

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Interim Report.

As kinship/relative carers my sister and I provide care for five children in the OOHC system.

We have read the Interim Report the Information Papers and attended the carer workshops and the Public Hearing.

We were shocked! Shocked at the frankness of NGO participants raising issues about the cost of insurance and workers compensation, a whole conversation dedicated to discuss making profits and need to make more, the complaints of retaining workers. All the PSP has done is grow a whole new administration industry at the sacrifice of the children that this system was supposed to be helping.

We have heard about the pain from front-line carers who are looking after these children how they never have enough to make ends meet and that most can no longer work because they need to be there for the children. We have heard the horror stories of NGO's playing with carers paying them what they want when they want.

There is something very wrong with this picture! And you ask why people are not signing up to become carers just listen to what is being said.

We have heard about the lack of information for carers as to what they can seek extra funding for and what they cannot. The unfairness how carers must front up for costs on an already under strain budget then wait to be reimbursed some wait up to a month.

We would propose that the PSP base package is paid directly to the carers. The annual package should be paid to carers quarterly. Costs that carers are responsible for meeting would be made clear. Additional funding should specifically state what could be applied for and under what conditions.

Carers would be responsible for booking and pay for the necessary supports the child needs specifically to what is identified in the pediatrician report.

Carers would be responsible for paying for all school needs, which include school fees and excursions.

We propose that DCJ create a carers online portal. Every carer that receives funding would have a profile in the portal. The portal would be catered to the individual carer and their needs.

Reporting requirements would be uploaded into the portal and the minimum reports required should be:

- 6 monthly pediatrician reports for each child

- 6 monthly support reports ie; Occupational therapy, Trauma counsellors, Feeding services etc.
- End of term school reports
- Any further reports as required by DCJ

Failure by the carer to upload the required documentation would result in an immediate stop on the next quarterly payment. Extensions to the reporting date could be applied for but circumstances would require evidence.

The portal should have information about each quarterly funding when the next payment would be paid and how much will be paid, much like the system that Centrelink provides when you log into your profile

The portal should also have a booking system. Carers could book transport and respite carers.

- Transport for children (to medical appointments or necessary to their care not for extracurricular activities)
- Respite carers

The system would automatically populate pre-vetted organizations who can offer these services for respite care and transport. The carer would be responsible for paying for these services and these costs would be reduced from their next quarterly payment, the cost would be confirmed at the time of booking and accepted. This amount would immediately be deducted from the carers' next quarterly payment and reflect in real time the amount that was due to be paid to the carer in the next quarterly payment.

The carer would request transport or a respite for a certain time frame and once this was entered then available service providers would show. Each service provider could have a rating system by carers who have used their services in the past and this rate would be reflected in the service providers profile information. The carer would then book, and the service provider would have a time frame that they could accept the booking and then carer would accept the quote.

Payments for these services would be paid to the service provider from DCJ.

The portal could also provide advertising services for carers such as:

- Medical services
- After school and before care services

- Extra-curricular programmes
- Legal services available
- Budgeting services
- Availability of carers training

The portal could have the capacity for carers to upload pictures of the children they are caring for during holidays or major events at school to create a timeline for each child that they could access when they leave care.

Carers would set goals for their child annually and progress reports to reaching these goals and reasons why they have not achieved these goals would be reviewed. These goals will be uploaded into the portal for DCJ to review.

Caseworkers would still be required whether via an NGO or via DCJ itself. The caseworkers would be responsible for:

- Monthly home visits
- Assisting with any legal requirements in progress
- Supervising parent visits if required
- Assessing if extra funding was needed for each child as per DCJ's packages.
- Assisting carers to apply for funding
- Assist carers with goal setting and planning to achieve these goals.

This proposal would address several major concerns. First, the lack of visibility by DCJ, having a carers portal set up in their system they could download real time information as required, they could also quickly communicate with carers via this portal. All reports will be accessible to DCJ when they require.

This would reduce the workload of case workers as a majority of DCJ's needs are being met via the portal.

Carers would also be in charge to manage each child's funding based on their wants and needs but also provide accountability to DCJ directly and via the portal.

This would be a start to address the many concerns that have been raised during this review and thank you for the opportunity to submit.

P. Te Purei

