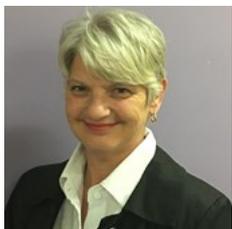




## Welcome to our summer 2016 Newsletter



### Your Chance to Speak Up- Watch the deadlines!

Our AGM was well attended and a great evening was had by all. We welcomed Meredith Carter to the Board and farewelled Cas O'Neil. Minister Mikakos thrilled the audience with her discussion of the funding being made available to permanent care, kinship care and foster care. Specifically \$7.1 m will be allocated to a Permanent Care Helpline and Support Packages for families. An additional \$11.7m will support permanency teams within DHHS. She is currently working out the finer details and will let the community know soon.

The Minister has stated her strong commitment to carers and wishes to remove barriers to Permanent Care Orders by providing greater support to carers. Carers at the AGM asked the Minister questions on seeking a higher rate of carer payment and sibling rights to contact when the contact is negative. The Minister also accepted a letter from a carer.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People, Liana Buchanan talked about the recently commenced inquiry into the implementation of the *Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014*(Vic) (the permanency amendments). There has been a 17% increase in reports to child protection and a significant 77% increase in Permanent Care Orders. There have been no adoptions made since the change in legislation. Some areas of contention include:

- Limitations on the Children's Court
- Timeframes of one to two years on birth families – can the service system meet their needs?
- Inclusion of adoption in the list of choices
- Extent of care plans being done
- Cultural Support Planning

The Commission is examining how the permanency amendments have been operating in their first six months, to determine whether they are achieving their objectives around permanency, and if they have led to any unintended consequences.

**Commissioner Buchanan has invited you to be part of a round table consultation on November 30, 2pm to 4 pm, venue to be advised. Please contact us on 9020 1833 or email [info@pcafamilies.org.au](mailto:info@pcafamilies.org.au) be quick, there will be limited places. You will also be provided with a consultation paper before we meet.**

This is a great opportunity to raise some of your issues, such as:

- Barriers to obtaining your Permanent Care Order
- Contact – safety, siblings, extended family (how are people negotiating the 4 contacts?)
- Breaches of PCO conditions
- Variations in Orders
- Birth family violence and relationships

***I encourage you to speak up! Share some of your success stories as well as your challenges. Submit a written response by 14 November (see page 2) or join us at the round table consultation 30 November. The Commissioner is also interested in hearing from children and young people!***

Have a safe Christmas everyone  
Brenda Carmen — CEO

### Dates for Your Diary

Tuesday November 15  
8.00pm—9.30pm

**Journal Club—Collingwood**  
**With guest speaker Jeff Young**

Wednesday November 16  
10.30am—12.00pm

**Peer support Bendigo**

Thursday November 24  
7.30pm —9.00pm

**Peer support Peninsula—**  
**Brass Razu**

Friday December 2  
10.30am—12.00pm

**Peer support Ballarat**

Wednesday December 7  
7.30pm —9.00pm

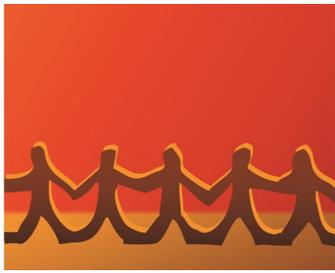
**Parenting Plus! Peer support -**  
**Thornbury**

Wednesday December 7  
8.00pm—9.30pm

**Journal Club—Collingwood**

Information including venues  
and how to RSVP, visit  
[www.pcafamilies.org.au/  
event-calendar-all](http://www.pcafamilies.org.au/event-calendar-all)





## Inquiry into the Implementation of the Children, Youth and Families Amendment Act 2014

### Permanency Amendments Enquiry, consultation paper

The Commission for Children and Young People is now seeking submissions from the community on recent changes to child protection laws. The changes relate to permanency for children and reducing delays for decision making. If you think you have been affected by these changes, the Commission wants

to hear from you. Read the [consultation paper](#) on the Commission's website or call the project team on 9032 3214 9032 3224.

**Submissions need to be sent via email to [submissions@ccyp.vic.gov.au](mailto:submissions@ccyp.vic.gov.au) by **Monday 14 November, 2016****

This is the link to the permanent amendment enquiries <http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/permanency-amendments-inquiry/index.htm>

In addition, the Commission for Children and Young People recently commenced an inquiry into the implementation of the *Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014*(Vic) (the permanency amendments).

The Commission is examining how the permanency amendments have been operating in their first six months, to determine whether they are achieving their objectives, and if they have led to any unintended consequences.

We would like to invite our PCA Families to a round table consultation where the Principal Commissioner, Ms Liana Buchanan will be participating.

It is proposed that the consultation would be held at the Commission on:

**Date:** **Wednesday 30 November 2016**

**Time:** **2-4pm**

**Venue:** **TBC**

The consultation will be guided by questions contained in the Commission's consultation paper, which can be found [here](#).

## Journal Club *\*\*an event not to be missed\*\**



**With special guest:**

**Dr Jeff Young**—Director of The Bouverie Centre: Victoria's Family Institute, La Trobe

**Presenting on:**

**"The experience for parents and carers living with children's trauma"**

This session is for parents and carers raising children with complex, traumatic backgrounds. These parents often experience unacknowledged grief at being unable to "heal" their child's past.

Join PCA Families and Jeff Young who has extensive professional experience in this field and will facilitate a conversation helping families acknowledge this grief and explore how to hold on to hope for their children.

**Date:** **Tuesday 15 November, 2016**

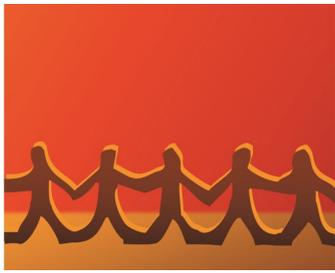
**Time:** **7.30pm prompt start**

**Location:** **Collingwood Library, 11 Stanton St, Abbotsford**

**Parking:** **immediately adjacent the library**

**RSVP:** **essential, limited seating** <https://www.trybooking.com/NCAN>

**Cost:** **gold coin donation**



## \$\$\$ Carer payments \$\$\$

There have been a number of enquiries regarding carer payments and application for adjustment of level after a Permanent Care Order (PCO) is granted. These have included cases where a child's needs and diagnosis have changed significantly since PCO was granted but the process for reassessment confusing, with carers/parents often receiving conflicting advice regarding the process.

In some instances a rise in level has initially been approved by their agency and then rejected by head office. Kinship carers, especially those on informal arrangements, have also been struggling financially, with many caring for children with complex needs, but receiving no financial support.

PCA Families have been liaising with the department and understand that DHHS is in the process of conducting a complete review of carer payment upgrades. Whilst this process is ongoing please be aware of flexible funding packages to help with financial support if receiving level one carer payments. Information regarding flexible funding can be found on our website <http://www.pcafamilies.org.au/flexible-funding> or you can contact Pennelopy on 9020 1833 for discussion.



It is that time when schools are winding down toward the school holidays. It is hard to think about the return to school for your children but now is the time to make an appointment with your school principle to make sure that you are getting all the assistance you need to help with school expenses.

Whether your child is in an Independent, Private or Public school, there are a variety of funds and assistance packages that your school principle can apply for on your behalf. It is important to apply for any assistance before the school year starts. If your principle is not aware of the assistance on offer please contact PCA Families and we will assist you with information. Visit our website to read more about accessing assistance with school expenses [fact sheet](#).



Earlier this year we were thrilled to receive a \$360,000 grant from the William Buckland Foundation to expand our services into regional Victoria over three years. This grant will allow us to build relationships with adoption and permanent care, kinship care and foster care agencies across Shepparton, Morwell and Horsham, and to identify and connect with families seeking support, resources and training.

We have also recently been successful in grants from the RE Ross Trust and Matana Foundation for Young People. These grants, totalling \$32,000, will enable us to offer our youth programs to kids in regional areas – Acting 101 and Tree of Life, as well as exploring the feasibility of a regional intercountry adoption mentoring program.

These grants play a very important role in the future of PCA Families. We greatly appreciated the support of philanthropic trusts and we will keep you posted on our progress.

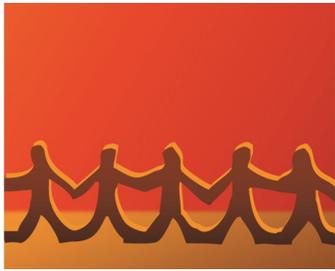


Playgroups offer parents and carers an opportunity to develop networks, and share information while the children have fun. If you are thinking of setting up a playgroup in your area, PCA Families can assist. Please email [Deborah@pcafamilies.org.au](mailto:Deborah@pcafamilies.org.au) or call 9020 1839 to discuss. All playgroups are listed on our website <http://www.pcafamilies.org.au/parents-and-carers/support>

**All suburbs**—Meet every second Friday of the school term from 10.30 am to (approx) 1.00pm.

Meet at various venues; Melbourne Zoo, Collingwood Children's Farm, CERES, Scienceworks. Contact: Samantha Everton, Mob: 0416 001 224, Email: [walford\\_everton@fastmail.fm](mailto:walford_everton@fastmail.fm)

**"All Ways Playgroup"** - Meets first Thursday of the month including school holidays from 10.00am - 12.00noon at Jika Jika Community Centre, Oldis Gardens site, East Street, Northcote. Contact: Tara Gooding, Mob: 0438 827 344, Email: [tarascircus@yahoo.com.au](mailto:tarascircus@yahoo.com.au)



## *Adoption mamas luncheon*

**Date: 13/11/16**

**Time: 12pm**

**Venue: BOHEMIAN BAR & RESTAURANT**

**35 Dukes Walk, South Wharf**

**Cost: \$65 per head**

*Price includes glass of champagne on arrival*

*Finger food*

*Goodie bag*

*R.S.V.P 30.10.16*

*Chrissie 0432 382 240*

*Payment via bank deposit*

*BSB 083028 Account 733574386*



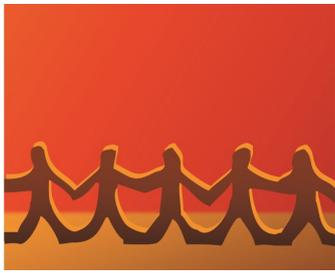
## **Closing down book sale**

*Closing by end 2016*

We have a large range of **children's books** available to sell at **50%** off the RRP.

Feel free to come in to our office at Level 5, 50 Market Street to browse the shelves and buy as many as you like. You can always call 9020 1839 if you are after a specific title.

If you do need the book/s posted then there will be an additional charge based on Australia Post rates, alternatively you can come into the office and pick them up as there is no charge.



The **LOOKOUT** Centres are designed to boost the capacity of schools, child protection and out of home care services to improve educational outcomes for children and young people living in out of home care.



We will do so through

- professional development with staff and carers
- expert advice to schools to support individual students
- challenging enrolment decisions that aren't in a student's best interests
- facilitating opportunities for students to participate fully in school life.

The Centre's team are based across the Department's Footscray, Geelong and Ballarat offices. Including expertise in education, social work, psychology and data analysis, we work as part of a multi-disciplinary service response, building on the expertise and professional practice within schools, the community sector, across the Department and with Department of Health and Human Services.

**LOOKOUT** Centre staff are here to provide advice and support to school staff, child protection workers, community service organisations and carers in all aspects of a student's education. Staff reinforce the fundamental importance of education for children and young people in out of home care - pushing everyone, including the students, to hold high expectations of what our children and young people can achieve through education and to do everything possible to realise those expectations.

For more information, see [Education State - LOOKOUT Education Support Centres](#). Contact **LOOKOUT** Education Support Centre, South Western Victoria Region, [lookout.swv@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:lookout.swv@edumail.vic.gov.au)

## Navigator Pilot Program

The Victorian Government aims to increase the numbers of young people connected to school and engaged in learning with a new initiative. A two-year Navigator service pilot supports young people aged 12-17 years who are not connected to schools at all or at risk of disengaging.

**How does Navigator work?** Navigator is a hands-on, proactive service delivered by community agencies in collaboration with the Department's Area teams and schools. Services are being piloted across eight Department areas, each tailored to its local community.

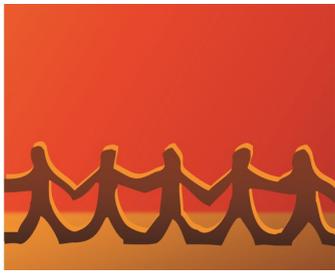
Providers are responsible for improving outcomes for young people, linking them to support services and interventions, and working with schools to support re-engagement planning. Through offering wrap-around supports, student barriers to engagement are addressed and learners are supported to re-engage in education or training.

Through regular contact, providers track and monitor young people, report on outcomes, identify gaps in local services and support planning to address these gaps.

**Eligibility criteria** - Navigator is available to young people who:

- are aged between 12 and 17 years of age
- have attended less than 30% of the previous school term (if enrolled in a school)
- either live in or have most recently been enrolled in an education setting in the 8 Navigator sites

**Locations** - The eight Victorian areas where Navigator is being piloted are Mallee, Central Highlands, Western Melbourne, Hume Moreland, Goulburn, Ovens Murray, Southern Melbourne and Bayside Peninsula. <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/educationstate/Pages/navigator.aspx>



## Charter for Children in Out-of-Home Care

A Charter lists the rights and privileges people have. We all have rights, and as members of the community, we need to respect each other's rights.

This Charter has been especially prepared for children who can't live with their parents and are in out-of-home care. It lists what you can expect from all those people who look after you and work with you when you are in care. All these people need to make sure the things they do for you and the things they allow you to do keep you safe and well. Being safe and well are the most important rights so they have been put first. It means that if there is a clash between you being safe and well and another right your safety and wellbeing always comes first.

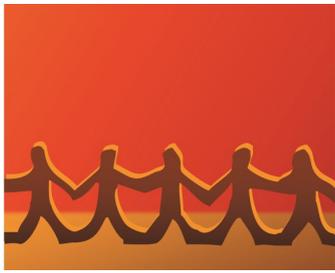
**As a child or young person in care I need:**

- to be safe and feel safe
- to stay healthy and well and go to a doctor, dentist or other professional for help when I need to
- to be allowed to be a child and be treated with respect
- if I am an Aboriginal child, to feel proud and strong in my own culture
- to have a say and be heard
- to be provided with information
- to tell someone if I am unhappy
- to know information about me will only be shared in order to help people look after me
- to have a worker who is there for me
- to keep in contact with my family, friends and people and places that matter to me
- careful thought being given to where I will live so I will have a home that feels like a home
- to have fun and do activities that I enjoy
- to be able to take part in family traditions and be able to learn about and be involved with cultural and religious groups that are important to me
- to be provided with the best possible education and training
- to be able to develop life skills and grow up to become the best person I can
- help in preparing myself to leave care and support after I leave care.



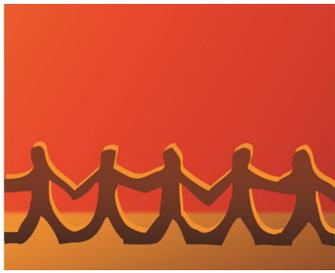
Right	Explanation
To be safe and feel safe	'Safe' means no one can abuse or hurt me. Where I live must be safe and not dangerous. I also need to feel safe, so there shouldn't be people or things around me that scare me.
To stay healthy and well and go to a doctor, dentist or other professional for help when I need to	I need to be given the things that will help my body and mind stay healthy and well, like being able to go to a doctor, dentist or other professional when I need to and having healthy food.
To be allowed to be a child and be treated with respect	This means I need to be treated according to my age and not be expected to act older or understand things that are too hard for me. Being treated with respect means accepting me for who I am, treating me fairly and not discriminating against me for any reason (this includes not treating me badly because I am in care).
If I am an Aboriginal child, to feel proud and strong in my own culture	This means that my carers and workers will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand, respect and value my own my own culture Aboriginal culture</li> <li>• Help me feel good about my own Aboriginal culture</li> <li>• Help me stay connected to my culture in all parts of my life.</li> </ul>
To have a say and be heard	This means having a say and being listened to about all things that affect me, like where I will live and where I will go to school. If I need help to have a say, someone will represent me wherever decisions are being made about me, like in court or in a meeting.
To be provided with information	Information is very important because without it I won't know who I am and won't be able to have a proper say about things that affect me. Examples of information I need are my life story, my history and my family's history, the choices I have and where I can go if I have a problem.
To tell someone if I am unhappy	If my rights aren't met, or if I am unhappy about something that has happened to me in care, I can make a complaint to someone who will sort it out.
To know information about me will only be shared in order to help people look after me	Information about me can't be given to just anyone—it can only be given to people who need to have that information - so they look after me and care for me.
To have a worker who is there for me	This means having a worker whose job it is to make sure I get the things I need, plan things for me, do things for me, and make sure things that are important to me are not forgotten, like my family and culture.
To keep in contact with my family, friends and people and places that matter to me	This means all members of my family, like brothers and sisters and grandparents, and friends from before I came into care and friends that I made when in care. People who matter are people who may not be related but are still very important, like a carer I used to live with or a teacher that I really liked. Places that matter might be places that are special, like an old school I used to go to or somewhere that is special to my family, community or culture.





Right	Explanation
Careful thought being given to where I will live so I will have a home that feels like a home	<p>My home will only feel like a home if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• carers and workers think about my needs and things like my family, culture and community when making decisions about where I will live</li> <li>• it is a place where I feel I belong, where I am cared for, where I have my own space and my things are safe</li> <li>• I am not moved around too much without good reason.</li> </ul>
To have fun and do activities that I enjoy	There are lots of things I have to do but I also have to be able do things that I enjoy like play a sport or learn an instrument. What it is depends on what I like doing and what I am interested in.
To be able to take part in family traditions and learn about and be involved with cultural and religious groups that are important to me	This can include things like learning the language my family and community speak, going to special events, being able to follow the rules of my religion, and wherever possible visiting traditional lands and places that are sacred and special to my culture or religion.
To be provided with the best possible education and training	The best possible education means going to a school that meets my needs and getting help so I can do the best I can at school. The best possible training is training that will help me achieve what I want and will help me to get a job or to do other training or learning.
To be able to develop life skills and grow up to be the best person I can	Life skills means being able to learn from my mistakes, how to get along with people, how to live as an adult, and how to make good decisions about my future and be responsible for my actions
Help in preparing myself to leave care and support after I leave care	I have the right to a 'leaving care plan', which is a plan that makes sure I get support to prepare myself for leaving care and support once I have left care. The sort of support I might need is being taught how to cook and budget and being given some money to help me move out of care; the sort of help kids not in care get from their parents when they move out of home.





## Peer support

### Peer support for permanent care and adoptive parents in Collingwood

Journal Club is a monthly facilitated discussion and support group where participants discuss an article relevant to parenting in home-based care and adoption. It allows confidential conversations around the challenges of parenting and is facilitated by skilled volunteers with lived experience in raising children through home-based care and adoption.

**Tuesday 15 November, 2016 at special time of 7.30am With special guest: Dr Jeff Young, Presenting on: "The experience for parents and carers living with children's trauma Bookings are essential, limited seating <https://www.trybooking.com/NCAN> Venue: Collingwood Library, 11 Stanton Street, Abbotsford**



The December Journal Club is on **WEDNESDAY 7** at 8.00pm, discussing 'The Challenges of Parenting as a Team'

### Peer support for permanent care and adoptive parents on the Peninsula

After having a great break we are ready to re-group on **Thursday November 24, 7.30—9.00pm** Let's meet at the usual place; **Brass Razu, 13 Main Street, Mornington**

Please feel free to come along for a beverage in a relaxed environment and chat to other parents with a similar lived experience.



### Peer support gathering for permanent care and adoptive parents in Bendigo

The peer support group gathers on a bi-monthly basis and meet at

**Cornerstore Café, 305 View Street, Bendigo**

Our next catch up will be **Wednesday November 16, 10.30am—12.00pm**. Please join us for a cuppa in a relaxed environment to meet and chat with other parents.

Pre-schoolers are welcome.



### Peer support for permanent care and adoptive parents in Ballarat

The peer support group meets on a bi-monthly basis and will meet in July at

**Beechworth Bakery, 6 Grenville Street, Ballarat**

Please join us on **Friday December 2 from 10.30—12.00pm** for a cuppa in a relaxed environment to meet and chat to others who have a similar lived experience.

