

Editorial



In early May 2010, I forwarded copies of the draft guidelines on the new carer payments to all approved carers. The response from carers has been positive.

We are also replacing the information system that records details about children in care. We were hoping that this would be in place before the commencement of the new payments in July 2010.

This has not been possible, however, and the implementation of the new system will now take place in September 2010. Once the new system is working properly, we will arrange any adjustments needed to carer payments to 3 July 2010. I hope that this will not cause too much inconvenience for carers. I can assure you that you will receive any additional payments as soon as possible after we implement the new information system. I will provide an update to all carers in September.

From July 2010 the Gateway Services in each area will be the access point for adults and children with disabilities. A Co-located Disability Services Officer will work in each of the Gateways. Like the Community Based Child Protection Workers, these workers are managed by Disability, Child, Youth and Family Services (DCYFS) but they will spend the majority of their time at the Gateways. Children in care who require a disability service will need an assessment by the Gateway Services. This also means that a young person in care who will require support from a specialist disability service after leaving care will be referred to a Gateway Service. Referrals should take place when the young person turns 15 years so that there is plenty of time to plan for the transition to disability services.

Following the recent State Election, Lin Thorp is the Minister for Children and has responsibility for child protection and out of home care matters. Cassy O'Connor is responsible for disability and family services matters. This new arrangement has resulted in some changes in the organisational structure for DCYFS. I now have responsibility for children and youth (including Ashley Youth Detention Centre) and Aileen Ashford is responsible for disability and community services. There have been no changes to the Area Offices. Finally, I would like to welcome Andrea Sturges, who commenced in the role of Area Director South West in late May.

I wish you well for the winter months.

Mark Byrne

Chief Executive Officer, Children and Youth Services
Disability, Child, Youth and Family Services

NEWS

National Foster Carers' Conference 2010

There is not much time left for carers to register for the national conference at the Hobart Casino on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 August.

The conference is an excellent opportunity for carers to find out what is happening across Australia in the out of home care sector, to take part in a variety of workshops and to meet with carers and workers.

It will be another eight years before there is another conference held in Tasmania. So don't miss out on the 2010 conference. **Free child care is available for carers.**

Carers are able to nominate another carer or themselves for a National Recognition Award. To be eligible for an award the carer must have provided care for at least 10 years. The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) sponsors the national awards. The awards are presented during the conference dinner.

Lin Thorp, Minister for Children, will participate in the opening session.

Brian Jeffrey, a mental health clinician for over 15 years, is one of the keynote speakers. He has been a strong advocate about the need to address the mental health needs of young people in care.

Registration forms are available on the FCAT webpage

<http://www.fcatas.org.au>

CREATE News

Kylie Gibbs is the new State Coordinator for the Tasmanian office of CREATE. Kylie joined the CREATE team in April as the part-time worker for the new CREATE Your Future Program (see opposite for more information about this exciting program). In June Kylie was appointed as the State Coordinator. Kylie was previously employed as a Child Development Officer with Kennerley Children's Homes. In that role she supported children in care and their carers.

Over the past two years Rachael Irvine has interviewed 98 Tasmanian children and young people in care as part of the Be.Heard program. The interviews explored aspects of being in care. CREATE is preparing a final report on the findings from the program. Rachael is finishing her position with CREATE on 30 June 2010.

Mel Casten supports the Tasmanian Youth Advisory Group. Young people in the South of Tasmania meet every third Saturday to voice their concerns and opinions while enjoying a free fun activity. Young people with a care experience aged 12+ are encouraged to participate. If you are caring for a young person who would be interested in taking part, contact Mel on 6223 7749.

There has been a 50 per cent increase in the number of Tasmanian children and young people joining clubCREATE. This is a national club that connects children and young people in care. Members receive a welcome pack and a quarterly magazine. Tasmanian members are able to participate in local CREATE events. For instance, in the June holidays more than 60 children in care enjoyed a trip to Cadburys followed by a harbour cruise and lunch. Approximately 15 carers also enjoyed the event.

CREATE & Circus Quirkus Day!
3rd of July, I am at the Grand Chancellor.
Tickets are strictly limited so ensure a spot by phoning Mel at CREATE on 62237749

For more information and to sign up to our mailing list, please contact the CREATE Tas Team on 62249822 or 62237749.



CREATE Office
260 Macquarie Street Hobart
7000
www.create.org.au

CREATE Your Future Program

The Department is funding CREATE to manage the CREATE Your Future Program from 1 July 2010.

The Program is a 'hands on' skills development program for young people over the age of 15 years who are getting ready to leave care or have recently left care.

CREATE staff work with young care leavers in small group settings with an emphasis on mutual support and learning through participation in fun activities.

Four separate day-long workshops introduce young people to some of the key aspects of leaving care.

The 'great race workshop' is a team event that brings young people together to locate services in the community that are able to help with independent living. For instance team members may be required to find their local Centrelink office to find out what rent assistance is and to talk to a community service officer.

The 'how to get a job and keep it' workshop introduces participants to the key tasks of applying for a job including what jobs to apply for. The workshop covers writing a resume and addressing selection criteria. It also covers techniques for doing well during an interview. The workshops will be run in all areas over the next three years.

The CREATE Your Future program includes an intensive training program for up to ten young people. The training covers many of the aspects of living independently such as shopping, cooking, getting accommodation and attending to health needs.

The Tasmanian program is still being developed. We will include more information in future Issues. In the mean time check out the CREATE Your Future website for more information
<http://www.createyourfuture.org.au/home/home.do?jsessionid=6C40761AC7D3A04C8F962E2FF4A39DA4>

Contact CREATE if you know a young person in care who could benefit from the program.

CREATE has also received a one-off grant from the Tasmanian Community Fund to manage the CREATE Your Future program. The Department's funding will enable the program to operate for Tasmanian care leavers over the next three years.

The Charter of Rights – making a difference for children and young people in care

The Charter of Rights for Tasmanian children and young people in out of home care makes clear statements about what a child in care can expect. For instance, they have a right to be consulted and listened to seriously about decisions that affect them. Thus they have a right to be told why they are in care; what the plans for their future are; and having a say in the development of their written case and care plan.

If the Charter is going to make a real difference, children and young people need to have a copy of the Charter. Their carers and workers should be referring to the Charter's content on a regular basis. If you are caring for a child who has not received a copy of the Charter, you should request a copy from the child's case manager.

Carers Notice Board

Carers in the South West and South East areas are able to attend a morning tea that is held every Tuesday from 10 am at 12 Bucaan Street Chigwell. The venue has toys for children to play with and a clothing pool.

Between six to twelve carers usually attend. They enjoy the opportunity to have a talk, a laugh and a cup of tea together. Carers are able to share positive caring ideas and where necessary debrief. This is an opportunity for mutual support between carers.

If you would like to know more about the regular morning tea, please contact Corrie Bartle on 6249 7194. If you prefer, you can just turn up and see if the morning tea works for you. Most carers take a packet of biscuits to share.

We are happy to include information about other events that carers could benefit from in future issues of the Carers News. If you would like something included send the details to:
fostercare@dhhs.tas.gov.au

Draft National Standards for out of home care

In the Autumn edition, we included a short article on the development of national standards for out of home care. Draft standards were presented to the Federal Community and Disability Services Ministers in June 2010.

The draft national standards will be released for further consultation in the near future. We will provide an update on the development of national standards in the Spring edition of the Carers News. There will be a workshop on the national standards during the national foster carers' conference.

The national standards will provide a platform for achieving better outcomes for children in care across the nation.

News for Residential Carers

From September this year, the Salvation Army will manage residential care services in the south of the state and Anglicare will manage services in the north.

Stephen Nelthorpe, Residential Care Practice Consultant, is managing the transition process.

Commissioner for Children – Children's Visitors Pilot

Children's visitors provide opportunities for children in care to speak with an independent person about what is happening in their lives. All the children taking part in the pilot have had the first two visits.

Most children have expressed positive comments about their carers and their placements with a majority reporting that they feel comfortable and relaxed. Nearly all children said that they had been happy during the past month.

Many children have asked for increased contact with family members. One child said that he was happy that his child protection worker had explained the circumstances of the child's father. The child now knows that he will not see his father for a long time but he is pleased that his worker is trying to contact his siblings.

The children involved in the pilot have been surprised that the visitors are volunteers. They have commented that they like that the children's visitor "is visiting them because they want to and not because they are being paid to".

Some children have said that they do not know the name of their current worker and several children report that "they have had a lot of workers".

If you have any questions please contact Mel Cooley on 6233 9325.

A learn to drive program for young people in care

The **Driving into my Future Project** is now operating in the North West. Tony Poole, Manager Child Protection Services, saw the need to support young people in care obtain their driver's licence.

The Project involves a departmental Support Worker providing tutoring sessions to prepare young people for the Driver Knowledge Test. The worker also supports participants through the actual test to obtain a learner's licence.

When participants have gained their learner's licence they then undertake professional driving instructor lessons that are paid for by the Department.

Following this, participants are then matched with a volunteer mentor from the Road Education Volunteer Program that is managed by the Kentish Council. The Program enables the participant to build up 30 hours of supervised driving sessions in a vehicle that is part of the Program. The departmental Support Worker maintains close involvement with the learner driver and the mentor during this period.

Participants then have a further lesson with a driving school to see if they are ready for the L2 driving assessment stage. Once they achieve the L2 stage, they continue to receive practical driving experience with the volunteer mentor supervisory drivers. They also have a weekly meeting with Support Worker to refine their knowledge of the Tasmanian Road Rules.

There are seven participants in the project. Four have obtained their L1 Learner's Driver's Licence and have commenced practical driving sessions with a mentor.

One young person had failed the Service Tasmania online examination 17 times and he had given up hope of ever getting his learner's licence. With the support of the program he now has a learner's licence.

It takes a year for learner drivers to build up the required minimum hours of supervised driving lessons. The reality for many young people in care is that access to a vehicle and an adult driver who is willing and able to supervise driving sessions is not an option.

The project is making a big difference for young people in care in the North West especially as the options of public transport in the area are limited. Well done!!

Do you wish to receive future copies of the newsletter by email?

The Carers News has been distributed to all approved carers. Our aim is keep carers informed of significant developments.

Over the past two years, we have included topics on changes to the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act*; the Child Protection Awards; and the Foster Carer Recruitment Campaign. There have been regular updates from the Foster Carers Association of Tasmania, CREATE Foundation and the Commissioner for Children. There have been articles about new resources for carers including the second edition of Carers Handbook and the opening of the Child Trauma Services. There has also been information on new policies that are relevant to carers such as children having an overnight stay and carers assuming the guardianship of a child in care. In each issue, we have also included an update from our CEO, Mark Byrne.

Although we will continue to distribute the newsletter by post, distributing the newsletter by email is quicker and environmentally friendlier. It also saves money and that means that we can use the savings in other ways. Many people prefer electronic communication because it enables more flexible access to information.

You are able to register your interest in receiving future issues by email at the email address below. All you need to do is tell us that you are happy with this approach and provide your name, postal address and the email address you would like to receive the newsletters on.

It would be great if you also provided your feedback about the newsletter. What articles do you enjoy reading? Are there topics that we have not covered but you feel that we should?

Do you have a story to tell about your caring experience?

Know of an experienced carer who deserves recognition? Send a piece to the Foster Carers Newsletter at fostercare@dhhs.tas.gov.au