
To help Australian foster carers remain in the system, we need action in a number of areas. When carers are asked to identify areas of need, they currently say:

- **Provision of “wrap around” services** for the child in care. Carers are frustrated when they see the child waiting for services. This frustration at times leads to a sense of hopelessness for both the child and the carers. It leads to burnout for the carer and a sense of worthlessness for the child.
- **Independent support, mediation and advocacy.** This is an important feature of a good fostering system. Carers feel valued and have a sense of hope for the future, which assists in the retention of precious carers.
- **Improved financial assistance** will provide an appropriate incentive for individuals to “choose” in-home or outside-home financial earnings, and will actually cover costs for general care and for the carer’s skill.
- **Training and professional development** prepares carers for the challenging role of carers and up-skills them for the challenges of specific children.
- **Respite for carers,** to support those caring for children with complex behaviours, is essential in preventing the burnout of carers.
- **Respect and the authority to care for children** have been highlighted as major concerns for carers. Enhanced delegation and authority would allow carers to make day-to-day decisions for the child.



To push for action in all these areas will require a coordinated and concerted effort from all stakeholders, led by foster carers and their foster care associations.