MEDIA RELEASE

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Peak Body releases a roadmap to address foster carer shortage in NSW

ACWA has released two reports exploring issues related to the declining pool of suitable and available foster carers in NSW, impacting both the Department of Communities and Justice and NGO providers.

CEO of ACWA, Maree Walk, says:

“We know that it’s become increasingly hard to find people with the time, space and capacity to step into the foster caring role.

“Our research indicates that this trend is set to continue, so it’s clear that we need to think very differently about how we care for children and young people who cannot live safely at home.”

The first report, ***NSW Foster Carer Demographic Outlook: Impacts on the availability of foster carers,*** draws on data and insights from a research paper by The Demographics Group, highlighting critical demographic trends that point to a shrinking pool of potential foster carers over the next ten years.

“The report shows how shifting demographics continue to dry out the foster carer pool in NSW. These trends show that the current shortage of foster carers in the system will not right itself, therefore the need for systemic reform is urgent,” emphasises Simon Kuestenmacher, Co-Founder and Director at The Demographics Group.

The accompanying report, ***The Future of Foster Care in NSW***, co-authored with Lumenia, proposes twelve steps to reforming foster care in NSW, including bolstering relative and kinship carer support so that children can stay with family and community, and modernising the foster care model to meet the changing fabric of Australian society.

"The opportunity to empower children and families is clear through revisioning models of foster care, strengthening kinship care and investing in relationship-centered, therapeutic family preservation, care and restoration supports," explains Dr Melissa Kaltner and Mark Galvin from Lumenia.

Both reports also highlight the importance of valuing and supporting our existing carers.

“Ultimately, we join our NGO sector colleagues in celebrating the incredible contribution of foster and kinship carers across NSW who open their homes and hearts to children and young people in need of love, safety and stability,” reflected Ms Walk.

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About the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA)

The Association of Children's Welfare Agencies is the NSW peak body representing non-government organisations that provide services to vulnerable children, young people and their families.