

2022 Election Commitments – Progress Report

Introduction

In the lead-up to the 2022 South Australian State Election, Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA (CF&KC-SA), the independent peak body representing statutory foster and kinship carers, called for **seven key commitments** to strengthen family-based care and improve outcomes for children and young people under guardianship of the Chief Executive.

While many parliamentarians across the political spectrum expressed support, it was SA Labor—now the State Government—that pledged to progress a number of these reforms.

Three years on, with the passage of the *Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Act 2025*, several of our asks are now **enshrined in law**. This report outlines what has been achieved, what is partially progressed, and what remains outstanding.

We also acknowledge the continuing support of opposition and independent MPs, who ensure the voice of carers is heard across Parliament, despite not holding executive power.

Commitment 1 – Whole of Government Approach

Our Ask: A whole of government approach by all government departments, to prioritise rapid access to services for children and young people under guardianship.

Government's Commitment: SA Labor agreed that efforts to support and empower children in care and those who care for them are siloed and that a whole of government approach to addressing the needs of young people in care was urgently required. SA Labor committed to working strategically and in partnership with the sector, including carers as vital stakeholders, to achieve this.

Progress: Through ongoing advocacy by CF&KC-SA as the peak body and sharing the voice of carers with government partners, The *Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Act 2025* now mandates a **State Strategy for the Safety and Support of Children and Young People**, requiring inter-agency collaboration across health, education, housing, and other systems, with priority access for children and young people in care, leaving care, or who have left care.

Status:  *Achieved in legislation.* CF&KC-SA will monitor this progress to ensure consistent cross-department service delivery occurs.

Commitment 2 – Carer Payments that Reflect the True Costs of Care

Our Ask: Carer payments to adequately provide for the real cost of raising children and young people, that is benchmarked nationally, with transparency processes, timely reimbursements, and a review of the DCP Complexity Assessment Tool and Special Needs Loading Tool.

Government's Commitment: Commission research to ascertain the true cost to carers of caring for children in care.

Progress: No commissioned research has yet been released, and carers continue to report financial shortfalls, delayed reimbursements, and inadequate transparency.

The Complexity Assessment Tool and Special Needs Loading Tool is yet to be reformed.

Status:  *Outstanding*. CF&KC-SA will include in the 2026 Election Asks process.

Commitment 3 – Flexible and Accessible Respite

Our Ask: Recognition of carers’ right to respite and provision of alternative, flexible supports (e.g. babysitting, holidays, cleaning) alongside recruitment of more respite carers.

Government’s Commitment: Commit to timely access to respite in a way that works for carers and the children in their care and that more respite carers must be recruited to achieve this. SA Labor commits to formally and positively acknowledging that carers have the right to respite.

Progress: While respite is recognised in departmental policy, carers continue to report access to respite remains inconsistent, with many carers struggling to secure timely and appropriate support.

During 2024, the Government acknowledged the importance of respite access by providing eligible carers a new flexible respite support payment (\$800 per year) to help pay for a range of respite-like supports such as gardening and cleaning, or transport for children. Additionally, the Government released the social media campaign titled “Foster the Feeling” to recruit carers, with a focus on short term and respite care. Respite recruitment data from this campaign is not published.

Status:  *Partial progress*. CF&KC-SA will include in the 2026 Election Asks process

Commitment 4 – Extend Support to Age 25

Our Ask: Extend carer payments and support for young people in care to age 25, recognising the challenges of early independence.

Government’s Commitment: No specific commitment in 2022; response referred back to commitment 2, and the agreement to commission research to ascertain the true cost to provide care.

Progress: The *Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Act 2025* requires the State Strategy to include **priority support and services for young people leaving care or who have left care**, signalling recognition of post-care needs. However, it is not yet clear if this translates to extended carer payments and comprehensive support up to age 25. There is current reform underway for the Stability in Family Based Care Program, which the peak is aware of.

Status:  *Partially achieved*. Legislative framework in place; policy and funding clarity still needed.

Commitment 5 – Procedural Fairness in the CYPS Act

Our Ask: Embed procedural fairness and prescribe care concerns in legislation, ensuring carers have transparent processes and external oversight.

Government's Commitment: Full support, with a pledge to pursue amendments in government.

Progress: Delivered. The *Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Act 2025* enshrines **procedural fairness for carers** and introduces **Quality of Care Report Guidelines**, replacing the previous care concerns process with a clear legislative framework.

Status:  *Achieved in legislation.* Monitoring needed to ensure practice aligns with law.

Commitment 6 – Research and Innovation in Foster and Kinship Care

Our Ask: Fund ongoing research into foster and kinship care in South Australia to inform best practice, innovation, and systemic improvement.

Government's Commitment: Agreed that further research is needed.

Progress: To date, no dedicated research program has been commissioned, and significant evidence gaps remain.

Status:  *Outstanding.*

Commitment 7 – Collaboration with the Peak Body

Our Ask: Early and ongoing consultation with CF&KC-SA on all matters affecting carers, and free membership for all foster and kinship carers to ensure awareness of rights and responsibilities.

Government's Commitment: Committed to early consultation and requested more information on membership structures.

Progress: Delivered in part. The Minister for Child Protection established the Carer Council, consisting of 12 approved carers representative of the foster and kinship population. The Carer Council is a national first, and provides recommendations directly to the Minister regarding topics impacting family based carers.

The *Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Act 2025* now requires the Minister to prepare and maintain a **Statement of Commitment to Foster & Kinship Carers**, in consultation with prescribed bodies including CF&KC-SA. This Statement must be laid before Parliament, and agencies under the Act must perform their functions in line with it.

Automatic free membership for all carers has not yet been introduced.

Status:  /  *Achieved in legislation; partial in practice.*

Conclusion

Since 2022, CF&KC-SA has secured **major legislative victories**. The *Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Act 2025* enshrines many of our key election asks into law:

- A whole-of-government strategy for children in care.
- Extended recognition of support needs for young people leaving care.
- Procedural fairness and legislated Quality of Care processes.
- Formal recognition of and consultation with the carer peak body.

These are **historic wins** for foster and kinship carers in South Australia.

Yet, some commitments remain unresolved. Carer payments still fail to reflect the true cost of care, respite remains inadequate, and clarity on the full extent of post-care support to 25 is needed. Research and innovation have not yet been funded to strengthen long-term improvements.

CF&KC-SA will continue to **monitor implementation closely**, ensuring that legislative victories are matched by real change in carers' daily lives. Our mission remains clear: to hold government accountable, amplify the carer voice, and secure a system that values, supports, and empowers foster and kinship carers as essential partners in child protection.

Looking Ahead – 2026 Election Asks

The progress made since 2022, particularly through the *Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Act 2025*, marks a turning point for carers. We secured significant legislative wins: procedural fairness, Quality of Care reports, a whole-of-government strategy, and formal recognition of carers and the peak body.

Yet, as carers tell us daily, legislation alone is not enough. Implementation, funding, and practical supports must follow if these reforms are to change the lived experience of caring. That is why our **2026 Election Asks** continue the effort to **retain and support foster and kinship carers**.

Our 2026 platform calls for:

- **Sustainable investment in the carer peak body**, ensuring independent advocacy is properly resourced.
- **Carer payments that reflect the real costs of care**, including transparent tools and timely reimbursements.
- **Flexible and accessible respite**, recognised as a right and delivered without stigma.
- **Free statewide mental health and wellbeing support** for carers, offered proactively and confidentially.
- **Free legal advice and representation** to ensure carers can exercise their rights on an equal footing.
- **A superannuation contribution scheme** for carers, recognising their service to the state and securing their long-term financial wellbeing.

These asks build directly on the reforms achieved in 2025 and address the areas carers identify as unfinished business: financial sustainability, respite, wellbeing, and long-term security.

CF&KC-SA will continue to work constructively with all parties and candidates in the lead-up to the 2026 State Election to ensure carers are supported, respected, and valued as the foundation of South Australia's child protection system.