

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 1 May 2025

Your submission for this review:

As a foster carer of a 10-year-old Aboriginal child with special needs, I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the current out-of-home care system.

**Travel Allowance Insufficiency** We currently receive a \$100 fuel voucher from our foster care agency for family visits mandated every two months. However, each visit requires 5-7 hours of travel each way, resulting in expenses significantly exceeding the provided voucher. We strongly recommend the establishment of a realistic travel allowance that adequately covers the actual fuel expenses involved in mandatory family visits.

**Accommodation Costs** Due to the extensive travel distance, an overnight stay is necessary, incurring additional accommodation expenses. Currently, these costs are not covered or reimbursed. We recommend explicit inclusion of accommodation expenses within the funding model to address this significant financial burden on carers.

**Clarity of Carer Entitlements and Supports** Foster carers do not currently have access to clear, easily navigable resources outlining what financial supports or payments they or the children in their care are eligible to receive. We recommend the creation of a centralised, accessible, and straightforward resource clearly detailing all entitlements, financial supports, and additional programs available to carers and foster children.

**Equitable Support for Non-ACCO Carers of Aboriginal Children** As non-ACCO carers of an Aboriginal child, we face specific cultural obligations which involve additional logistical and financial support. Current arrangements do not adequately reflect these responsibilities. Additional targeted funding or logistical support should be provided to enable effective and culturally appropriate engagement and connection with the child's family and community.

**Special Needs Considerations** Caring for a child with special needs inherently involves additional complexities and costs, particularly related to travel and accommodation for mandatory visits. Recognising this, additional funding or specific logistical support should be established to assist carers managing these challenges.

**Impact on Foster Carer Retention** The ongoing financial pressures caused by inadequate reimbursements negatively impact carer retention and recruitment, particularly in regional and remote areas. Implementing fair and realistic reimbursements would significantly contribute to sustaining existing carers and attracting new carers to the system. Thank you for considering this submission.