

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 30 May 2024

Your submission for this review:

I am a carer of 3 (originally 4) Aboriginal siblings. The oldest child left our care after 6 years. We continue to have his 3 sisters whom we have had for 8.5 years. When we originally started caring we were prepared with vehicle, beds, bedding, car restraints etc for 2 children. We understood this to be our responsibility. when asked to take 4 children long term we had to: buy a Hiace bus (take out a loan for \$40000) as we had 7 children and couldn't fit whole family in our 8 seater; we asked for support with this but were denied; we asked for support with paying interest on the loan which was denied. We also had to buy: larger fridge, freezer, 15kg washing machine; new bunk bed; new bedding; more car seats. None of this was compensated for. I had to stop work after a year (private practice as a speech pathologist earning \$180 per hour) as the high demands of the children (all under 6 at that point with significant trauma related needs) meant that I couldn't manage our household as well as work. I also have lost all the superannuation from that time. Our family holidays cost a fortune. 9 people means at least 2 cabins or motel rooms which is just not affordable. We chose to send our foster children to the private school around the block that our bio children went to - our choice yes, but we weren't having two separate levels of education in the one house - that would be discriminatory. The cost of education then is not just fees, but uniforms, shoes, extra curricular activities - all of these things keep going up, with no change to the carer payment in the 10 years we've been carers. We also had to do renovations on our home as our bio children were not coping (bio son had to share room with foster son who was extremely violent) - no help from agency. We bore all the costs of renovations, as well as costs for up keep of home with regular holes in walls etc. Ongoing maintenance of vehicles is huge - they are used to transport children to contact visits (3-5 hours).