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FOSTER CARE: The time has come to adopt better policy

QLD News

# Housing for high-needs children to be made available under \$3m trial

JESSICA MARSZALEK, EXCLUSIVE, The Courier-Mail

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FOSTER parents will be paid up to \$65,000 to take in high-needs children for the first time as the State Government makes it easier for all children to stay permanently with their foster families.

Child Safety Minister Shannon Fentiman will today announce a \$3 million trial to train carers and pay them to house children who might otherwise live in residential care.

While all foster families receive an allowance to house children who can't safely live with their own parents, people such as nurses and social workers would be selected and paid to care for under 18s who have suffered a trauma, who have a disability, and to care for large sibling groups.

About 30 high-needs children will be accommodated in the first six to 12 months before the program is expanded.



📷 Elloise Waite, 25, says housing stability will give foster carers “the ability to parent”. Picture: AAP Image/Claudia Baxter

Child safety and carer groups have welcomed the announcement, which they say will provide children high-quality, one-on-one care in a family environment and help recruit and retain experienced carers who would otherwise have to give up paid work.

Ms Fentiman said all children needed to feel they belonged. “Because we know the best place for children and young people coming into care is in a family environment, we want to help make that a reality for all children, no matter what their needs.”

The Government will also create a new “permanency care order”, which will work like adoption by allowing young people who are settled to stay with their foster families until their 18th birthday, but without requiring them to give up links to their birth parents.

It will mean that the Child Safety Department steps back from foster families that are working well and won’t need to continually prove to courts that a child can’t be safely returned to their parents in order to stay with their foster families.



📷 Child Safety Minister Shannon Fentiman will today announce a \$3 million trial to train carers and pay them to house children who might otherwise live in residential care. Picture: Steve Pohlner

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Elloise Waite, 25, flitted between up to 15 homes ranging from short and long foster care, kinship care and residential care between the ages of 8 and 18.

She said young people had been asking for a permanency order that would give them “stability and some normalcy”.

Ms Waite said it would also give foster carers “the ability to parent”, as at present children needed permission from the department to do activities from skateboarding to horse riding.