



Julie Collins MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Community Services

Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Telephone: 02 6277 4881
Facsimile: 02 6277 2307
www.juliecollins.com

BR11-001016

Mr Ken Abery
President
Australian Foster and Kinship Carer Partnership
30 Snug Tiers Rd
SNUG TAS 7054

18 JUL 2011

Dear Mr Abery

You have recently been in contact with Lisa Mycko from my office, and I thank you for sharing your concerns with us. You raised a concern that the process for foster carers to notify Centrelink that a child had come into their care was onerous and inconsistent. Given the important nature of the role of a foster carer, and the often turbulent circumstances that can lead to children entering foster care, this is an area of concern to the Australian Government.

I am pleased to inform you that my office has sought clarification from both the Minister for Human Services, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, as well as the Department of Human Services (DHS). We have been advised that customers who currently receive Family Tax Benefit for other children (including foster carers) and who wish to claim for an additional child are able to verbally advise details of the new child entering care. This may be done by contacting the Family Assistance Office on 13 61 50 or by visiting either a Centrelink branch or Medicare Customer Service Centre.

Furthermore, DHS has advised me that a reminder has been issued to all staff throughout Australia regarding the procedure for processing claims such as the ones you described.

I hope this information provides further reassurance to you and your members that the Australian Government places a high value on the efforts of foster carers, and that we will continue to work hard to ensure that the wellbeing of children is at the forefront of the Government's social policy agenda.

Once again, thank you for your continued dedication to helping improve the lives of Australian children, and thank you also for your follow-up information.

Yours sincerely

JULIE COLLINS MP