



# CARE FOR A CHILD IN YOUR HOME

for a week | for a month | for a lifetime

[www.fostering.org.au](http://www.fostering.org.au)

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# WHO ARE WE?

## **We are the social care agency of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Broken Bay.**

Since 1987 CatholicCare Broken Bay has served the communities of Northern Sydney, Northern Beaches and Central Coast, providing services and supports to more than 26,000 people every year to create a brighter future. We welcome everyone, regardless of circumstances, religion, ethnicity, age, gender or ability.

Our services are as diverse as the people we serve. Whatever assistance is needed, we are here to serve in justice and love.

With funding from Government, individual supporters and other sources as well as a workforce of 620 employees, we provide disability services and NDIS supports, foster care and residential care services as well as children's services including early learning and care centres, out of school hours care, vacation care and family day care.

Our Family & Community Hubs offer counselling, domestic and family violence support, family dispute resolution and mediation, parenting and relationship education, emergency relief, and housing and homelessness support. We also provide hospital chaplaincy, pastoral care, crisis support ... and much more.



# OUR VALUES



## RESPECT

We respect the dignity and worth of all people and embrace difference.



## HOPE

We see the strengths in each person and believe that every individual can grow and build a positive future. We respect each person's right to shape their own future.



## COMMITMENT

We build relationships with those we serve and stand in solidarity with them through tough times and joyous times. We dedicate ourselves to their rights and interests.



## PROFESSIONALISM

We are ethical and act with integrity in all we do. We are accountable to the communities we serve, to our funders and to each other. We take responsibility for continually learning and improving.



## EXCELLENCE

We learn from and act on evidence of what works. We maintain high standards and pursue innovative and best practice approaches to effecting change in people's lives.



## SOCIAL JUSTICE

We take time to care. We strive for equity and opportunity for all. We speak up for and give voice to those who are vulnerable.

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# OUR FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

CatholicCare have been accredited to provide Out of Home Care (OOHC) since 2006, providing foster care and group home care for children and young people.

The children who come into our program are unable to live with their birth families due to concerns about their safety. Our priority is to provide these children with a safe home for life. We provide support on a temporary basis while arrangements are made to safely return a child home, or on a long-term basis where we find a permanent home for the child.

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*There is no perfect formula for being a foster carer. We welcome applications from people of all cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds.*

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Most of the children have experienced abuse or neglect. This impacts on their behaviour, self-esteem, emotional and educational development. They may have difficulties trusting adults and forming relationships with others. As a result it can take some time for a child to settle into a foster family and their emotions may be expressed in ways that carers may find difficult. Case workers, psychologists and other people in the child's support team, work with the child and foster parents to achieve the best outcome for the child.

Keeping in touch with members of their birth family is important for children in care. Children have a right to maintain family ties and, when it is safe and in their best interest, will have contact arrangements in place to support this. Research shows many benefits of maintaining contact between children and their birth families, such as developing a child's identity and increasing a sense of belonging, stability and continuity. CatholicCare supports and encourages contact between children in our program and their birth families.



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# WHAT TYPES OF CARE DO CHILDREN NEED?

## **EMERGENCY CARE**

When a child comes into care, little is known about the exact circumstances, but one thing is certain and that is the child is not safe to remain where they are. Emergency carers provide immediate crisis care ranging from a single night to a few weeks. The duration of the placement depends on whether the risk at home can be removed or, until the child is placed with an alternative short-term or family carer if the safety concern cannot be resolved.

## **SHORT-TERM CARE**

Short-term care can be as little as a few weeks or up to 24 months while a child's matter is before the courts to determine whether or not a child can go back home safely, or an alternative family can be found. Carers will need to be able to support a child to transition either into a longer term placement or back to their birth family if this plan is decided by court. Short-term carers will also be required to assist with the transport and supervision during contact visits and support children in their care with managing their emotional responses to these visits.

## **LONG-TERM CARE**

Long-term carers will care for a child until the young person reaches 18 years of age or is ready to move into independent living. CatholicCare expects that long-term carers commit to achieving this goal for the child in their care, with ongoing financial, emotional and practical support provided.

## **RESPITE CARE**

A respite carer is an individual or family who for one weekend per month or more often cares for a child in our program. Respite care provides a child's full-time foster family with a break, and a chance to recharge. It also provides the child with the opportunity to learn more about living with safe, caring adults.



“

There are moments that seriously melt my heart. When he falls asleep holding my hand. When he says that he loves me. When he says something that totally cracks me up.

”

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# WHAT SUPPORT WILL YOU RECEIVE?

## **CASE WORKER SUPPORT**

CatholicCare's case workers visit children and their carers on a regular basis. Case workers coordinate services required to meet the needs of the child. They also support carers with any challenges which may arise when caring for a child.

## **24 HOUR ON-CALL SUPPORT**

CatholicCare foster parents have access to a 24 hour on-call service to seek support from case workers and coordinators about urgent issues out of regular office hours.

## **SOCIAL FUNCTIONS & SUPPORT GROUPS**

CatholicCare regularly hosts social functions for our foster carers. This provides you with the opportunity to meet other carers, share stories and experiences. Carer support group meetings also take place regularly.

## **ONGOING TRAINING**

We provide regular training for carers facilitated both in-house and externally to mentor carers through their journey and learn how to be great foster carers.

## **ACCESS TO COUNSELLING & PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT**

Counselling and psychological support for carers and the child for whom they care can be accessed as required.

## **RESPIRE**

Full-time foster carers may receive regular weekend respite. This gives them a chance to recharge, as well as gives the child an opportunity to develop additional relationships and experiences of family.

## **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

An allowance is provided to cover the care and living costs of the foster child. On top of the allowance, additional funding can sometimes be accessed to engage services to meet children's additional needs.



**CLICK HERE TO  
CHECK YOUR  
ELIGIBILITY**

[www.fostering.org.au](http://www.fostering.org.au)

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# WHO CAN BE A FOSTER CARER?

CatholicCare has some criteria which we follow when considering the suitability of foster care applicants:

## **AGE**

- Applicants need to be at least 25 and under 70 years of age.

## **MARITAL STATUS**

- Single applicants may apply.
- Married or defacto couples must have been married and/or living together continuously for a minimum period of 2 years.

## **BIRTH CHILDREN**

- If the applicants have children, additional consideration will be given to ensure safety and minimise risk in respect to any child in the home. In most instances, this may result in the child placed by CatholicCare being the youngest child in the family with at least a 2 year age gap.

## **FERTILITY**

- Applicants who have been having infertility treatment need to have finished their involvement with the fertility program before applying.
- Applicants need to be able to demonstrate a degree of acceptance of their infertility and an understanding of the impact of infertility upon each of them as individuals and as a couple.

## **HEALTH**

- The physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing of an applicant will be assessed to see if they can undertake the task of fostering.
- Carers are expected to conform to guidelines designed to ensure that children are cared for in a healthy environment, including a smoke free household. Carers are expected not to smoke indoors and away from the child.
- Training in children's first aid and a first aid training certificate is desirable for at least one adult member of the household.



“  
Knowing the trauma  
and neglect she  
suffered, totally  
changed the way we  
interact with her.  
The biggest idea that  
we hold onto is love.

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## **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

- CatholicCare requires applicants to be financially stable, sufficient to meet their own needs and commitments.
- Applicants seeking to provide care may be employed full or part-time if they are able to provide adequate time to the child in their care.

## **RESIDENCE**

- Applicants need to reside in New South Wales at the time of application to the agency and be either Australian citizens or hold a permanent residency visa.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

- Applicants need to have adequate, safe accommodation for a child.
- Children need a bedroom of their own.
- All safety requirements eg. fenced pool need to be completed before placement.
- Applicants may be home owners or rent.

## **CHARACTER & REFERENCE**

- Background checks are conducted including a Working with Children Check and a National Police History Check for any residents in the home who are over the age of 18 years.
- A check will also be undertaken with the Department of Communities and Justice and applicants details entered onto the NSW Carers Register.
- Applicants will be required to provide details of their criminal history (if any) and this will be taken into account when considering their application. Applicants who have a record of violence, sexual assault or a crime against a child will not be able to continue with their application.
- Applicants need to be able to provide two references from people who are not related to them.

## **INVOLVEMENT WITH CATHOLICCARE**

- Applicants need to demonstrate a capacity to work with our team.
- The child's case manager will maintain involvement with the child in care and the family through regular monthly home visits. The case workers will spend time with children on their own also.



# WHAT'S INVOLVED?

## 1. Contact us

Complete our online eligibility survey at [www.fostering.org.au](http://www.fostering.org.au) which will let us know you're interested in becoming a foster carer. We will follow up by phone and send you all the information you need to help you make an informed decision about moving ahead.

## 2. Attend an information session

We'll organise either a home visit or group session where we can give you more information about fostering and answer questions you and your family may have.

## 3. Complete your application

By filling out the application you are formally agreeing to move ahead with the process to be a foster carer. We'll be there every step of the way to walk you through the process.

## 4. Background check

We are required to conduct background checks for all foster carers. These include reference checks, medical checks and a check of your home to ensure it meets minimum standards for a child's safety. Formal background checks or probity are also conducted such as a Working with Children Check and a National Police History Check.

## 5. Your personal assessment

You and your family (and people residing with you) will be part of an assessment interview process. The assessment interviews will take place in your home and may be conducted over several sessions. We will ask you to prepare information on your background and ask a series of questions. Children and other adults residing in your home will also be interviewed.

## 6. Training

All adults in your home are required to participate in foster carer training to give you a better understanding of the foster carer role and to equip you with some of the skills you will need to provide quality care.

## 7. Approval

Upon completion of the paperwork, checks, assessment and training, a report is prepared. We will let you know if you have either been approved as a carer, or let you know why you have not.

## 8. Welcome a child

Congratulations, you are now a foster carer!



## CAN YOU HELP A CHILD IN NEED?

There are children and young people in our community who need a safe, happy, secure home environment because they can't live with their parents right now and, in some cases, may not be able to for some time, if ever.

## CHECK YOUR ELIGIBILITY

[www.fostering.org.au](http://www.fostering.org.au)

**CatholicCare Foster Care**

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