



Hon Katrine Hildyard
Shadow Minister and Spokesperson for Child Protection
Member for Reynell
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Dear *Katrine*,

I refer to your letter dated 16 March 2022, relating to Labor's Child Protection Policy Platform.

I appreciate the consideration that you gave to these positions, along with the election platform in relation to children, young people and their families and carers, outlined in your letter. CAFFSA also applauds South Australian Labor's proposed focus of putting the welfare of children at the centre of your decision making and actions.

I note with interest that two of your commitments align very closely with CAFFSA's Policy Positions. The first of these is *ensuring the Guardian for Children and Young People is funded to be the Community Visitor for children in residential care.*

As you would be aware, in 2016, Royal Commissioner Margaret Nyland recommended that the government legislate for a community visiting scheme for children and young people living in residential care. Although the Commissioner's recommendation arose from the investigations of the Royal Commission, it followed years of advocacy by the Guardian and others for the establishment of a funded, independent visiting scheme. Like any scheme with such important reach, it requires adequate resourcing to provide the independent contact and support to our state's most vulnerable children and young people.

CAFFSA notes that the scheme was originally introduced with significant funding as a trial for two years, demonstrating that the Government recognised the substantial resources required to administer such a scheme. The Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People commissioned a review of their work last year and established a Business Case for the minimum funding needed to 'deliver all legislated roles of the Guardian for Children and Young People'. It included a budget of \$1.637 million for a Residential Care Visiting Scheme for 400 children (the number who were living in residential care properties at that time).

A Budget for a Child and Person's Visitor Scheme – \$1.637m

- Staffing – 1 Manager, 12 Visiting Advocates
- Goods & Services – for Recruitment, Training & Development, Travel, ICT, Consumables, Business Support

- Tasks – Pre-Visit Scheduling & Preparation, Review of Records, Visit, Post-Visit Reporting, Post-Visit Advocacy & Follow-Up, Data Collation and Analysis, Systems Advocacy, Quarterly and Annual Reporting.¹ CAFFSA believes public release of the funding required for the scheme and the accompanying rationale provides an even more compelling case for endorsing this recommendation.

As the Guardian states: Children and young people living in residential care are some of the most vulnerable kids in South Australia’s out-of-home-care system. Compared with other children living in family-based care, they face a higher risk of physical and/or sexual abuse and emotional and psychological harm, related to their living circumstances. How can it be that there is still no dedicated funding for regular, systematic visits to the 600+ children who are living in residential care in South Australia?

CAFFSA remains firmly of the view that funding for this, along with a Reportable Conduct Scheme are vital for protecting the safety, welfare and wellbeing of some of this state’s most vulnerable children and young people and applauds the Malinauskas Labor Party for committing to the former. The second election commitment that aligns with CAFFSA’s Policy Positions is to *invest in the Create Foundation to work with children and young people in care to identify and develop future housing, work and study pathways.*

CAFFSA believes that this commitment can only be truly implemented if all young people in care have the choice to stay in care until the age of 21. The current Government’s 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 that a Malinauskas Labor government 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 for the commitment that no young person exits the care system into homelessness.

I have attached a more detailed CAFFSA position paper on transition from care as an addendum to this letter for further deliberations and discussion.

Once again, I applaud the election commitments outlined in your correspondence that seek to ensure that any child’s starting point does not limit their future. The Chair of the CAFFSA Board and

¹ It’s time! The compelling case for a Visiting Scheme for residential care – OOGCYP (SA)
<https://gcyp.sa.gov.au/2022/02/17/its-time-the-compelling-case-for-a-visiting-scheme-for-residential-care>

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you, should you wish further detail.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Martin', with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

18th March 2022

Dr Robert Martin
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