

The Draft Report for out of home care costs and pricing has yet again failed to support foster carers in the OOHC system. These recommendations will do nothing to remove the widespread dissatisfaction of foster carers and will do nothing to successful recruitment and retention of foster carers.

Carers provide the necessities of life for OOHC children, yet IPART calculate benchmark costs for non-government providers higher than providing the necessities of the child's life. Based on IPART's figures a non-government provider should receive annually administrative costs of \$11,940 and casework costs of \$15,200 these are just two of the allowances given. These two allowances total \$27,140.

Yet a foster carer for a 0–4-year-old would receive \$18,148 annually to provide the necessities of life.

IPART has recommended an increase in carers current allowance, but it fails to acknowledge the additional costs required throughout the lifetime of the child, the extra costs of high school the additional costs of extracurricular activities which is essential for successful socialisation of a child. A set up allowance of \$1,500 but what about the child growing are they expected to stay the same size and sleep in the same bed until they are 18?

IPART figures show that 12,794 children are in foster care and 904 children are in residential care, yet IPART has provided a comprehensive break down for these 904 children which includes rent and running costs. For the 12,794 children there is no consideration for rent and no consideration for house running costs.

As a foster carer this report continues to make me feel undervalued and overwhelmed.

Another way that the OOHC system continues to exploit the generosity of foster carers is the system of reimbursement. There is mention of DCJ providing a process to meet medical costs but there is no urgency attached with this. I am a foster carer of twins and due to the inefficiency of my caseworker I have had to take the twins to see a paediatrician privately. The cost for this is a minimum of \$500 each that is a total of \$1000 out of our budget, we are left to rely on reimbursement from our NGO. This is a lot of money to be taken out of our already tight budget and if our NGO is late with reimbursement then we must rely on family to help us through. Reimbursement is becoming an accepted payment arrangement, and it is wrong to exploit foster carers this way.

The report talks about clear guidelines for what the care allowance covers but there also needs to be clear guidelines the qualifications for higher needs care allowance, I have been arguing for months with supporting evidence from my child's medical team that she should be categorised as Care+2 but no explanation is provided why this is not progressing. As a minimum requirement, children who are identified as high needs should be given extra respite days to give the foster carer a break.

The recommended increases in carers allowance will help our financial situation but I really thought it would do better, it looks like everyone gets something yet the ones who deserve it the most get the least.