

Carer Council Communique

May 2025

Update

The Carer Council held its seventh meeting on 12 May 2025, preceded by an out of session meeting on 28 April 2025. The May meeting marked the final meeting of the inaugural members of the Carer Council.

Topics of the meetings included:

- Care concerns reform
- Mapping the journey of a family-based carer
- Reflection on signals of change seen over the inaugural 18 months
- Cultural connections for Aboriginal children and young people

Attendance

28 April 2025

Members: Alexandra Ingleton, Dana Wright, Gail Ward, Gai McMichael, Kate Thomas, Lorraine Joy (Chair)

Support: Lauren Deer, CF&KC-SA

Apologies: Kailah Hurditch, Jakob Schmaal, Ellese Nelson, Emily Ware

Absent: Suzanne Scanlon, Peter Kennedy

12 May 2025

Members: Alexandra Ingleton, Dana Wright, Ellese Nelson, Gai McMichael, Gail Ward, Kailah Hurditch, Kate Thomas, Lorraine Joy (Chair), Peter Kennedy

Support: Dana Shen (Facilitator), Lauren Deer (Carer Council Project Lead, CF&KC-SA)

Apologies: Emily Ware, Suzanne Scanlon, Fiona Endacott

Absent: Jakob Schmaal

Themes arising from the meeting

Care concerns reform

Following a request for advice, the Carer Council initially met on 28 April 2025 to start preparing a submission on the *Proposed Quality of Care Response Model (QCRM)*, a model proposed to replace the current care concerns framework. The submission was finalised at the Carer Council's meeting on 12 May 2025.

The SWOT analysis below summarises the themes arising from the Carer Council's discussions on the QCRM:

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES,
THREATS FRAMEWORK
CARER COUNCIL ASSESSMENT OF THE QCRM



Mapping the Journey of a family-based carer

The Carer Council engaged in a reflective discussion during its meeting in May 2025 to finalise the work it started in February 2025 on mapping the journey of a family-based carer. This is a special project to be presented to the Minister on the experiences of being a carer within South Australia's child protection system.

Signals of Change

Signals of Change is an activity facilitated by Dana Shen, which serves to help Carer Council members reflect on signals they are seeing in child protection that show positive change, whether influenced by Carer Council directly, indirectly, collectively with other stakeholders, or by other forces and influence. *Signals of Change* was a timely activity to reflect on the inaugural Carer Council's work over the last 18 months, allowing a supportive conclusion for exiting members.

The Carer Council reflected on signals of change in the following areas:

- The commencement of the Carer Council
- Relationships with stakeholders
- Public consultation
- Public communiques
- Other opportunities
 - Guest speaking opportunities
 - Events
 - Panels
- Meetings
 - Guest speakers and knowledge gained
 - Results of 128 recommendations put forward by the Carer Council as of 12 May 2025.
 - *Statement of Commitment to Foster and Kinship Carers (Statement of Commitment)*
 - Care concerns
 - Carer remuneration
 - Respite
 - Sibling connections
 - Workforce consistency and communication with carers
 - Mental health and peer support
 - Therapeutic supports for children and young people
 - Complaints and accountability

Cultural Connections for Aboriginal children and young people

The Carer Council in representing foster and kinship carers focussed on cultural connections for Aboriginal children and young people in out of home care. The discussions held marked preliminary work of the Carer Council on this complex topic. The Council is of the opinion that a future meeting on this topic is needed to finalise clear advice and recommendations. Nevertheless, the Carer Council formed some initial advice and recommendations for the Minister.

Some of the themes identified by the Carer Council and through public consultation included the following **problem areas**:

- A lack of cultural awareness, cultural training, and personal knowledge of staff and stakeholders.

- Inconsistency in the knowledge of various staff members, carers, and other stakeholders.
- Inconsistent practice, including inconsistent funding to support return to Country trips for children and young people.
- A history of systemic injustices, including colonialism, stolen generations, denial of cultures, and a contrast between western views and Aboriginal ways.
- Family genograms (including accurate and up-to-date genograms).
- Support for non-Aboriginal carers caring for Aboriginal children.
- Access/contact with kin connections, including siblings.
- Support from and access to Aboriginal workers.
- Return to Country trips, including accessibility and suitability.
- Aboriginal life story books
- Family scoping and scoping of appropriate placements.
- Cultural events and activities
- Culturally appropriate departmental policies and procedures
- Quality of contact with kin connections
- Cultural knowledge and training of workers
- Incorrect or inaccurate identification of Aboriginal heritage
- Positive programs being defunded or changed.
- Views of the child
- Inactivity or low prioritisation of DCP in supporting cultural connections.
- Inadequate or non-existent financial support to support cultural connections.
- Voices of carers being absent in decision-making.

The Carer Council acknowledges that it received feedback from the carer community on cultural connections for children and young people of other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. However, this was not the focus of this meeting.

On the other hand, some areas identified as **positives** were:

- Cultural camps
- Flexible access/contact visits
- Cultural events and activities
- Continuity of care (e.g. post-18 placements)
- Keeping Aboriginal families together where possible
- Return to Country trips
- Policies and procedures (while carers acknowledged the policies are written well, there were comments that the policies and procedures are not often adhered to in practice).
- Agency support
- Own family connections

It is acknowledged that some areas identified as problems by some carers were acknowledged by other carers as areas going well. The differing views demonstrate the diversity of the carer voice and the complexity of this topic.

Some **areas for opportunity** identified were:

- Building upon cultural camps
- Supporting language, with the understanding that language can play a big role in shaping cultural identity.
- Narrative therapy and cultural mentoring as a gentle way to reconnect children and young people with their culture.

The Carer Council also discussed and advised on **the process of transferring carers who care for Aboriginal children and young people from mainstream foster agencies to foster agencies that are Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)**. The Carer Council understands that this is a key issue impacting carers currently in the cultural space, particularly carers with Life Without Barriers, an agency who has committed to carrying out this process. The Carer Council focussed on this issue, understanding that it is a current sector trend Australia-wide that is likely to expand and continue.

Key themes of discussion included:

- Benefits of using ACCOs as carer support agencies
- Choice for Aboriginal people
- Upholding the *Statement of Commitment*, particularly the inform and consult pillars.
- Ensuring clear expectations
- Exploring nuances of individual families
- Education and rationale for carers
- Carer registrations with agencies
- Impacts on retention and attraction of carers.

Meeting outcomes

As a result of this meeting, the Carer Council has:

- Completed a submission on the QCRM.
- Finalised discussions on mapping the journey of a family-based carer.
- Conducted a *Signals of Change* exercise to reflect on the last 18 months.
- Formed eleven recommendations on care concerns and three recommendations on cultural connections.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Carer Council is scheduled for **10 November 2025**.

Contact

Lauren Deer

Carer Council Project Lead

T: 1800 732 272 (freecall)

E: carercouncil@cfc-sa.org.au