



NATIONAL REPORT – AFCA PRIORITIES 2004

State and Territory Associations provided responses from their committees on the progress being made on the 2004 AFCA Priorities. Responses were graded either 'Satisfactory' or 'Unsatisfactory' and the table below provides the collation of these responses by Priority and then by State/Territory.

The table clearly shows that there are two major areas of concern – in relation to retention of foster carers and in allegations of abuse against foster carers.

These have been on-going concerns and the responses emphatically reinforce that positive progress is not being achieved. The future safety of children is at risk if sufficient placements are not available in foster care.

The response from Governments have not seen significant improvement in these areas despite Governments acknowledging the need for action and making positive comments about foster carers for many years. There seems to be an attitude that new foster carers can always be found and so support and respect for current ones is not a priority.

These two Priorities need to be the focus of AFCA action in all States/Territories and Nationally if children are to have placements available for them when needed. This applies to approved foster carers, relative and kinship carers because all suffer under the current conditions.

The other concern from the table is the wide variation across the States/Territories. Two States/Territories (D and E) have major concerns across all priorities and this must be negatively impacting on child protection in those, while two other States/Territories (B and G) are optimistic that the priorities are at least appearing to be addressed positively.

AFCA needs to focus on how States/Territories that are seen as very negative can be encouraged to work to change their approach for the well-being of children and foster/relative carers.

AFCA PRIORITIES 2004

The States/Territories have been randomly assigned letters A to H so they are not identified but response patterns can be seen individually and collectively.

Priorities with Directors-General	Satisfactory		Unsatisfactory	
	1. Implementation of the National Foster Care Plan, which includes the establishment of National Standards for foster care.	ABCG	4	DF
2. The retention of foster carers through respect for them and their work and the provision of appropriate support to meet the needs of the children they care for as well as the related needs of the foster family.	B	1	ACDEF G	6
3. Processes developed and implemented to respond to allegations against foster carers, which ensure the safety and well-being of the child while respecting the foster family; and providing a system that is fair, just, timely and accountable.	G	1	ABCDE F	6

Priorities with State/Territory Governments	Satisfactory		Unsatisfactory	
	1. State/Territory Governments have the statutory responsibility for the care of children under child protection orders and as the corporate parent/guardian they have a duty to provide the funds to ensure that all the needs of children are met. Adequate weekly basic fostering allowances, other allowances, medical and therapeutic costs, together with appropriate respite for foster carers are essential to meet the statutory responsibility and Governments should not expect costs to be supplemented by the foster family.	BFG	3	ACDE
2. Use of the reports entitled <i>The Costs of Caring: A Study of Appropriate Foster Care Payments for Stable and Adequate Out of Home Care in Australia</i> and <i>Supporting Strong Parenting in the Foster Care Sector</i> should guide responses to support and related foster care issues.	ABFG	4	CDE	3
3. Relative/kinship care is an appropriate care option for children under child protection orders but these carers should receive the same financial and other support as foster carers with a recognition that relative/kinship care can have complex and demanding intra-family issues as well.	ABG	3	CDEF	4

Priorities with Commonwealth Government	Satisfactory		Unsatisfactory	
	1. Payment of full Family Tax Benefit or Youth Allowance, and full Child Care Benefit for all children in foster care.	ABG	3	CDEF
2. Responsible and adequate preparation for the transition of young people leaving care must include support for them to acquire the skills for independent living (including continuing to live with their foster family if that is the case) with an emphasis on entry into employment or further study and support to achieve this continuing beyond 18 years of age.	BCFG	4	ADE	3
3. Continued Australian Government leadership in the implementation of the National Foster Care Plan and the development of appropriate responses to the other recommendations contained in the AFCA report entitled <i>Supporting Strong Parenting in the Foster Care Sector</i> .	ABCG	4	DEF	3

TOTALS	27	35
State/Territory Summary totals		
A.	5	4
B.	8	1
C.	3	6
D.	0	9
E.	0	8
F.	3	6
G.	8	1
H.		