



Message from Alannah
Welcome to PCA Families
Thrive Summer edition

Decembers in Victoria see the winding down of the school year, longer days, a bumpy rise in temperatures and holiday cheer on the horizon. The PCA Families staff for the last five years saw the city decorated with Xmas lights and the influx of shoppers. We relocated to Collingwood in September and so we now watch Smith Street gear up for the festive season.

With a couple more staff on board the office certainly is full and busy. The state wide mail out happened in November and hopefully every Permanent Carer in Victoria is now aware of our mighty little organisation. New families are calling in and joining us every day - probably reading this now - and we welcome you again.

We expect our membership numbers to potentially double, and while this may mean (while we adjust) a wait time before we are able to respond to calls and flexi-funding applications; it also means a greater strength will arise from our numbers. PCA Families will be able to collect more comprehensive data about the needs of children placed on Permanent Care Orders (PCO's) and their families. This information can be used to advocate for greater support for families in recognition of the vital and extraordinary work so many of you do.

2019 has certainly been a year of change and growth. We farewelled CEO Brenda Carmen and Board Directors Jennifer Botha and John Loke, while welcoming new Case Worker, Lucinda and Board Members Kris Peach, Naomi Colville and Sarah Witty.

Kind regards

Regards
Alannah



PCA Families—Christmas hours

The office will be closed from 24 December 2019 until 6 January 2020.

There will be limited staff on 23 and 24 December. We wish you and yours a wonderful Christmas break and look forward to supporting you in 2020.

From the friendly PCA Families' staff and their furry family members.

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Carer strategy

Strong carers, stronger children

Supporting kinship, foster and permanent carers to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people in care



Strong carers, stronger children: a strategy for kinship, foster and permanent carers' was launched on 24th October this year.

It outlines Victoria's strategy to transform the experience of kinship, foster and permanent carers to drive positive outcomes for children and young people in care. Strong Carers, Stronger Children articulates

a vision for the future where carers are supported and empowered to better respond to the changing needs of children and young people in care.

It was developed in consultation with carers, peak bodies, young care-leavers, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Community Service Organisations. Goal six specifically speaks to Permanent Carers and the aim to Improve support for permanent carers: including training and link-ups to universal and specialised services and community support. PCA Families will continue to work with the Department of Health and Human Services regarding this Strategy, and we will always be a **strong** voice for our Members.

Strong carers, stronger children commits to:

- Maintaining children and young people's connection to family where possible, and finding appropriate care arrangements
- Ensuring carers are adequately prepared to support the children they care for
- Ensuring carers are well-informed, valued and empowered
- Providing relevant and timely training to enable carers to provide safe, stable, quality and culturally-connected care
- Enhancing and improving the supports and systems available to carers
- Facilitating long-term stability for children and young people in care.

Strong Carers, stronger children will be implemented over the next five years through a series of action plans, developed in consultation with the sector.

You can read the full report by clicking here <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/strong-carers-stronger-children>



GOAL 6

Stability and permanency

Carers provide nurturing lifelong relationships, enabling family preservation or reunification or providing a permanent care arrangement

Goal 6 strategies

- Develop a structured and supportive model for carers where children are transitioning to:
 - their parents through reunification
 - another care arrangement
 - into permanent care
- Improve support for permanent carers, including:
 - transition support
 - training
 - link-ups to universal and specialised services and community and peer support



CEO recruitment

PCA Families is recruiting a new CEO. If you think you have the skill set and expertise or know of anyone who may "fit the bill" please forward on the advertisement below.

CHIEF

EXECUTIVE OFFICER *for Permanent Care and Adoptive Families (PCA Families)*

- ♦ Advocate for parents and children in out of home care
- ♦ Diversify partnerships (government and community)
- ♦ Not for Profit Packaging and flexible working arrangements

Permanent Care and Adoptive Families (PCA Families) is a Melbourne based organisation and is a unique provider of community services with a strong focus on information advocacy and support for permanent carers and adoptive families. Providing support to parents who in turn provide a caring and stable home for children and young people who are unable to live with their birth parents, is at the heart of everything we do. Collaborating with other community organisations, government bodies and philanthropists, PCA Families' campaigns and projects have contributed to reforms and services that recognise the importance of an independent voice and support for the sector.

Reporting to, and working closely with the board, the CEO will develop and implement strategies to ensure that programs and projects are delivered in line with the current organisational strategic plan. The CEO will play a key role in diversifying partnerships, developing philanthropic relationships and will work closely with government bodies in regards to current and future funding opportunities. Leading a small, dedicated team and ensuring cultural vitality and an integrated organisational approach, influencing policy development and advocating for the benefit of clients will be key to the success of this role.

This is a great opportunity for a collaborative leader who is looking for a first time CEO opportunity or an experienced leader who wants to make a difference and have impact in the sector. With strong communication skills, strategic leadership approach, governance and board reporting experience, the CEO will also work with the board to develop the next three year strategic plan whilst providing operational support. A background in a relevant area such as community services, education or government will be highly regarded.

To apply for this role, please email your resume to executive@davidsonwp.com quoting reference number JO-1912-98777. For further information or a confidential discussion, please contact Sandra Kerr on (03) 9929 9528.

PCA Families member consultation survey

A special “thank you” to all our members who responded to the Member Consultation Survey – 302 parents and carers provided their feedback, of which:

- 66.8% were Permanent Carers
- Intercountry 12.6%
- Local Adoption 5.6%

The remaining membership responses were from the broader Out of Home Care community.

Carer and parent responses to the survey highlighted what services are valued and helpful, the broader gaps in service provision and areas for improvement.

Services currently valued by parents and carers within the community are:

- Peer support
- Education & Training workshops
- Helpline support

The training/workshop topic areas of interest were the impact of trauma on behaviour and development, caring for adolescents and identity. It was also recognised that current training/workshops and peer support were mainly provided in Melbourne’s CBD. Many rural carers and parents, while interested in attending, found location an issue. Suggestions provided by respondents included running sessions in outer regions, webinars/ podcasts and the possibility of online training or peers group support via social media platforms.

Challenges experienced by carers and parents ranged from the loss of case management support once a Permanent Care Order is granted (families experiencing the burden of liaising with Government authorities and finding and accessing suitable services), reduced support and services for families of Intercountry and Local Adoption children, and how to support and advocate for your child within the education system. Additionally, respite and the opportunity for holidays and camps for children and families was a strong need recognised in survey responses.

Specific to PCA Families, respondents would like more clarity around the scope of services offered by the Helpline and the application process for Flexible Funding. Many permanent carers appreciated how the Flexible Funding has made a significant contribution to the support they are now able to provide their children. Many respondents provided positive feedback regarding the services offered by PCA Families.

What's on

**Office closed from
25 December 2019,
Re-opening 6 January, 2020**

Thursday February 6
8.00pm – 9.30pm
Journal Club – Collingwood

Tuesday February 11
5.20pm – 6.15pm
Mindfulness in Motion

Tuesday February 18
5.20pm – 6.15pm
Mindfulness in Motion

Tuesday February 25
5.20pm – 6.15pm
Mindfulness in Motion

Tuesday March 3
5.20pm – 6.15pm
Mindfulness in Motion

Thursday March 5
8.00pm – 9.30pm
Journal Club – Collingwood

Tuesday March 17
5.20pm – 6.15pm
Mindfulness in Motion



Youth Programs

TERM 1 dates

Tuesdays 5.20—6.15pm

February 11, 18, 25

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 2020. 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, 2020**

Tuesday February 11, 18, 25, and March 3, 17, 24 (no lesson on 10 March)

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/BAYWC>

To register: contact Deborah on Deborah@pcafamilies.org.au or call 9020 1839

Your Instructor:

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.



Training

Raising
Expectations

Caring for a young person
considering further study next year?

Read on for helpful resources, supports and info!

Despite facing significant barriers in accessing higher education, with the right support through Raising Expectations, care leavers are thriving at TAFE and Uni.

[Joseph's story](#) is just one example. Nine years after going into out-of-home care, he is studying a Bachelor of Human Services at La Trobe and loving it!

This year at Swinburne care leaver students are studying everything from Community Services to Aviation and Plumbing, and at Federation Uni, consistently high numbers of TAFE and Uni students are being supported – 230, with over 100 starting in 2019.

Each of our University partners, [Federation](#), [La Trobe](#) and [Swinburne](#) offer financial and other supports to make it easier for care leavers to undertake

further study. **Find out more** at their care leaver support pages.

If the young person you are supporting is under 24 and has been subject to a Child Protection or Youth Justice Order, they may be able to access the [Skills First Youth Access Initiative](#). Eligible students **pay no tuition fees** for government subsidised courses from VCAL/VCE through to Advanced Diploma.

The [Education Guide for Carers](#) is a fantastic resource for anyone supporting young people in care to learn about education and learning supports and services available to them in and after school.

Finally, keep your eyes peeled for the **brand-new Raising Expectations website, coming soon!** The new site makes it easier than ever for care leavers and their supporters to access information, supports and inspiration to lift and support the aspirations of care leavers.



The Carer KaFE 2020 Learning and Development Calendar will be published in late December, featuring some favourites you may have missed this year as well as a range of new and exciting courses. Carer KaFE provides free training to statutory kinship and accredited foster carers throughout Victoria. This can often include permanent carers too; please contact PCA Families to register your interest; info@pcfamilies.org.au

Subscribe to www.carerkafe.org.au to find out more. Don't forget the online courses are still open on the website and you will receive a certificate for each course you complete!

Volunteers needed

Are you interested in volunteering?

Do you have lived experience of adoption or permanent care?

Are you a

- ✓ team player,
- ✓ organised,
- ✓ non-judgemental,
- ✓ considerate?



If you answered “yes” to all of the above then you might consider volunteering for PCA Families with our peer support group, Journal Club. The group meets from around 8 -9.30pm in Abbotsford on the first Thursday of every month.

For more information about volunteering please contact PCA Families at info@pcfamilies.org.au

What your child is eligible for

As the new year begins, please remember that you and your child are eligible to apply for:

- **10 sessions of mental health care**, ie psychology, OT, social workers etc. under mental health care plan—<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-care-plan>
- **5 sessions of speech or OT under chronic disease plan**—https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-medicare-health_pro-gp-pdf-allied-cnt.htm
- If you or your child requires psychiatric or paediatrician support, please obtain a **291 referral** from your GP <http://www9.health.gov.au/mbs/fullDisplay.cfm?type=item&qt=ItemID&q=291>

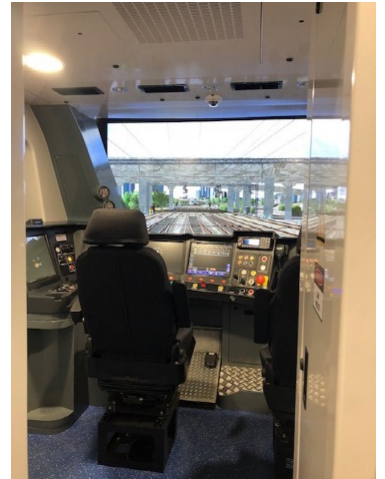
Please speak to your GP further for clarification on the above care plans.

- **Child care subsidy**—You can claim this subsidy using your Centrelink online account through myGov <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/online-help/centrelink/claim-child-care-subsidy#a2>
- **Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS)** for a child placed in their care who is considered to be 'at risk' for the purposes of ACCS (child wellbeing)? To be eligible, you must
 1. contact Centrelink to obtain a CRN (if you don't have one) and have the child/ren in their care linked to them
 2. apply, and be approved, for Child Care Subsidy (CCS), and
 3. complete a Complying Written Arrangement for each child in your care. To avoid any delays you are encouraged to undertake these steps as soon as you become the primary carer of the child/ren

For more information check out the Guide to ACCS (child wellbeing) https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/2019-11-28_-_accs_guide_0.pdf



Train simulator



In October PCA Families arranged with Metro Trains to access their new driver Academy in Kensington which is a simulator .

Practicing on the multi screens was fun and the simulator was truly impressive. Not an exaggeration to say the adults enjoyed this day as much as the young folk!

2019 National Permanency Conference

Our recent staff attendance at the National Permanency Conference gave us all a greater understanding of the commitment to creating a timely and transparent future plan for children faced with uncertainty. It was an opportunity to greater build on alliances across the sector to work towards the goal of best outcomes for our young children and next generation.

Federally a commitment was reiterated to working collaboratively whilst being guided by current research and best practice. Prevention and early intervention were highlighted as key areas that can assist in reducing the amount of children moving into out of home care.

Information around adoption practices in Northern Ireland, Taiwan, New Zealand, and the Philippines was presented providing a greater depth of knowledge and understanding for all in attendance. Similar discussions and feedback from the States and Territories was informative.

The conference also highlighted some significant key factors in regards to attachment and permanency. Richard Weston (*pictured top right*) (SNAICC – Peak Body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children) encouraged us to rethink the Western construct of Attachment, which does not factor in extended family relationships or those with the land and ancestors. He impressed that identity needs to be maintained and a deeper understanding of its complexity needs to be exercised – it is not simply making an Order in court. Terry Cross (National Indian Child Welfare Association) added that Permanency only exists if it exists in the mind of the Child – the heart of belonging is Connection.



Richard Weston
CEO, SNAICC – National Voice for our Children



Kaisey Hayes
Adoptive Mother, Pharmacist and PCA Families committee member



Brad Murphy
Ex-Pro AFL Player & Adoptee

Annual General Meeting



Once again our AGM provided a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge the significant contributions of so many to PCA Families. It was a time for our board, staff, PCAF members and other relevant parties to get together and reflect on another year of commitment and hard work.

In attendance was The Hon. Luke Donnellan; Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers (*pictured right*) and Argiri Alisandratos, Deputy Secretary Children and Families reform (*picture left*). They spoke at the AGM of the Government's commitment to the ongoing support of families.



The evening was bought to a close after a rigorous question time with a spotlight on the additional educational needs of the children and young people placed on Permanent Care Orders.

Flexible Funding applications

Due to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) mail out, we are experiencing a high demand for our service. If you have sent in a flexi funding application we will contact you regarding your application in the coming weeks. Rest assured we are endeavouring to process your application but it may take longer than usual so please be patient.

How to apply for flexible funding

1. You will need to complete the **Flexible Funding Carer Application Form** which can be found in both [word](#) and [pdf](#) version on our [website](#).
2. If you are applying for the first time, you will need a copy of the Statutory Permanent Care order with court reference number in the top right hand corner and a copy of your DHHS remittance slip. Please see sample [document](#).
3. Please arrange a quote for the service you wish to utilise and either email the documents to flexifunding@pcafamilies.org.au or post to P O Box 201, Collingwood 3066.
4. Your application will be allocated to a Case Worker who will contact you to discuss the application. There are periods of high demand so please allow as much time as possible for your application to be considered.
5. Applications of a high cost/expense are presented to the CEO and/or alliance members for approval/rejection or part payment.



If you require urgent financial support please contact your local providers:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/crisis-payment>

<https://www.bsl.org.au/services/money-matters/>

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/need-help/financial-assistance/>

<https://ssr.net.au/>

<https://goodshepherdmicrofinance.org.au/mediacoverage/discount-white-goods/>

Emergency contacts

| Contact organisation | Phone Number | Hours of operation |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 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 | 131114, | 24hours |
| Grief line | 9935 7400, | Midday -3am |
| Support after suicide | 9421 7640 | 24hours |
| Royal Children's Hospital Social Work | 9345 7400 | 8pm- 8am |
| Emergency | 000 | 24hours, 7 days per week |

Parenting tips

11 Things to Say When Kids Cry

by GoZen!

We're on the same team. I will help you.

I can see this is hard for you.

I understand you're overwhelmed and that's OK.

That was really sad/frustrating/disappointing.

Let's take a break.

I love you. You are safe.

Would you like help/a break/to try again?

I can hear you are crying, but I don't know what you need. Can you help me understand?

I remember when you...

Let's come up with a solution together.

Maintain silence and hold loving space for your crying child.

1. *"We're on the same team. I will help you."* Even if your child says they do not want your help, they do want to feel as though you will back them up when they need you.

2. *"I can see this is hard for you."* This simple phrase acknowledges that you hear and see them.

3. *"I understand you're sad/disappointed/scared/anxious/happy and that's OK."* Reinforce the notion that feeling an emotion is what makes us human.

4. *"That was really sad/frustrating/disappointing."* Acknowledging the event that triggered your child's crying helps them also see what triggered their emotion and figure out what to do next.

5. *"Let's take a break."* Removing you both from the situation helps your toddler understand that sometimes you need to walk away in order to compose yourself. Your child may legitimately be tired or over-stimulated and simply need to have time in a quiet, soothing place before re-joining the activity.

6. *"I love you. You are safe."* This invites connection with your child rather than separation. They may need a hug, a snuggle, or to hold your hand in order to feel that you are indeed there to help them.

7. *"Would you like help/a break/to try again?"* Many times when your child cries out of frustration, they need one of three things: help performing the task, a break from the emotional situation, or to try to do the task again, possibly with assistance. Asking them, not telling them, what they would like empowers your child, helping them to feel important and significant.

8. *"I can hear you are crying, but I don't know what you need. Can you help me understand?"* Even if your child cannot verbalize why they are crying at first, this can give them a chance to practice.

9. *"I remember when you..."* While it may seem like a distraction technique, helping them recall a time when they felt happy and peaceful helps prepare their brain for rational thought. Trying to reason with a toddler who is in a highly emotional state is kind of like negotiating with a tiny dictator. They are not prepared to listen to reason when they are in the midst of feeling helpless or angry or sad or exhausted.

10. *"Let's come up with a solution together."* Ultimately we want to help our children to develop problem-solving skills. Coming up with a solution that will help process their emotions teaches them how to look at the situation objectively and come up with possible solutions.

11. *Maintain silence and hold loving space for your crying child.* Be a pillar of empathy and strength for them.

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

