

8.4 NOM NO 15 - SUPPORTING LOCAL FOSTER CARERS

Submitting Councillor/s:	Cr Dr Josh Fergeus
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MOTION

That Council:

1. Notes the advocacy campaign run by the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) and PCA Families seeking an increase to the care allowance provided to volunteer foster carers;
2. Notes that a foster carer in Monash caring for a child of up to 7 years of age only receive \$217.80 per week to cover general household, education and health expenses^[1];
3. Notes that up to 60% of carers are financing the costs of care out of their own pocket and that 80% of those carers are women^[2];
4. Supports the position of the FCAV and PCA Families in seeking an increase in the care allowance to meet the true costs of care;
5. Writes to the FCAV and PCA Families notifying them of Council's support;
6. Acknowledges the critical work of foster carers in Monash and thanks them for their service to our community.

[1] https://www.fcav.org.au/images/Letter_to_Ministers.pdf

[2] https://www.fcav.org.au/images/Letter_to_Ministers.pdf

[3] <https://www.fcav.org.au/news/carer-allowance-analysis-by-jurisdiction>

INTRODUCTION

The Foster Care Association of Victoria 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.

Foster care is the backbone of the Victorian response to protective intervention for children and young people at risk. Foster carers are the volunteers providing a home, family life and care to children and young people who are unable to live with their birth family for a variety of reasons. Many of these children have suffered traumatic events and the role of our foster carers is critical and complex in providing a safe and healing environment for children and young people to reach their full potential.

PCA Families is a not-for-profit member representative organisation with lived experienced foundations. They have delivered high-impact early support and services to permanent care, kinship care and adoptive families since 2003, informed by research and the lived experienced of the families they represent.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

CARER ALLOWANCE³

Fortnightly base rates of each state/territory for first age range: ^[1]

State/territory	Amount	Age range
ACT	\$601.69	0-4
Queensland	\$567.14	0-5
NSW	\$540	0-4
Tasmania	\$451	0-4
Western Australia ^[1]	\$440.45	0-6
Victoria	\$427.05	0-7

Fortnightly base rate of each state for second age range:

State/territory	Amount	Age range
ACT	\$674.34	5-14
NSW	\$609	5-13
Queensland	\$611.10	6-10
Western Australia	\$530	7-12
Tasmania	\$516	5-11
Victoria	\$441.92	8-10

^[1] South Australian payment rates have not been included because payment structures include complexity loading which makes comparisons difficult. Fortnightly base may include other regular payments such as clothing and pocket money allowances.

In Victoria the care allowance was only indexed by 2% over the last two financial years despite household inflation being over 6% each year, representing a further significant decline in real value.

CONCLUSION

Foster carers are volunteers and they provide a vital service to our community. Despite this being broadly acknowledged by government the care allowance remains stagnant, and the majority of carers contribute to meeting the basic costs of children in care from their own pocket.

ATTACHMENT LIST

1. Officers Response to NOM [8.4.1 - 3 pages]

OFFICERS REPORT

COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR FOSTER CARE PAYMENT ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

Submitting Councillor: Cr Dr Josh Fergeus

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{recommendation-end-do-not-remove}

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Foster Care provision is a Victorian government responsibility. There are no budget implications for Monash.

IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES

Foster Care provision is a Victorian government responsibility. There are no implications for Monash resources.

COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

Whilst Foster Care provision is not a Local Government responsibility, this NOM is consistent with underlying intent of Council Plan Objective 2: Inclusive Services:

Local services, close to home, are an important way for residents to participate in their community, and meet their social, recreation, leisure, employment, shopping, education, health or other needs.

RELEVANCE TO WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN BY OFFICERS OR COMMITTEES

Monash City Council is a provider of Victorian Government funded Family Services. This program promotes the safety, stability and development of vulnerable children, young people, and their families, with a focus on building capacity and resilience.

Family Services supports vulnerable children, young people and their families who are -

- likely to experience greater challenges – as the child/young person's development has been affected by the experience of risk factors and/or cumulative harm, and/or
- at risk of concerns escalating and becoming involved with Child Protection – if problems are not addressed.
- The intention is to provide services to the target group earlier, to protect children and young people and improve family functioning.

[Family services - DFFH Service Providers](#)

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Victorian Government provides care allowances for assessed and approved foster, kinship, permanent and additional needs local adoption. The care allowance contributes to costs incurred by a carer in the course of providing home-based care for children, including (but not limited to):

- accommodation, clothing, food, utilities, telephone and internet
- basic personal items for the child such as toiletries and toothbrush
- transport required as part of a regular routine, including to and from school, professional appointments and access where appropriate
- entertainment, social activities and other things – pocket money, hobbies and club memberships, outings, toys, photos, gifts, treats.

In Victoria, there are five care allowance levels which reflect the diverse needs of children and young people in care. The complexity of the child's needs and ongoing specialist or support costs are considered when determining the care allowance level.

The payments levels quoted in the NOM reflect the level 1 payment.

For information about additional financial support for Carers please see [Care Allowances – Information for foster carers, kinship carers, permanent carers, and additional needs local adoption carers](#)

[Support for home based carers in Victoria - DFFH Services](#)