



FCAV

Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc
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18 October 2011

The Hon Philip Cummins
Chair, Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry
GPO 4708
Melbourne, VIC, 3001

RE: Supplementary submission - cost of caring

On 5th July 2011 Tracey Cocks (Vice President FCAV) made an individual submission to the panel in relation to her thoughts on ways of improving the current out-of-home care system, with a particular focus on foster care. At the conclusion of this presentation she was asked whether the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) would undertake two valuable pieces of work to further inform the Panel:

1. A research project which examined "the real and hidden costs of caring" and;
2. Several case studies from carers, representative of varied demographics, which detailed their expenditures relating to supporting the children in their care.

Unfortunately, the FCAV does not have capacity in our current budget to undertake or commission the suggested research project. However, we see this project as necessary for future discussions about adequately resourcing home-based care.

Anecdotally, we believe that the expenses incurred by a volunteer carer make the role more challenging to take on.

In the FCAV's Strengthening Carers Report (Griffin & Laister, 2011)* it clearly indicates that what motivates carers in their role as a carer is the children, "82% of carers stating the children, their development and being able to give them a good life for a while was meaning full to them as carers." Pg16.

The same report (Griffin & Laister, 2011, pg 20) indicates carers responses to the question asked regarding whether the caregiver reimbursement rate adequately contributes to the financial needs of the child in your care. Nearly half (42%) felt the rate wasn't adequate.

Specific costs that would need to be considered in a thorough analysis of reimbursement for home-based care include;

Rural or regional carer

- Cost of water on properties where tank water needs to be purchased/ brought in
- Cost of traveling distances (to school, agency, access with birth family, support services, and other appointments)
- Costs of travel and expenses to come to capital city for specialist medical or other appointments or Children's Court Clinic assessments
- STD phone calls

Single carers

- Cost of child care
- Need for provision of respite support

Carer of adolescent young people

- Cost of travel for regular trips to specialist appointments (including for reasons relating to mental and physical health, or education)
- Cost to carer of caring for young people previously in their formal care and now post 18

Carers of sibling groups

- House extension
- Vehicle upgrade (upsized)
- Loss of wage due to needing to be very available for the children

Respite carer

- Cost of maintaining relationships in-between respite visits (often not recognised and therefore not recompensed)
- Cost of supporting children, who were once in your care and have returned to their family. In this case many carers continue to provide support and relationship (sometimes vital long-term support) but these costs are not acknowledged or reimbursed

I have attached two case studies from carers who are so concerned about the cost of caring and inadequate reimbursement that they have spent more than 20 hours each detailing the costs associated with caring for the children and young people in their care.

These cases can only be used as an example due to the limited number of case studies that were undertaken and the huge variance of income/expense for carers across the state. Without taking into consideration home extensions, upsizing a car, specialist education, or loss of income to provide care, these two examples indicate that the cost of caring for a child/young person in care for a year could be well over \$20,000 and closer to \$30,000 per child/young person. See case study 1 which indicates for this family caring for toddlers the average cost of caring per child is \$31,254.08 and case study 2 where adolescents were in care the cost was an average of \$28,416.70 per young person.

The FCAV can only stress again the importance of having the cost of caring reviewed adequately and broadly across the state for all types of carers and levels of reimbursement. It is our hope that the Panel will make a recommendation that this piece of work – to fully understand the cost of caring with a view to seeing that carers are adequately reimbursed - is completed. We would respectfully suggest to the Inquiry that recommending that this piece of work be done is vital to the recruitment and retention of carers in this State.

Regards,

Katie Hooper
Executive Officer

Attached – FCAV cost of caring - Case study 1 (Aug 2011)

Attached – FCAV cost of caring - Case study 2 (Aug 2011)

*http://www.fcav.org.au/files/documents/Governance_Reporting/Strengthening_Carers_2011.pdf

Inquiry note:

The attachments Case Study 1 and Case Study 2 have not been published to protect the privacy of the families and children concerned.