and 120 children and young people in the areas of Wagga, Albury and Leeton.

Visit [www.anglicare.com.au](http://www.anglicare.com.au) or call the Anglicare Riverina team on 02 6937 1555 for more information.

*Note: The names in this article have been changed for privacy protection. ♦*



## Now in the post – your Work Exemption Certificates

Carers who receive a Centrelink parenting payments or Newstart Allowance are exempt from work participation requirements like study, training or job seeking.

The certificates of exemption are sent out in June to eligible FACS foster, relative or kinship carers including guardians.

If you are eligible, keep an eye on mailbox for a certificate. If you haven't received your certificate or have lost it or need any help, please contact your local FACS Community Services Centre. ♦

# Carer profile

Five minutes with carers Erika and Mark Brinsmead who run the Adore Comedy and Entertainment program.

## Tell us about the young person in your care

Natasha is now 16 years old and has been in our care for the last 15 years. Natasha's current passion is in dance. She is such an amazing dancer. Once she is on that stage, you can't take your eyes off her. Natasha's understanding of her Latin American cultural background has helped her to find her passion.

## What are the rewards of being a carer?

Knowing that we are both making positive changes in a child's life in out-of-home care.

## What would you say is the key to being a good carer?

The key to being a good carer is to be a genuine carer, good listening skills, patience, good communication & education. Most importantly, caring for kids in & out-of-home-care is very challenging, never be afraid to put up your hand whenever your situation is tough, there is a lot of support out there.

## *It was your fostering experience that inspired you to start a comedy and entertainment organisation that runs programs for children and young people in out-of-home care. Can you tell us more about it?*

We started Adore Comedy and Entertainment to provide programs and workshops on comedy, effective communication, singing and dancing. We are very passionate about these programs and truly believe that kids and young adults in out-of-home care deserve a creative outlet to fulfil their dreams and passion.

We saw a positive outcome at one of our very first workshops. In 2013 Adore was asked to join the Connecting Carers NSW annual camp. We successfully worked with a group of young people, who experienced so much laughter & received so much from our workshops. At the end of the workshops, the young people were confident



enough to get up on stage, in front of family & friends to demonstrate their new abilities.

A stage is available on our premises with sound equipment for students / performers to practise on. At Adore we produce variety shows and fundraise for the communities when needed. It is here that we encourage all young people to perform in front of a live audience.

Adore has also recently purchased a 21 seater bus. Our bus is used to transport the kids & young adults to & from workshops. We also hope to go out into the regional areas where the opportunities are scarce.

## What compelled you to start Adore?

Having been long-time foster carers and advocates for these kids, seeing how much our niece thrives through her creative outlets and how it helped in her in her own journey through life.

Carers in the Central Coast area interested in getting the child or young person in their care involved with Adore Comedy and Entertainment should contact 0416 297 432 or 0411 886 356. ♦

# New Carers Register Process

A new way to register carers and carer applicants is just around the corner. FACS is working along side the Office of the Children's Guardian to successfully deliver the new carers register.

As part of coordinating the new register, FACS will be placing your information into the carer register before it goes live. This may mean that existing carers and household members may be contacted to clarify any missing information to make sure information entered is correct.

The Carers Register will hold information about:

- ◆ carer applicants (individuals who apply to a designated agency to become authorised carers)
- ◆ authorised carers (individuals authorised by a designated agency to provide statutory or supported OOHC, including those authorised both as foster carers and adoptive parents)
- ◆ household members (adults, young people and children regularly living in a carer's home or residing in a dwelling that adjoins the home, e.g. a caravan or granny flat)
- ◆ children and young people in statutory, supported or voluntary out-of-home care will not be recorded on the Carers Register.

For more information visit

[www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au](http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au)

or call the Office of the Children's

Guardian on 02 8219 3600 or email

[carersregister@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au](mailto:carersregister@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au) ♦

## Keeping your kids healthy: Use the OOHC Health Pathways Service

Children and young people entering out-of-home care have more health care needs, compared to other Australian children. It is important to keep them healthy. If your kids are healthy it supports their participation in a full and active lifestyle, something we all strive to achieve for children and young people in care.

OOHC Health Pathways is designed to make sure children and young people entering out-of-home care receive timely referral, assessment and health planning to meet their needs.

### Health Assessments

When a child comes into your care FACS make a referral to the OOHC Coordinator at your Local Health District to organise a Health Screening Assessment. This should be completed within

30 days of a placement. The Local Health District will contact you to make arrangements for a Health Screening Assessment.

When a child or young person is placed with non-government service providers, there is liaison between the NGO caseworker, FACS caseworker and the carer in completing the health referral form and Health Screening Assessment.

Talk to your caseworker if you have questions about the assessment.

### Do I need a Health Management Plan?

Following the initial health assessment, a Health Management Plan is developed to provide direction and support in meeting the health needs of the child or young person in care. It's vital that you as the carer receive a copy of this plan – this will help you follow-up with any necessary appointments required.

Discuss the OOHC Health Pathways with your caseworker to make sure referrals, appointments and the Health Management Plan is in place for the child or young person in your care.

For more information visit:

[www.community.nsw.gov.au](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au) ♦

# Having your say: Carer Reference Groups

The Carer Reference Group (CRG) members met in May and June and earlier in the year (February/March) to discuss issues and topics as well as gather feedback about how the CRG quarterly meetings are progressing.

Key issues raised across recent meetings include:

- ◆ shared access to training opportunities and new resources across different agencies for foster/kinship carers
- ◆ networking opportunities between foster carers with FACS and local foster care agencies
- ◆ planning for upcoming Foster Care Week events and 'Tell Someone Who Cares' foster care conference
- ◆ respite – creating more respite opportunities as well as having more dedicated respite carers available
- ◆ Guardianship
- ◆ Introduction of the Carers Register scheduled for mid 2015
- ◆ Understanding more about the costs and funding for placements and how these may differ, depending on the child's needs and Agency
- ◆ Information about the CREATE Foundation and how to connect children and young people
- ◆ Cybersafety and helping carers and children to be cybersmart.

## Feedback

Attendance at meetings has been consistent and discussions are reported to be robust and productive. The CRGs meetings are highly valued. Participants consider the opportunity to access information about changes in OOHC legislation, policies and procedures to be a rewarding component of CRGs meetings.

There are six Carer Reference Groups in NSW. For more information or to suggest items for discussion at Carer Reference Group meetings please email [carerreferencegroupsnsw@facs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:carerreferencegroupsnsw@facs.nsw.gov.au)

Event	Dates
National Child Protection Week	Sunday, 6 September – Saturday 12 September
Foster Care Week	Sunday 13 September – Saturday 19 September
Kids in Care Cup	Saturday 19 September – Sunday 20 September
CREATE Conference	Thursday 1 October – Sunday 4 October - Brisbane
Connecting Carers NSW Conference / International Foster Care Organisation	Sunday November 8 – Wednesday November 11, Star Sydney



# FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Casework staff or your local Community Services Centre (CSC) should be the first point of contact for any queries. To find your local CSC, look under 'Community Services, Department of' in the White Pages.

[www.community.nsw.gov.au](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au)

## Child Protection Helpline

132 111 TTY: (02) 9633 7698

## Foster Care Complaints freecall:

Freecall: 1800 000 164

## OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

### Connecting Carers NSW

Free advice, information, training and support across NSW plus information sessions for carers, workers and the public.

1300 794 653

[www.connectingcarersnsw.com.au](http://www.connectingcarersnsw.com.au)

### Foster Parents Support Network

Telephone support services to carers.  
(02) 9608 8494

Freecall: 1800 262 445 (24 hrs)

[www.fosterparentsupportnetwork.org.au](http://www.fosterparentsupportnetwork.org.au)

### Karitane

Child and family help services and a 24-hour care line.

1300 227 464

[www.karitane.com.au](http://www.karitane.com.au)

### Parent Line NSW

Telephone advice and information service for carers and parents.  
Freecall: 1300 130 052

### CREATE Foundation

Supports young people living in out-of-home care and those who have left care.  
(02) 9267 0977 Freecall: 1800 655 105

[www.create.org.au](http://www.create.org.au)

### NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal NSW

Independent, external review of administrative decisions.  
1800 060 410 TTY: (02) 92352674

[www.ncat.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ncat.nsw.gov.au)

### Centrelink

A range of government services throughout Australia.  
[www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)

### NSW Ombudsman

An independent and impartial government agency watchdog.  
(02) 9286 1000 Freecall: 1800 451 524

[www.ombo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au)

# ABORIGINAL SPECIFIC SERVICES

## AbSec

### Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat

Aboriginal carers and carers of Aboriginal kids can visit AbSec's website for the latest news and information about carer support groups. [www.absec.org.au](http://www.absec.org.au)

### ASFCSS

### AbSec's Statewide Aboriginal Foster Carer Support Service (ASFCSS)

Freecall: 1800 888 698 | (02) 9559 5299

foster@absec.org.au [www.absec.org.au/foster-care](http://www.absec.org.au/foster-care)

## LEAVING CARE

### Link-up NSW

Helps Aboriginal adults separated from their families as children and Aboriginal families separated from their children.

(02) 4759 1911 [www.linkupnsw.org.au](http://www.linkupnsw.org.au)

### Marungbai Aboriginal Service

Supports Aboriginal young people who have been in care.  
1800 422 555 or (02) 6551 3973

## EDUCATION & TRAINING

### Aboriginal Education Council

(02) 9660 5696 [www.aec.org.au](http://www.aec.org.au)

### AECG NSW

Aboriginal Education Consultative Group provides advice on behalf of Aboriginal communities on education and training.

(02) 9550 5666 [www.aecg.nsw.edu.au](http://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au)

### NSW Department of Education and Training

Aboriginal Education and Training

[www.aboriginaleducation.nsw.edu.au](http://www.aboriginaleducation.nsw.edu.au)

### Tranby Aboriginal College

An alternative, independent learning environment

Freecall: 1800 601 988 [www.tranby.edu.au](http://www.tranby.edu.au)

## ABORIGINAL AGENCIES

### Abcare

(02) 9559 5299

Anglicare Aboriginal Partnership (Leeton/Griffith)  
1800 367 837

GLMACS (Great Lakes Manning Aboriginal Children's Services) – Biripi Aboriginal Corporation  
Medical Service  
(02) 6551 2088

Barnados Aboriginal Partnership (Orange)  
02 6342 4223

Burrun Dalai Aboriginal Corporation  
(02) 6562 1913

### Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation – Myimbarr

(02) 4226 3358

KARI Aboriginal Resources  
(02) 8782 0300

Ngunya Jarjum Aboriginal Child and Family Network  
(02) 6626 3700 /  
0400 521 488

Ngurambang (in partnership with Uniting Care Burnside  
(02) 6885 5010  
(Uniting Care Burnside)

South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation OOHC  
(02) 4428 6666

South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation OOHC  
(in partnership with MacKillop)  
1300 791 677

Wandiyali  
(02) 4957 5900

Waanggay - RivMed & Anglicare Partnership (Wagga)  
02 6927 0400