

Press Release 23rd April 2020

KINSHIP CARERS ACCEPT THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT'S HELPING HAND

Today's announcement by the Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan detailing special payments to assist kinship carers to navigate these difficult times is seen as most welcome by kinship carers.

The fact that the government has reached out a helping hand to its kinship carers should come as no surprise, given recent increases in the overall funds available to kinship carers across the state. However, the offer of this extra help is taken as a clear recognition of added stresses and strains on kinship placements in these difficult times.

In a phone call to KCV on the 22nd April Minister Donnellan said:

"These are strange times. I am calling to reassure you that the government has not forgotten kinship carers. We recognise that these strange times also be troubling times for them. By way of acknowledging the extra burdens they are carrying just now I have worked with the DHHS to craft a series of payments we hope will be of some help."

Anne McLeish, Director of Kinship Carers Victoria (KCV) said:

"KCV welcomes all the payments, they each have specific attractions. The \$600 payment to purchase urgent items is well targeted. Kinship carers have reported to KCV that the most urgent expense they have relates to the increase costs in fresh food coupled with the fact that the children are eating more of it whilst they are at home".

Also welcomed by KCV is a program offering increased access to respite care. Whilst respite care is notoriously difficult to secure this new program acknowledges the need to provide new funds to make

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it available and therefore may open up new respite care options. KCV looks forward to working with DHHS to make this happen for kinship carers.

The financial assistance to be made available to 18-year olds is in keeping with the Victorian governments efforts to secure ongoing financial assistance for young people up to age 21 in out of home care. The costs of keeping such young people at home in these times escalate more than at any other time. This payment recognises such mounting challenges.

Postscript

These payments are only available to the kinship carers for whom Victoria has responsibility. KCV is well aware of the hardships being suffered by many of the informal carers so we suggest that they call the Prime Minister's office with requests that similar payments be made through Centrelink for informal carers. The Prime Minister's office number is **(02) 6277 7700**.

Carers are also invited to contact:

- **Maternal and Child Health Services** on **13 22 29** or email: mch@dhhs.vic.gov.au to enquire about other services

- **Centrelink** for advice about any possible Australian government financial assistance on **1800 245 965**

For further information about this press release, call Anne McLeish at **Kinship Carers Victoria** on **(03) 9372 2422** or at director@grandparents.com.au

Kinship Care in the time of Coronavirus

Media Release

The Hon Luke Donnellan MP
Minister for Child Protection
Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers



MORE SUPPORT TO KEEP FAMILIES AND CHILDREN SAFE

Thursday 23 April 2020

Foster and kinship carers will receive a one-off \$600 payment for every child they care for, as part of a package of support from the Victorian Government for some of our state's most in-need children and families.

Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan today announced an additional \$77.5 million over the next two years to support some of Victoria's most at-risk children by bolstering the staff, resources and services available to them.

The coronavirus pandemic is placing immense pressure on these families as well as the frontline workers who support them, including financial challenges, physical distancing restrictions and the potential for heightened family violence.

The package includes \$46 million to increase the capacity of family services to provide outreach support to the most vulnerable Victorian families.

In a new model of care, specialist family services teams with staff from service providers and child protection practitioners will deliver intensive and integrated support so families can immediately access the services they need, when they need them most.

The teams will also help families to access things like immunisation, childcare, kinder and school – so no child falls through the cracks. They will also help in supporting families on practical coping strategies and video conferencing technology to stay connected while 'stay at home' restrictions are in place.

Another \$11 million will provide extra financial support for carers most in need and a one-off payment of \$600 to all foster and kinship carers per child in their care to help cover the additional costs of full-time caring at home.

The investment will also go towards dedicated phone

support with up-to-date advice, funding to increase much needed respite time, and increased efforts for identifying kinship options for children and young people.

Our landmark Home Stretch program will be expanded with nearly \$4 million to support all young people currently in care who are due to turn 18 before December this year. During these uncertain times, the program will allow them to keep their current foster or kinship care living arrangements or support as they transition to independence.

More than \$15 million will support residential care service providers to form mobile response teams that will bolster staff where needed and proactively respond to the needs of every young person. It will also help to ensure residential homes are properly cleaned to ensure the safety and hygiene standards needed during this crisis.

The Government will also provide workforce supports, ensuring agencies and the Department of Health and Human Services can replace frontline workers in the children and family sector if staff cannot perform their duties because of coronavirus.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan

"Every day, our foster families and kinship carers provide the most amazing support to our children and young people. Now, it's our turn to support them."

"We're making it easier for workers on the frontline to do what they do best – supporting our children, young people and families as we get through this together."