

**Message from Brenda  
Welcome to PCA Families  
*Thrive* Summer edition**

So much has happened since our last newsletter. We had a fantastic AGM with our children presenting their Mindfulness in Motion demonstration and guest speaker Corey White.

We farewelled our Board Directors; Charlie Salloum, Amanda Stone and Felicity Isaac and welcomed new Board members Roslyn Rule (Treasurer) and Alba Chliakhtine. Meredith Carter is our President, Donna Coelho Vice President, and Chris Lockwood Secretary.

I met with the Honourable Jenny Mikakos MP former Minister for Families and Children, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth Affairs before the election, to seek commitment for supporting young people past the age of 18 in permanent care and adoption, as well as other issues. If you would like to see her response, please go to our [website](#). PCA Families would like to thank Minister Mikakos for her commitment and support to Permanent Care and Adoptive Families. Without her support, we would not have our current Permanent Carers Helpline and Flexible Fund.

I hope to meet Minister Luke Donnellan, who is the new Minister for Child Protection & Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers in the New Year.

You will see under Adoption on page 6 & 7 *“Breaking barriers: a national adoption framework for Australian children Inquiry into local adoption House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs - Canberra, October 2018”*. We have included the recommendations for you to read.

This started as a federal “Inquiry into adoption as a viable option for children and young people in Out of Home Care”. Having read all the submissions, I found it interesting that all the Australian states were more “opposed” to adoption being used for this specific purpose, than “pro” adoption. The final report relied heavily on two NSW organisations while there were so many other opinions which should have been given weight.

Many of us in our submissions raised the need for families to receive post placement support and resources post adoption (local and intercountry), permanent care, and third party guardianship. So it was extremely disappointing that there was not one recommendation on this issue.

We have learnt through the voices of our members, the Helpline and the Flexible Fund that more is needed to support our families post placement. It does not end with an “order”, support is life-long!

While we are closed between Christmas and the New Year, I will be contactable in cases of urgency. See the contact numbers on page 2.

And so with this I wish you all a very safe Christmas and New Year. Deep breath, it’s just starting!

**Brenda, CEO**

**What’s inside this issue**

	Pg
PCAF Xmas hours .....	2
Parenting tip.....	2
Calendar.....	2
Peer support .....	3
Life Story Work—CBD	
Professionals.....	4
Parents & carers.....	4
Mindfulness in Motion	
For children and young people .....	5
Adoption .....	6 & 7
Education & Youth.....	8
Legal assistance .....	9
Flexible Funding.....	10



## Closure of PCA Families' office over Christmas period

The office will be closed from Monday the 24th December and will re-open on Wednesday 2 January. This is likely to mean a delay in our usual time frame for responding to flexi-fund applications. We will endeavour to contact you within five working days from 7 January, 2019.

Thankyou for your patience during this time and be reassured that PCA Families always vigorously support and empower families where we can.

Should you require further support over the new year period, please contact **Brenda** in an emergency on **0487 541 661** or the numbers below:

Parent line	13 22 89	8am – Midnight 7 days per week
Nurse on call	1300 606 024	24hours 7 days per week
Kids helpline	1800 551 800	24hours
Lifeline	131 114	24hours
Grief line	9935 7400	Midday—3am
Support after suicide	9421 7640	24hours
Royal Children's Hospital Social Work	9345 7400	8pm- 8am

## Parenting Tip—over the holidays

### Pyjama Day is A-Okay

"Pyjama Day" is like telling kids they get to break the rules. To them, not having to get dressed is a treat. So let them hang in their PJs, watch movies and make pancakes for dinner the kids will think they've done something REALLY FUN.

### Local libraries can save the day

Most run activities involving books, craft etc. that can save the mess from home. You can finish the time with letting them pick some movies, books or games to take home.

### Exploration day

Utilise the beach, parks, riding trails and even public transport. Pack a picnic and make a day of it make sure to check out the weather report though so as not to disappoint.

### Kids Choice

So make a list of two or three activities (too many choices complicate things) and let them decide. The list might include going to the movies or going out for ice-cream. It might be going to the zoo or bonus iPad time. Just make sure they're things you can actually handle doing. If you give them the choice between the movies and glitter crafting because you feel certain they'll choose the movies, prepare to be wrong.

Thursday February 7  
8.00pm – 9.30pm  
**Journal Club – Collingwood**

Friday February 8  
11.30pm – 1.00pm  
**Peer support – Bendigo**

Tuesday February 19  
5.20pm – 6.15pm  
**Mindfulness in Motion**

Wednesday February 20  
12.30pm – 2.30pm  
**Peer support – Ballarat**

Tuesday February 26  
5.20pm – 6.15pm  
**Mindfulness in Motion**

Tuesday March 5  
5.20pm – 6.15pm  
**Mindfulness in Motion**

Wednesday March 6  
10.00am – 11.30pm  
**Peer support – Warrnambool**

Thursday March 7  
8.00pm – 9.30pm  
**Journal Club – Collingwood**

Tuesday March 12  
5.20pm – 6.15pm  
**Mindfulness in Motion**

Wednesday March 13  
11.30pm – 1.00pm  
**Peer support – Morwell**

Tuesday March 19  
9.00am—1.00pm  
**Life Story Work for professionals—CBD**

Tuesday March 19  
5.20pm – 6.15pm  
**Mindfulness in Motion**

Saturday March 23  
10.00am—2.00pm  
**Life Story Work for parents & carers - CBD**

Thursday April 11  
9.00am—1.00pm  
**Life Story Work for professionals—CBD**

Sunday May 5  
10.00am—2.00pm  
**Life Story Work for parents & carers - CBD**

# Outreach and peer support



We have many forms of support and play groups scattered around Melbourne and regional Victoria, including; Collingwood, Bendigo, Ballarat, Shepparton, Horsham and Morwell. People gather for shared learning and talk about some of the challenges of raising children. Learning and support occurs around parenting our children and the opportunity to build relationships with others.

Our support groups are friendly and welcoming and are open to all parents; adoptive, permanent care and kinship care. You can also arrange a one-on-one appointment by calling the office on 9020 1833 if required.

## Outreach and peer support in your area

We will be in your area on the dates below. If you would like an individual appointment, please contact PCA Families on 9020 1833.

### TOPIC: Consultation around philanthropic spending



#### Bendigo - Alannah

**Date:** 8 February  
**Time:** 11.30am – 1.00pm  
**Venue:** Bendigo Library, 259 Hargreaves St

#### Warrnambool - Brenda

**Date:** Thursday 6 March  
**Time:** 10.00am – 11.30pm  
**Venue:** RSL, Corner Merri and Liebig Streets, Warrnambool

#### Ballarat - Alannah

**Date:** Wednesday, 20 February  
**Time:** 11.30am – 1.00pm  
**Venue:** Ballarat Library, 178 Doveton Street North

#### Morwell - Alannah

**Date:** Wednesday, March 13  
**Time:** 11.30pm – 1.00pm  
**Venue:** Morwell Library, 63-65 Elgin Street

At the end of the group session, Alannah will be available for individual consults if required



*These peer groups are proudly funded by The William Buckland Foundation*

## Journal Club – Collingwood

Journal Club is a monthly facilitated discussion and support group where participants discuss an article relevant to parenting in home-based care and adoption. It allows confidential conversations around the challenges of parenting and is facilitated by skilled volunteers with lived experience in raising children through home-based care and adoption.

**Date:** Thursday February 7 from 8.00—9.30pm  
**Venue:** Collingwood Library, 11 Stanton Street, Abbotsford



Future Journal Club dates are Thursdays March 7 and April 4

## Life Story Work for professionals working in sector



Learn how *Life Story Work* can be used by parents and carers as therapeutic tool to use with children. *Life Story Work* begins a healing journey with children, helping them understand their past and present while providing resources to move on into the future.

At the session you will explore

- Current research and thinking on *Life Story Work* and the role it can take in family life
- The opportunity to explore, in a practical way, how to create and use life stories
- An invaluable 'toolbox' of suggested strategies and activities, and
- Shared learning, reflection and problem-solving.

Young people and children in Kinship Care, Foster Care, Permanent Care and Adoptive families often require additional guidance from the adults in their lives to ensure they have opportunities to record their history.

**Date** Tuesday March 19  
**Time** 9.00am—1.00pm—morning tea provided  
**Venue** PCA Families, Level 5, 50 Market Street, Melbourne  
**Cost** \$115.00 inc. GST (to arrange an invoice, please email Deborah@pcfamilies.org.au)  
**RSVP** <https://www.trybooking.com/ZUMI>

**Date** Thursday April 11  
**Time** 1.00pm —5.00pm — afternoon tea provided  
**Venue** PCA Families, Level 5, 50 Market Street, Melbourne  
**Cost** \$115.00 inc. GST (to arrange an invoice, please email Deborah@pcfamilies.org.au)  
**RSVP** <https://www.trybooking.com/ZUMI>

## Life Story Work for parents and carers



Develop another therapeutic tool to use with your children. Learn how to begin a journey with your child towards helping them understand the past and present while providing resources to move on into the future. Discover how to enhance your child's reflection and problem-solving skills.

At this training, you will learn about:

- Current research and thinking on *Life Story Work* and the role it can take in family life
- The opportunity to explore, in a practical way, how to create and use life stories
- An invaluable 'toolbox' of suggested strategies and activities, and
- Shared learning, reflection and problem-solving skills.

**Date** Saturday March 23  
**Time** 10.00am—2.00pm  
**Venue** PCA Families, Level 5, 50 Market Street, Melbourne  
**Cost** \$60.00—including light lunch  
**RSVP** <https://www.trybooking.com/ZUMD>

**Date** Sunday May 5  
**Time** 10.00am—2.00pm  
**Venue** PCA Families, Level 5, 50 Market Street, Melbourne  
**Cost** \$60.00—including light lunch  
**RSVP** <https://www.trybooking.com/ZUMG>

# Youth Programs

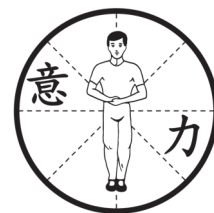
## TERM 1 dates

Tuesdays 5.20—6.15pm

February 19, 26

March 5, 12, 19, 26

mindfulness  
in motion



The *Mindfulness in Motion Kids Program* is designed specifically to assist young peoples' personal growth. Classes blend skill development, personal observation and experiential learning in an environment that is fun, supportive and engaging for young people.

Classes focus on acquiring:

- Resilience
- Focus
- Teamwork
- Assertiveness
- Emotional regulation
- Self-reflection
- Body awareness

**We are continuing the Mindfulness in Motion program in term 1 in 2019. Flexi funding can cover the cost if your child is on a permanent care order and ICAV will cover the cost if you child is intercountry adopted. Children not in either of these categories are asked to pay \$100 towards the cost of the program.**

The classes run **Tuesday** evenings on the dates listed below.

**Age limit** 5 - 12 years old

**Time:** 5.20 – 6.15pm

**Dates:** **TERM 1**  
February 19, 26,  
March 5, 12, 19, 26

**Address:** Mindfulness in Motion, 6 Oakover Road, Preston

**Cost:** **free of charge to permanent care and intercountry adopted children**  
\$100.00 per child otherwise. <https://www.trybooking.com/ZUMO>

**To register:** contact Deborah on [Deborah@pcafamilies.org.au](mailto:Deborah@pcafamilies.org.au) or call 9020 1839

### Your Instructors:

Guy Rhynsburger is the senior instructor at Mindfulness in Motions, with over 20 year's martial arts experience. Guy has been working with young people from a variety of backgrounds teaching life skills for well over 15 years.

Evan is a Kung Fu Black Belt and an experienced Youth Worker with more than 10 years' experience.



## **Breaking barriers: a national adoption framework for Australian children Inquiry into local adoption House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs - Canberra, October 2018**

Below is the list of recommendation from the national adoption inquiry. You can find the full report on our [website](#).

### **List of recommendations**

#### **Legislative and policy framework**

##### **Recommendation 1**

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth work with state and territory governments to achieve agreement, through the Council of Australian Governments, to develop and enact a national law for adoption.

##### **Recommendation 2**

The Committee recommends that a national adoption framework be adopted as the model and starting point for a uniform national law.

Key elements of a national framework regarded as essential for a uniform national law for adoption should recognise that:

- the best interests and safety of the child are paramount and override all other considerations;
- returning a child to parents or family/kin must only be an option when it is appropriate and safe;
- adoption should be considered before long-term foster care or residential care;
- family preservation and cultural considerations are important, but not more important than the safety and well being of the child;
- legal permanency is key in providing stability and permanency for children;
- adoption from foster care is a viable option where a child has an established and stable relationship with an authorised carer and adoption will promote the child's welfare; and
- decisions on whether a child may be able to safely return to their birth parent(s) must be made within a legislated timeframe, such as six months of an interim care order for children under two years old, or within 12 months for older children.

#### **Adoption as a viable option for children in out-of-home care**

##### **Recommendation 3**

The Committee recommends that, when it is determined that it is not safe for a child in out-of-home care to be reunified with their parent(s) or placed in the care of kin, open adoption should be considered and progressed as a viable option in the best interests of the child.

#### **Policy and practice barriers to adoption**

##### **Recommendation 4**

The Committee recommends that a national law for adoption provides for 'open adoption' unless exceptional circumstances make an open adoption inappropriate.

##### **Recommendation 5**

The Committee recommends that a national law for adoption provides for integrated birth certificates that include the names of both birth parents and adoptive parents, while conferring full parental and legal responsibility for adopted children on the adoptive parent(s).

##### **Recommendation 6**

The Committee recommends that all states and territories improve the administration of adoptions and reduce the complexity and length of adoption processes.

# Adoption cont...

## Adoption framework for Australian children Inquiry cont....

### Evidence based decision making

#### Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare continue to work with relevant Commonwealth, state and territory agencies to improve data collection on adoptions and child protection in Australia, including by:

- collecting unit record data rather than aggregate data;
- agreeing on nationally consistent definitions;
- collecting data on: timeframes for finalising adoptions, sibling separation, parental consent (including dispensation of consent), adoption of Indigenous children, adoption of children with disabilities and special needs, and long-term outcomes for all adoptees; and
- maintaining registers of potential adoptive parents.

# Annual General Meeting



Comedian Corey White speaking at our AGM



Children performing in Mindfulness in Motion



Board members L—R

Amanda Stone, Jennifer Botha, Charlie Salloum, Meredith Carter (President), Corey, Dan Barron, Donna Coelho (Vice President), Brenda, John Loke  
Absent: Alba Chliakhtine, Chris Lockwood (Secretary), Roslyn Rule (Treasurer)

Our **AGM** was a great success with comedian Corey White speaking about his childhood. His humour, warmth and courage is extraordinary and we were so grateful to him for sharing his story and time with PCA Families.

# Education and Youth

## Raising Expectations supports care leavers to pursue higher education and university.

Are you supporting a young person in care who is thinking about TAFE or Uni? Over 200 students who have experienced foster, kinship, permanent and residential care are studying at **Federation and La Trobe Universities**. They offer financial, academic and personal supports, including mentoring and counselling. For more information on :



**Federation Uni** supports, visit the [website](#) or contact Pearl Goodwin-Burns, Care Leaver Coordinator on [p.goodwin-burns@federation.edu.au](mailto:p.goodwin-burns@federation.edu.au).

**La Trobe Uni** visit their [website](#), or call **1300 135 045**.

## Want to study at a different university?

Other unis are starting to come on board. Talk to Jo Humphries at the Centre on **9094 3509** or email [Joanna.Humphries@cfecfw.asn.au](mailto:Joanna.Humphries@cfecfw.asn.au)

## Study at TAFE and pay no tuition fees!

The **Skills First Youth Access Initiative** supports young people up to age 22 who have been/or are on a Child Protection Order, Family Court Order or a Youth Justice Order. Eligible young people can study VCAL/VCE through to Advanced Diploma and pay no tuition fees. For more information, call **131 823** or go to <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/Skills-First-Youth-Access-Initiative.aspx>

## In-school and post-school education support for young people in care and care leavers

Go to <https://www.cfecfw.asn.au/raisingexpectations/> and click on our flyer with clickable links or for more information contact [Joanna.Humphries@cfecfw.asn.au](mailto:Joanna.Humphries@cfecfw.asn.au).



**Free TAFE Courses from January 2019:** Check out the free TAFE courses available. To find out more, click on the flyers and go to <https://www.vic.gov.au/freetafe/free-tafe.html>

**Education Guide for Carers:** The Centre is finalising its Education Guide for Carers. We expect this to be on line before the end of the year. We will let you know via our Facebook page as soon as it is available. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/raisingexpectationseducation/>

**Out-of-home Care Education Commitment 'Partnering Agreement':** This updated and revised agreement outlines education and school supports for students living in Out-of-home care. It describes the roles and responsibilities of school and community professionals supporting students in care.

They include:

- school staff, including principals and teachers
- support service staff, including LOOKOUT Centres, Designated Teachers and the Koorie Education Workforce (KEW)
- Case managers working in DHHS Child Protection, Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) programs and Community Service Organisations (CSO) or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)
- Care managers in CSOs and ACCOs
- Approved kinship carers, accredited foster carers and residential care workers.

For more information, go to <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/health/PartneringAgreement.pdf>



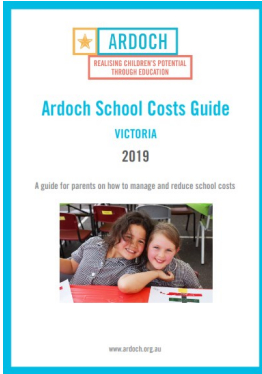
Brittany Witnish, studying her Masters of Social Work at Monash University tells her story in The Age <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/program-gets-more-whip-smart-care-leavers-into-higher-ed-20181106-p50edn.html>



Ashten, a second-year nursing student at Federation University, speaks about her experience of pursuing higher education after spending time in residential care. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIDpZSrlzUU&t=2s>



# Education cont...



Ardoch's School Costs Guide is a resource to parents and carers and helps ensure that your child has everything they need to learn and realise their potential.

We know that there are additional costs for families when children start, or return to, school each year and the aim of this guide is to help inform parents about the different costs of education and assist you to manage these.

Simply working out and understanding these costs, and how to reduce them can be overwhelming. This guide is here to help you.

We also believe that the personal role you play in supporting children to learn is the most critical. By engaging in what children are learning, talking about the benefits of school, and building positive relationships with people at your child's school you reinforce the importance of education. To view the guide online, visit <https://www.ardoch.org.au/publications/school-costs-guide-2019> and click Victoria 2019.

# Legal assistance



ready for tomorrow

YOUTHLAW

**FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR CARE-LEAVERS**

— LEGAL POD —  
PROGRAM

If you're aged 18-26, have been in care at any time, and have legal problems like fines, court, owing money, family violence or housing concerns, and live within 1 hour of Melbourne, you can get long-term help for free for up to 3 years from Youthlaw Legal Pod Program.

We are taking referrals now for the program from young people or their support workers. For more information, visit [www.youthlaw.asn.au/legal-pod](http://www.youthlaw.asn.au/legal-pod), call (03) 9611 2412 or email [legalpod@youthlaw.asn.au](mailto:legalpod@youthlaw.asn.au).

## Free Legal Assistance for care leavers

Please contact youth law for assistance on

 9611 2412 or

 email

[legalpod@youthlaw.asn.au](mailto:legalpod@youthlaw.asn.au)

# Flexible Funding

## Flexible Funding Applications for Educational Needs

We also ask for your help in exploring with your school any financial assistance you may be eligible for prior to contacting PCA Families. This helps our Flexible Funding go further for everyone.

All Victorian government schools provide assistance through **State Schools' Relief (SSR)**. SSR funds can assist with school uniforms, school shoes and textbooks. You will need to make a time to speak with your school's Principal, Assistant Principal or School Welfare Co-ordinator. They can discuss with you your eligibility and submit a request to SSR on your behalf.

**Camps, Sports & Excursions Fund (CSEF)** is available to government and non-government schools with financial assistance for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Funds are available to families and carers:

- ◆ holding means-tested concession cards
- ◆ on bridging or temporary protection visas
- ◆ in community detention
- ◆ with students in out of home care
- ◆ with students in statutory care.
- ◆ Contact the school office to obtain a CSEF application form or download from [www.education.vic.gov.au/csef](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/csef)

We appreciate your support in exploring the above options for assistance but please, do not hesitate to contact us to discuss your needs and submit a Flexible Funding application for your child/young person's educational needs.

*\*Please note: due to the increase in Flexible Funding applications, school closures over the holiday period and PCA Families staff availability, late Flexible Funding applications may result in a delay in providing your child/young person's educational needs prior to the 2019 school year.*

## PCA Families



Permanent Care and Adoptive Families (PCA Families) Helpline can assist with a variety of queries in relation to permanent care

We have professionals available Monday to Friday 9am-5pm with an understanding of legal, financial, educational and psychological issues.

Our staff have professional and lived experience of the reality of caring for children who come from out of home care and can support you to access appropriate trauma informed services, either from our database or by researching your area. Where needed, our staff can support you to educate your child's school in trauma sensitive schooling, and advocate on your behalf to build a community of trauma sensitive understanding and support around your child.

We endeavour to respond to your call within 48 hours.

We also have **flexible funding** which you can apply for by calling our office during business hours 9.00am—5.00pm Monday to Friday. T: 03 9020 1833 or E: [info@pcafamilies.org.au](mailto:info@pcafamilies.org.au)

The services we support are:

- ✓ medical
- ✓ education
- ✓ therapies
- ✓ respite
- ✓ transport
- ✓ cultural connection.

PCA Families has zero tolerance of child abuse and we are committed to establishing and maintaining child safe environments

