



Permanent Care and Adoptive Families

How we respond to the needs of grandparents who take primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren.

Activities and services:

- Annual Family Day March 2014- great day at Como Gardens in The Basin.
- Regular bi-monthly events for families continue to provide positive connection to parents and carers. Events have included Dr. George Habib on "Self Harm"; a workshop on "Understanding Lying and Cheating"; and a "Welcome to Our New Centre- 2014!"
- Continuation of our on-line bookstore selling children's books, fictions, factual and academic books specifically targeted to and featuring the stories of families formed through care and adoption; this remains a unique service within Australia. There has been great difficulty in sourcing any books related to Permanent Care.
- Delivery of 17 Journal Clubs, monthly facilitated peer-based discussion groups exploring issues in parenting children through care and adoption. The Werribee Journal Club has been established and well attended, as has the Collingwood Club. Topics discussed in the Clubs have included: "Is contact with birth families always positive?", "When a child bonds with one parent more than the other", "Managing the Meltdown", and "Six major parenting mistakes to avoid".
- Planning for establishment of two new Journal Clubs in the Eastern Region and the Mornington Peninsula set to meet in May and June 2014.
- 60 plus journal articles have been collected for future sessions of Journal Clubs.
- Promotion and sponsorship of parent-led playgroups: Inner-south Forever Families Playgroup, Northern Allways Playgroup, Western Suburbs Playgroup, Regional Greater Western Playgroup, and Adoption and Permanent Care Playgroup.
- Ongoing expansion and delivery of the specialist database of 'care and adoption-competent' therapeutic professions. We have also included a new section on barristers and solicitors due to requests for legal practitioners with knowledge of permanent care and adoption. Sixty-four professionals are now on the database covering metropolitan and regional Victoria.
- Telephone information and advice service, providing support, assistance and referral to individuals and families affected by care and adoption. A steep increase in calls has been noted this year.



Training, Products and Resources:

- Delivery of training program 'Let's Talk about School: Adoption and Permanent Care' and 'Let's Talk About School: A program for teachers' to Ripponlea Primary School and Anglicare (Yarraville).
- Delivery of training - 'Introducing Siblings through Permanent Care and Adoption: a professional and parent perspective' with 21 people attending.
- Delivery of 'Parenting with Mindfulness' full day workshop for parents. Well attended by 35 parents/carers.
- Completion of 'Life Story Work' training package and associated publication, a unique, parent-based program around the role of life story work when parenting children with experience of loss and trauma. Successful pilot with 20 parents/carers participating in two separate workshops.
- Completed modified version of "Life Story Work for Professionals" training package, delivered to 18 workers in the sector.
- -Development and delivery of - "Parenting Children through Permanent Care and Adoption" (Parenting Plus+). This is an 18 hour program run over a number of sessions. Highly successful, with 26 parents/carers, participating over two separate programs.
- Parenting Plus+ Support Group- currently being developed for and by parents who have already undertaken the training.
- Completion of 'Raising Teens' training package and associated publication, addressing the challenges of raising teens through care and adoption at critical transition points.
- Development of Tree of Life project proposal. PCA Families' facilitators and volunteers have been trained by the Dulwich Centre (SA) in the Tree of Life model. The model will be modified to target children and young people from permanent care and adoptive families, and the pilot delivered in July 2014. We have applied for a grant to deliver this program state-wide.
- Development and printing of the second edition of 'Let's Talk About School: Helping Educators Understand the Implications of Permanent Care and Adoption'.
- 11 new fact sheets for parents and carers written and published.
- Ongoing expansion of on-line resource centre.



Current significant issues:

Legal Issues

Successful partnership with Peninsula Legal Service in obtaining Law Foundation Funding. Six Legal Fact Sheets were created and launched on 30 April, 2014. 132 people attended the launch and panel discussion with His Honour Magistrate Francis Zemljak (Children's Court of Victoria), Robyn Hamilton (Children's Law Specialist, Vic. Legal Aid), Dan Baron (Permanent Care Parent), and Beth Allen (Assistant Director, Child Protection, Department of Community Services).

Issues raised by grandparents were in relation to access to:

- Legal Aid
- Solicitors with knowledge of the permanent care system
- Training in navigating the legal system
- Costs associated with continual court appearances for variations
- Legal status of the grandchildren

Country and Regional Victoria

- Warrnambool
 - Bendigo
 - Ballarat
 - Geelong

Conclusion: What is needed now- the complete package.



Our numbers during the last year:

- 855 members
- 103 parents and carers attended Journal Clubs (per participation)
- 440 parent / carer contacts through the Carer Information Support Service, delivered in partnership with the Foster Care Association of Victoria and part-funded through PCA Families
- Counselling, assistance and referral via the PCA Families Telephone Advice Service: 83 callers
Follow-up of these calls involved 156 contacts.
- 70 parents, carers and children participated in the annual family day
- 229 parents, carers and children participated in bi-monthly events
- 115 parents and carers received training from PCA Families
- 38 workers received training from PCA Families
- 12 newsletters distributed to 855 members. Relevant stakeholders and agencies contacted.