



Email Newsletter – February 2009

Dear all,

Welcome to the February edition of our electronic newsletter, and a special welcome to all our new members! In this newsletter, you will find details about;

- Debutante Ball for young people in care
- [Education Maintenance Allowance](#)
- *Be.Heard* Project
- The [Australian Foster Care Conference](#)
- The [Leaving Care Program](#)
- [Education Tax Refund](#)
- [Kindergarten Subsidy](#)
- A range of helpful [Resources](#)

DEBUTANTE BALL

Calling young males, 16-21 years

The Office of the Child Safety Commissioner and organisations that support young people in care are organising a Debutante Ball on 21 May 2009 at the Melbourne Town Hall.

The organising committee is looking for young males, aged 16-21 years who would like to participate in this Ball. All participants are required to attend 11 dance lessons on Wednesday evenings from 7.00 to 8.30 pm, commencing on 11th March 2009.

If you know of a young male who would be interested could you please contact Cathy Carnovale from the CREATE Foundation as soon as possible.

Phone: 9918-0002
Toll free: 1800-655-105
Email: cathy.carnovale@create.org.au

EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) helps to cover the costs related to your child's schooling. The EMA provides families on a low income with financial assistance to support their child's education up to the age of sixteen.

The allowance is paid in two instalments throughout the year; the first instalment from March onwards and the second instalment from August onwards. Half of the payment is paid to the school and half to the parent or guardian. You need to submit your EMA application to your child's school by 27 February 2009, in time for the first instalment. Application forms are available from schools.

In 2009, you have the option to have your EMA instalments paid by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) directly into your bank account. You can select this option when filling in your application form. After feedback from parents and schools, the new EFT option has been introduced to offer you a faster and more convenient option for receiving your EMA payment. Choosing the EFT option means that you will receive your payment 2–3 weeks sooner than with the traditional cheque based system.

To be eligible for the EMA:

- Your child must be under the age of sixteen; and
- Your child must be enrolled at a primary or secondary Government or registered school in Victoria on 27 February 2009 for the first instalment and 7 August 2009 for the second instalment; and
- You must, on 28 January 2009 for the first instalment, and 13 July 2009, for the second instalment:
 - Be a parent or legal guardian of the student; and
 - Be an eligible beneficiary within the meaning of the State Concessions Act 2004, that is, a holder of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or be an eligible Health care card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) holder; or
 - Be a foster parent

**** Please note that Kinship & Permanent Carers should tick the Foster Care Box ****

Submit your application to the school by the due date:

- 27 February 2009 for the first instalment
- 7 August 2009 for the second instalment.

Please note you only need to make a second application in August if your child changes schools between March and August. The Pension Concession Card (PCC) or Health Care Card (HCC) is subject to electronic confirmation with Centrelink to verify that the cardholder is receiving a benefit.

For further information please visit:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/lifeatschool/ema/default.htm>

Be.Heard

We've been visiting and talking to children from all corners of the Southern Metropolitan Region to hear about their experiences in care.

Have your children and young people had their say?

*** \$25 gift voucher for all participants ***

You are invited to participate in this exciting new 'voice of children' project being delivered by the CREATE Foundation, in partnership with the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner. The *Be.Heard* project is an independent survey to hear what children and young people have to say about their lived experiences of care and to feed this information back to the Department and Agencies responsible for their wellbeing.

Be.Heard invites children aged five to 18 years who are living in foster care, residential care, kinship care or permanent care to participate in a confidential face-to-face survey. Up to 80 children in both the Southern Metropolitan and Hume regions will be interviewed. The survey will provide an insight into children's inclusion in decision-making and their perceptions about their rights in key areas like:

Health Participation
Best interests planning
Cultural planning
Family Contact

Complaint processes
Placement and support
Transition from care
Education Family decision making

Children are the experts in out-of-home care, which is why it's so important for us to ask them how it's going and what we can do to make it better. One of the things CREATE has learnt is that many children and young people really care about what's happening for other kids in care. This project gives children and young people the chance to make sure it keeps getting better for other kids in the future.

We encourage you to support this unique opportunity to hear what our children and young people are saying. They are enjoying this opportunity, not to mention the show bag and the voucher!

Be.Heard

AUSTRALIAN FOSTER CARE CONFERENCE

“you ^{raise} ^ me up”

27 – 29 March 2009
Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle WA

This national conference aims to attract upwards of 200 participants including foster carers, practitioners, policy makers, academics and others. Such a significant professional development and stakeholder participation event will challenge, inform and influence delegates through a focus on cutting edge, innovative ideas, fresh perspectives and wisdom learned from experience.

Its purpose is to contribute significantly to our understanding of foster care in Australia, hearing about foster carers’ experiences and stories, providing opportunities for networking and sharing of information and ideas between workers and carers, researchers and policy makers and any other combination of delegates rubbing shoulders at the Conference.

Bringing all parties involved in foster care together in the one place at the Conference allows time to consider the factors which impact on the wellbeing of children in care as stakeholders in policy, programs and service delivery. It will highlight the issues and challenges facing these vulnerable children and young people in care and their families today and explore preventative and strengths-based strategies for improving future, positive outcomes for them on a local and national level.

We may even find answers to the question:

How *do* we raise them up to be the best that they can be?

For more information, visit <http://fostercareconference.com/information/WA>

THE LEAVING CARE PROGRAM - VICTORIA

All young people who have been in state care between 16 and 21 years & who are, or were, on a Custody or Guardianship Order on their 16th birthday (or after), have been in out of home care, or kinship care and require assistance in their transition to independence will soon have services to help them.

It is important to note that young people currently transitioning from state care and those young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 years who require supports subsequent to leaving care are eligible for post care support. New, or expanded, services in all 8 DHS regions will include:

[Leaving Care Mentoring \(LCM\) program](#) that will provide young people leaving care with the opportunities to interact with adults in community settings and promote personal relationships beyond out of home care.

[Post Care Support, Referral & Information Services](#) in each DHS region to support young people between 16 and 21 years who require support in transitioning to independence or subsequently to leaving state care.

[Leaving Care Brokerage Funding](#) which will provide a flexible support fund for care leavers, both for those transitioning from state care and those young people up to 21 years who need support subsequent to their leaving state care.

Young people transitioning from state care will be involved in developing, as part of their Best Interest Planning clearly articulated transition plans at least 12 months prior to leaving care. Transition plans will help everyone working with the young person to identify their transition and post care needs, actions to assist them in meeting these needs in their transition to independence, and roles and responsibilities within the young person's care team.

Loddon Mallee, Barwon South West, Southern and Gippsland have so far successfully applied for Leaving Care funding. The remaining 4 regions are currently developing their implementation proposals. Leaving Care services covering are anticipated to be established in all regions by June 2009.

A central Advisory Group, with representatives from each region's Regional Leaving Care Alliance has been established to oversight the progress of the rollout, identify learnings, issues and solutions arising. Representatives from Community Housing, Mental Health, Alcohol and Drugs Branches, the FCAV and the Centre for Excellence in Child & Family Welfare and VACCA are also on the central Advisory Group.

For further information please contact: Maria Trombin, Senior Policy and Project Officer on 9096 3012 or maria.trombin@dhs.vic.gov.au

EDUCATION TAX REFUND

The ETR was introduced on 1st July 2008.

You are eligible if:-

- You get Family Tax Benefit A for a child in primary or secondary school; or
- A payment was made for the child that prevented you from receiving Family Tax Benefit A for that child, such as Youth Allowance; or
- Your child stopped full time school during the year and received sufficient income to prevent you for receiving Family Tax Benefit A; or
- You are an independent student

Eligible applicants may be able to claim 50% of education costs for children in their next tax return; up to \$375 for each primary school student, and up to \$750 for each secondary school student. If you don't lodge a tax return, you can still claim the ETR using a separate form. Remember to keep your receipts. They will help you calculate your refund and you may be required to show them as proof of purchase. You can claim for items purchased from 1 July 2008.

To find out more visit www.australia.gov.au/educationtaxrefund or call 132 861

FREE OR LOW COST KINDERGARTEN SUBSIDY

You are eligible for kindergarten fee subsidy if you have one of the following cards:

- Health Care Card
- Pensioner Concession Card
- Dept of Veteran's Affairs Gold Card
- Asylum Seeker bridging visas A-F
- Temporary Protection/Humanitarian visas 447, 451, 785, and 786
- Refugee and Special Humanitarian visas 200-217

For more information, contact your local kindergarten or the Office for Children and Early Childhood Development on 1300 731 947

RESOURCES

NEW:

- Hindle & Shulman (2008). *"The Emotional Experience of Adoption: A Psychoanalytic Perspective"*. An interesting new book for adoption libraries, professionals and others interested in or working with adoptees and adoptive families.

PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED:

- *Australian Institute of Family Studies* – This site provides a link to the papers presented during the recent conference (9 - 11 July 2008)
<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/afrc10/index.html>
- *International Network Foster Care* – This site provides the latest research on issues relating to foster care from around the globe <http://www.foster-care-research.org/>
- *ICASN Newsboard* - This resource is updated on an ongoing basis so check it regularly to keep abreast of Inter-Country Adoption news and information
<http://www.icasn.org/newsboard.html>
- *ICASN Perspective Paper - Search & Reunion with Natural family*
<http://www.icasn.org/perspectives/ICASN%20Perspectives%20-%20Search%20and%20Reunion.pdf>
- *Australian Government Inter-country Adoption Strategic Plan 2007*
For more information go to <http://www.ag.gov.au> and follow the links to Families >> Children >> Inter-country Adoption >> What's New
- *Transitioning from the state care system: the impacts of in-care experiences on the post-care outcomes for young people leaving care.*
http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/ASPC2007/papers/Mendes_9.pdf
- *Educational outcomes of children on guardianship or custody orders.*
http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/ASPC2007/papers/Hunter_148.pdf
- PPSS Referral List – we provide a list of counsellors who have been recommended to us by at least one person or family (although we don't formally recommend any counsellor as an organisation). Contact us if you would like a copy of this.
- Child Parenting Skills - educational support services to prospective parents forming their families through adoption, fostering, permanent care, surrogacy and biological birth children. <http://www.childparentingskills.com.au/>
- Medicare subsidised counselling from psychologists – if you would like to find out more about this, the link on the Australian Psychological Society website

(www.psychology.org.au) is: http://www.psychology.org.au/medicare/fact_sheet/

- Ruth Kelly from Ireland has been involved in a study on Inter-country Adoption undertaken by the Children's Research Centre (Trinity College) and the Adoption Board in Ireland. The research, which interviewed 180 families and nearly 100 children, is now complete and available as a PDF file from: www.tcd.ie/childrensresearchcentre and www.adoptionboard.ie
- Costs of raising children in Australia - based on research commissioned by the Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support and published through the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, this occasional paper (# 18) presents a collection of three reports on the costs of children in Australian families namely:
 - The estimated costs of children in Australian families in 2005–06
 - Updated costs of children using Australian budget standards
 - Costs of children and equivalence scales: a review of methodological issues and Australian estimates

A copy of the paper is available at:

<http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/research/ops-ops18.htm>

- British Association for Adoption and Foster Care (www.baaf.org.uk) - books on adoption and foster care. BAAF books can also be obtained in Australia from St Luke's Innovative Resources in Bendigo (www.stlukes.org.au).
- Permanent Care and Adoption - Teachers and Parents in Partnership - an information sheet for families to give to their children's teachers <http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/adoption-permanent-care/library/publications/teachers-parents>
- Permanent Care and Adoption of older Children - Information for Relatives and Friends - an information sheet for families to give to relatives and friends <http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/adoption-permanent-care/library/publications/older-children>
- Foster Care Association of Victoria website and newsletters (lots of interesting information) <http://www.fcav.org/newsletter.htm>
- Paediatric Policy – *Health Care for Children in 'Out-of-Home' Placements* www.racp.edu.au/hpu/paed/outofHome.pdf

INTERSTATE ORGANISATIONS OFFERING SUPPORT TO PARENTS & CARERS

- Post Adoption Resource Centre, Sydney, NSW. www.bensoc.org.au/parc/index.cfm. Information and counselling for anyone affected by adoption. Email: parc@bensoc.org.au
- Post Adoption Support Services, Relationships Australia, South Australia. www.relationships.com.au/what-we-do/services/post-adoption-support-service
Tel: 08 8245 8100. Nikki Hartmann, Coordinator. Email: n.hartmann@rasa.org.au
- Adoption Research and Counselling Service WA. www.adoptionwa.org.au
Counselling, support and outreach service for anyone separated from birth family, adoption, foster care, step family etc. Email: arcs@adoptionwa.org.au

WEBSITES/EMAIL LISTS

- Educational support services to prospective parents forming their families through adoption. www.childparentingskills.com.au
- Australian information on attachment – www.attachmentresources.com.au
- Information and news on a wide range of inter-country adoption issues - contact Lynelle Beveridge on: lynelleb@au1.ibm.com
- Advice, search and support services for the adoption triangle, care leavers and donor conception - VANISH - www.vanish.org.au
- Inter-country Adoption Service (new website addresses) - www.dhs.vic.gov.au/icas and office-for-children.vic.gov.au/placement-support/intercountry-adoption