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Your submission for this review:

From: Sue Coutts Sent: Thursday, September 12, 2024 11:28 AM To: IPART Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on Out of Home Care costs and pricing. I've been a Foster Carer for 30 years, having cared for more than 60 children. In the beginning there was no allowance, simply reimbursements which were difficult to keep track of (keeping receipts). Much has changed since then, including the demands on Foster Carers and the fortnightly allowance. I left DCJ and moved over to an NGO 12 years ago, admittedly I was enticed by a higher Carer payment to meet the needs of my children in care with special needs. That Carer payment remained the same for 12 years ( it has never increased) and even fell below DCJ's allowance for a period (teenage years). Foster Carers are the unsung heroes, taking on the role of advocate, counsellor, nurse and educator as well as caring and providing a safe home environment for vulnerable children. How do we support Carers, if we can't begin to understand the sacrifices they make to improve the lives of children? The allowance must cover the cost of living, food, petrol, entertainment, clothing etc. it doesn't. But, Foster Carers are doing so much more....working long hours, sometimes through the night, caring for children, managing behaviours, building support networks, advocating at schools and driving to specialists appointments. Fast forward to the ever growing business of residential care, where inexperienced staff are working to ensure vulnerable children are kept safe, working shifts in well paid jobs. Then compare this to the Foster Care allowance. As a society we should expect nothing but the best in Foster Care, Children and Carers should be a high priority, instead they are given an allowance that doesn't come close to the real cost of raising a child eg: \$636 per fortnight or \$45 a day. If you ask for extra financial support, you basically have to beg. Foster Carers undertake training in their own time and they must learn to manage their own stress, they often have their own family to care for as well as the high demands of caring for not just one, but often siblings groups in care. It takes a special person to fill this role, but what value do we put on these dedicated volunteers, when they are expected to cover costs from their own personal funds, because the Foster Care allowance hasn't kept up with inflation. Suzanne Coutts Public submission Permission to publish name