

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Launch of the Parliamentary Friends of Foster Carers and Children in Foster Care

Families Australia, and the National Foster Care Sustainability Group, will join Federal Members of Parliament and Senators from across the political divide to launch the Parliamentary Friends of Foster Carers and Children in Foster Care in Canberra today.

The Parliamentary Friendship group co-convenors include Susan Templeman MP, Jenny Ware MP and Kate Chaney MP and will highlight the challenges faced by 45,000 children and young people in out-of-home care across Australia.

Chief Executive Officer of Families Australia Jamie Crosby welcomed the formation of the Parliamentary Friendship Group and thanked the founding members for their support for this important issue.

“Across Australia, the number of children entering care has remained steady, while at the same time, there has been a **steep decline** in the number of new and active foster carers,” Mr Crosby said.

“Caring for Australia's children is a shared responsibility. We must act now to improve access to healthcare, reduce the financial strain on foster carers, and ensure equitable workplace entitlements.”

“I welcome the formation of the Parliamentary Friends of Foster Carers and Children in Foster Care and thank the Members of Parliament who are working hard to shine a light on this critical issue.”

Families Australia and the National Foster Care Sustainability Group are advocating for three critical reforms:

- 1. Prioritised access to Medical and Therapeutic Support**

The introduction of a card system—similar to the Veterans' Health Card—that would ensure all children in care have better access and financial supports to essential medical, therapeutic, and developmental services.

- 2. Reducing Financial Pressure on Foster Carers**

Raise the ATO tax-free threshold for foster carers which would ease financial pressures and enable higher carer allowances without tax burdens.

- 3. More equitable Leave for Foster Carers**

Adjust the National Employment Standards to help foster carers in paid employment to start or continue fostering. Foster carers fulfil a parenting-type role but are not currently afforded the same supports. Extending these benefits to foster carers ensures an equitable home experience for children.

Economic assessments from Lumenia estimates **\$1.2 billion** in long-term financial benefits from these reforms, including improved health outcomes, increased placement stability, and greater economic participation. The proposed changes would also generate significant savings for governments through reduced future service provision costs.

“Without implementing these necessary federal changes, the number of foster carers across the country will continue to decline, leaving more vulnerable children without a home-based environment to care for them,” said Mr Crosby.

“These reforms are a smart investment in the future of Australia’s children. It’s time to give foster carers and children in foster care the fair go they deserve.”

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

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## **BACKGROUND**

Families Australia will join Federal MPs and Senators who will meet with foster carers and young people with an experience of foster care in the Enid Lyons Alcove, Parliament House for the official launch of Parliamentary Friends of Foster Carers and Children in Foster Care.

**Co-convenors:** Susan Templeman MP, Jenny Ware MP, Kate Chaney MP  
**Date:** **Monday 18 November 2024**  
**Time:** 11am-12pm  
Group photos: 11.30am  
**Location:** Enid Lyons Alcove, Parliament House

A group photo will be taken at 11.30am at the conclusion of speakers.

### *Background:*

In addition to the co-convenors, the following Members of Parliament form the Parliamentary Friendship Group:

- Shadow Minister, Pat Conaghan MP, Member for Cowper
- Peter Khalil MP, Member for Wills
- Senator Helen Polley, Senator for Tasmania
- Dr Anne Webster MP, Member for Mallee
- Dr Michael Freeland MP, Member for Macarthur
- Senator Jana Stewart, Senator for Victoria
- Senator Tony Sheldon, Senator for NSW
- Sally Sitou MP, Member for Reid
- Dr Gordon Reid MP, Member for Robertson

**Families Australia** and the **National Foster Care Sustainability Group** support the establishment

of the Parliamentary Friends of Foster Carers and Children in Foster Care. **Families Australia** has helped establish the **National Foster Care Sustainability Group** to advocate for small changes to the foster care system.

The Group is focusing on three main policy changes:

1. Prioritised access to medical and therapeutic support
2. Reduced financial pressures on carers
3. Equitable leave entitlements for carers

The National Foster Care Sustainability Group is composed of the following organisations:

- Anglicare Victoria
- Australian Foster Care Association
- The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
- Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA
- Families Australia
- First Nations NGO Alliance representation
- Key Assets Australia
- Life Without Barriers
- MacKillop Family Services
- OzChild
- PeakCare
- And **three foster carers** – a Families Australia board member, a chief executive from the corporate sector, and an experienced advocate from Commonwealth public sector unions.