



Hon Katrine Hildyard
Shadow Minister and Spokesperson for Child Protection
Member for Reynell
114 Beach Road
CHRISTIES BEACH SA 5165

Dear *Katrine*,

RE: Child and Family Focus SA (CAFFSA) policy positions, South Australian State Election 2022

In the lead up to the 2022 South Australian State Election, Child and Family Focus SA would like to bring several key policy positions to your attention and ask that you consider adopting and implementing these as a part of your election commitments.

After consultation with the CAFFSA Board of Directors as well as CAFFSA members represented on our Policy and Advocacy sub-committee, I attach to this letter our policy positions and election commitment requests for your consideration.

I would be pleased to discuss our commitment requests with you at a meeting scheduled at a time most convenient to you.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R Martin", is positioned below the text "Yours faithfully".

30th September 2021

Dr Robert Martin
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Child and Family Focus SA
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**Child and Family Focus SA (CAFFSA) policy positions and election
commitment requests**

South Australian State Election 2022

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional lands of the Kurna people and acknowledge the Kurna people as the custodians of the Adelaide region and the Greater Adelaide Plains. We pay our respects to Kurna Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of land beyond Adelaide and the Adelaide Plains, and pay our respects to all Aboriginal Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the cultural authority of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and are grateful for the cultural expertise that they represent.

Summary

Child and Family Focus SA (CAFFSA) is the South Australian peak body representing the needs and interests of children, young people and families connected with or at risk of entering the child protection system, and the not-for-profit, non-government organisations who support them.

Child and Family Focus SA (CAFFSA) is also the principal industry association supporting those not-for-profit organisations who provide various forms of prevention and early intervention, family support, out of home care [including foster care and residential care], and other child protection and child safety services. We represent small, medium and large community service organisations across South Australia in metropolitan and country locations, and act in the interests of children, young people and their families.

CAFFSA fulfills a leadership role in the child, youth and family support sector, representing over 50 South Australian organisations and community groups working across the continuum of child, youth and family support services.

Our vision is of an inclusive community where all children, young people and families are secure, safe and supported.

The purpose of CAFFSA is to represent the needs and interests of children, young people and families connected with or at risk of entering the child protection system, and the not-for-profit, non-government organisations who support them.

After consultation with the CAFFSA Board of Directors as well as CAFFSA members represented on the Policy and Advocacy sub-committee, this document outlines CAFFSA's policy positions and election commitment requests for consideration by current Ministers, Shadow Ministers and other relevant individuals running for parliament in the 2022 South Australian State Election.

Background – CAFFSA’s Policy and Advocacy Platform

Child and Family Focus SA (CAFFSA) is the South Australian peak body representing the needs and interests of children, young people and families connected with or at risk of entering the child protection system, and the not-for-profit, non-government organisations who support them.

Our vision is of an inclusive community where all children, young people and families are secure, safe and supported.

The purpose of CAFFSA is to represent the needs and interests of children, young people and families connected with or at risk of entering the child protection system, and the not-for-profit, non-government organisations who support them.

When driving or influencing legislative or policy change, Child and Family Focus SA (CAFFSA) has the potential to act as a catalyst and source of expertise, influencing social policy and child protection policy changes that are driven politically, by the media, community interest, a significant adverse event and/or other aligned peak bodies bringing attention to issues impacting on children and families connected to or at risk of entering the child protection system.

Taking a macro-level view provides an opportunity for CAFFSA to be more attuned to agenda setting opportunities, to drive policy positions and practice recommendations, as well as broaden responses as they relate to public and social issues in the child and family well-being sector.

CAFFSA is a well-known South Australian peak body amongst its membership base. In guiding the policy and advocacy work of the organisation, CAFFSA refers to its Policy and Advocacy Platform to identify those issues that we have the expertise and experience to speak to and to influence.

The five areas of CAFFSA’s policy and advocacy focus are:

- Children and Young People
- Families
- Community
- Services/Sector
- Government and System

CAFFSA policy positions and election commitment requests

CAFFSA has consulted with its Board of Directors, its members and the delegates of the Policy and Advocacy sub-committee in order to arrive at the following policy positions and election commitment requests:

1. The implementation of a Reportable Conduct Scheme in South Australia;
2. Raising the age of criminal responsibility for children and young people;
3. Support for young people exiting statutory care arrangements;
4. Addressing the skills shortage and workforce development gaps for child protection and child safety staff in South Australia;
5. Support for Aboriginal self-determination and family advocacy via the Family Matters Campaign in South Australia; and
6. Appropriate funding and support for the South Australian Child and Young Person’s Visitor’s Scheme

1. A Reportable Conduct Scheme in South Australia

CAFFSA supports and recommends the adoption and implementation of a Reportable Conduct Scheme in South Australia.

Such a scheme should provide independent oversight of the handling of child abuse and neglect allegations against sector employees and volunteers. It should oversee how organisations and institutions prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse and misconduct by employees and volunteers.

Such a scheme would assist in:

- Safeguarding children and young people;
- Work with institutions and organisations to improve systems in preventing and responding to reportable conduct;
- Provide training and advice; and
- Assessing responses to reportable conduct to ensure processes are fair, transparent and conducted in a timely manner.

2. Raising the age of criminal responsibility for children and young people

A range of behaviours in 10 to 13-year-old aged children that currently come into contact with the juvenile justice system are better understood as behaviours within the expected range in the typical neurodevelopment of 10 to 13-year-old aged children who have experienced significant trauma.

General behaviours include poor impulse control, and a poorly developed capacity to plan and foresee consequences.

Judging criminal responsibility on the basis of a chronological age is inappropriate for children who may have a much lower developmental age due to a number of medical and developmental conditions described, and particularly for children and young people who have experienced complex trauma.

CAFFSA supports and recommends that the age of criminal responsibility for young people in South Australia being raised to 14 years.

3. Support for young people exiting statutory care arrangements

CAFFSA believes that all young people in care should have the choice to stay in care until the age of 21. The Government's current provision for young people in family-based care to stay in care until 21 should be extended to all young people in care, particularly those who live in residential and emergency care. This group often experiences the most complex needs, and poorest life outcomes, which are compounded by the pressures of leaving care at the age of 18 – many into homelessness.

CAFFSA has observed that the Act's current provision that "The Minister must cause such assistance as the Minister thinks appropriate to be offered to each eligible care leaver for the purposes of

making their transition from care as easy as is reasonably practicable”, including “the provision of information about Government and other resources” is quite opaque and potentially equates to nothing more than the provision of a service directory for young people. CAFFSA does note the introduction of extended support for foster and family-based carers for young people until the age of 21 which we welcome.

CAFFSA asks that the Government of South Australia commit to formally extending the care leaving age to 21 and co-designing with young people a flexible, person-centred service approach that can be accessed by all young people with a care experience. CAFFSA also asks that the Government of South Australia commit to no young person exiting the care system in to homelessness.

**A CAFFSA position paper on transition from care has been attached as an addendum to this letter.*

4. Addressing the skills shortage and workforce development gaps for child protection and child safety staff in South Australia

Across South Australia, CAFFSA notes that there is a critical shortage of a qualified, skilled and available workforce to respond to the need of the increasing number of children and young people coming into statutory care.

CAFFSA requests that:

- Government subsidises the cost of training for the Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention for front-line child protection staff in the non-government sector in SA;
- The government bring South Australian training requirements for front-line child protection staff in line with National standards and trends;
- Recognition of equivalent qualifications, including that a first year of a recognised university degree should be deemed the equivalent to a Certificate IV; and
- Dedicated funding to bridge the gap of required knowledge and skills essential to working with children and families who are coming into contact with the child protection system (*see DCP practice framework*) and what students are currently trained in through tertiary education institutions.

5. Support for Aboriginal self-determination and family advocacy via the Family Matters Campaign in South Australia

Self-determination is critical for ensuring that change occurs, and that Aboriginal voices are heard by governments at every level of society.

CAFFSA seeks ongoing funding commitments for programs and services that enhance the capacity of all South Australian First Nations to design, implement and monitor strengths based, community driven prevention, early intervention and community capacity building initiatives, demonstrating the South Australian Government’s genuine commitment to the “inherent capability” of local level Aboriginal led solutions for reducing the proportion of Aboriginal children in the child protection system (*as well as continued support for Family Matters in South Australia*).

CAFFSA seeks formal support for the continued implementation of the Family Matters Campaign in South Australia by:

- \$150,000 contribution per annum for the Family Matters campaign and a commitment to continue to develop and support targets for generational funding for Family Matters in the medium term; and
- Commitment to further embed and enact the principles (and corresponding actions) of the Family Matters campaign into the internal policies of state government departments and agencies.

6. Appropriate funding and support for the South Australian Child and Young Person's Visitor Scheme

CAFFSA supports the position of the Guardian for Children and Young People in South Australia that appropriate funding and resources must be made available to the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People in order for the Guardian to properly carry out the legislated function of Child and Young Person's Visitor.

The function of the Guardian in fulfilling the role of Child and Young Person's Visitor, as well as being embedded in legislation, is absolutely vital in ensuring the wellbeing of South Australia's most vulnerable children and young people living in emergency and residential care. No other oversight or advocacy function can possibly provide the level of scrutiny into the wellbeing of these children or intervene more promptly where basic physical, psychological, and emotional needs are not being appropriately attended to.

CAFFSA requests that the government revisit the detailed business case submitted by the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People which outlined a scheme to visit a reasonable proportion of the 200 residential care properties in South Australia which house over 600 children and young people.