



MEDIA RELEASE

Reforms to child protection can't wait

Call to implement TEN POINT ACTION PLAN FOR CHILD PROTECTION

“We need to take action now to do better for children in care. There is no need to wait until we have the outcomes of the SA Royal Commission”, said Albert Barelds, Executive Director of CAFWA-SA.

Members of the Child and Family Welfare Association have set a reform agenda for child protection, as they are acutely aware of the need for change. These not-for-profit organisations know the complexities and challenges in this area, however this should not be a deterrent to recommending improvements.

Albert Barelds continued,

“We urgently need to develop different options for children entering the child protection system as we are currently continuing to place more children into very expensive residential care facilitiesⁱ, at times to the detriment of the children. Simultaneously, we pay our foster carers the lowest base rate subsidyⁱⁱ in Australia”.

“The best option for most children if they cannot be with their biological family or other relatives is to be in family based foster care. We need to create more foster care opportunities, and by doing so we know from experience that we provide better for the child. By avoiding residential care placements, we will also save money that can be used for urgently needed early intervention and targeted family support services”.

“Compensating foster carers with subsidies that are below the cost of providing for a child in a family obviously excludes many families from considering foster care. But we also see many carers leave as a result of the demands put upon them. Foster carers get very frustrated when they are often not allowed to make regular parenting decisions”.

CAFWA-SA argues that the current range of functions undertaken by Families SA is inherently contradictory. The agency responsible for removing children from families where necessary cannot also effectively function as the primary family support service.

CAFWA-SA calls for a more open and transparent child protection system, where not-for-profit organisations and government work closely together to plan and co-design what is best for our children and families in crisis.

“Even without further funding, we know that immediate initiatives can be taken to start the

much needed reform required in the child protection sector, and we are fully committed to adopting a new partnership approach”, Albert Barelds.

The Ten Point Action Plan provided to the Premier and to the Minister for Education and Child Development also sets out a list of issues in relation to longer-term system improvements. The Action Plan therefore has also been submitted to the SA Royal Commission, as the issues raised are in scope for the work to be undertaken by the Royal Commission.

A copy of the Ten Point Action Plan can be downloaded from

<http://www.childandfamily-sa.org.au/media-publications.html>

For further information/comment, contact:

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ⁱ We do this more frequently than any other State or Territory in Australia – 12.4% of children in care in South Australia are living in residential facilitiesⁱ compared with 5.5% as the national average - see the report ‘Child Protection Australia 2012-13’, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, table A28 – page 99

ⁱⁱ See the report ‘Professional Foster Care’, Acil Allen Consulting, October 2013, table 2 - page 6