

Welcome to our August 2014 Newsletter



Did you know that we do not receive one cent of government funding? PCA Families have been relying on donations and philanthropic funding since we became a non-for-profit organisation. We have been applying for a number of grants, including one to Federal Government for close to \$2 million for five years... so keep your fingers crossed!

Our Legal Group continues in partnership with Mirabel Foundation and Peninsula Community Legal Service. We are applying for a specific grant to run more legal forums, and a questionnaire is being developed to survey members on legal issues and court variations. Dan Barron (Board Member) and I will be meeting with the Registrar from Births, Deaths, and Marriages on August 6th to discuss the waiver criteria on adoption search fees and change of name issues. We'll keep you informed.

Delivering our services to country and regional Victoria will be a major focus over the remainder of the year. I will be visiting a number of areas during September and would be most happy to meet with any members who would like to catch up. You can ring our main office on 9202 1833 or email info@pcfamilies to make an appointment. We will let you know at the end of August of the exact dates for Bendigo and Ballarat.

Warrnambool: Tuesday 9th and Wednesday 10th September.
Bendigo: Week beginning 15 September- date to be advised.
Geelong: Tuesday 23rd and Wednesday 24th September.
Ballarat: Dates to be advised.

We look forward to meeting our regional families soon.

Brenda Carmen—General Manager

Support Groups in Bendigo and Ballarat

We are going to establish peer support groups for families formed through adoption or Permanent Care in **Bendigo** and **Ballarat**. If you are interested in attending or assisting with set up, please let me know by calling 03 9020 1833 or emailing Deborah@pcfamilies.org.au

Dates for Your Diary

Thursday August 7
8.00 – 9.30 pm
Journal Club, Collingwood

Wednesday August 20
7.00 – 9.30 pm
Parent Session—Parenting Teens with George Habib and Christine Miller

Thursday August 21— *(new group)*
7.00 – 9.00 pm
Peer support gathering on Peninsula—Mornington

Friday August 22 *(new group)*
10.00 – 11.30 am
Peer support gathering in East — Ringwood

Monday August 25
10.00 – 11.30 am
Journal Club, Werribee

Wednesday August 27
7.30 – 9.00pm
Parenting Plus support group

Thursday September 4
8.00 – 9.30 pm
Journal Club, Collingwood

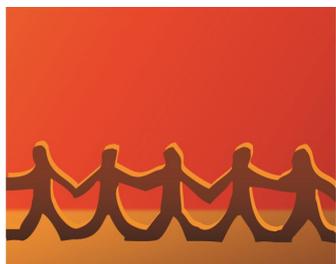
Thursday September 18— *(new group)*
7.00 – 9.00 pm
Peer support gathering on Peninsula—Mornington

Thursday October 2
8.00 – 9.30 pm
Journal Club, Collingwood

Wednesday October 8
7.30 – 9.00pm
Parenting Plus support group—Thornbury

Thursday October 23
7.30 – 9.00pm
Parenting Plus support group—St Kilda

Information including venues and how to RSVP, visit www.pcfamilies.org.au/event-calendar-all



Parenting Teens

in Permanent Care and Adoption

August 20 at 7.00pm

Mulgrave Community Centre,

Room 2, 355 Wellington Road, Mulgrave



Adolescence is unlike any other period in life for both young people - and their parents!

It is a time of great transformation; not a single event, but a number of major changes over a relatively short period, including the personal exploration of autonomy and identity.

Teen behaviour is often at the best of times confusing and coupled with additional issues related to permanent care and adoption, this transition can have a significant impact on relationships within families.

Please join us to explore these complexities with senior clinical psychologists, George Habib and Christine Miller from the Psychology Directorate within Monash Health.

Date	20 August, 2014
Time	7:00—9:30pm - venue open from 6.30 for 7.00pm start
Venue	Mulgrave Community Centre, Room 2, 355 Wellington Road, Mulgrave
Parking	Parking is available at the venue or surrounding streets (please check parking signs)
RSVP	Online via http://www.trybooking.com/FLQU by August 15; spaces are limited to 60
Cost	This event is a gold coin donation event which is kindly supported by the Department of Human Services
Queries	Please contact PCA Families on 9020 1833

This event is for parents and carers only



Tree of Life Program - (pilot)

We were so excited to deliver our pilot program; Tree of Life. It was sold out within days of tickets being available, which confirmed that we are on the right track with our training programs. The program was specifically developed and designed from a Narrative Therapy base, for use with our children and young people involved in permanent care and adoption.



The metaphor of a tree was chosen as the best framework for children to explore and speak about many aspects of their lives, both positive and challenging. The *Tree of Life* framework, encompasses: **roots** (where they come from), **ground** (where they live and what they do each day), **trunk** (special skills and abilities), **branches** (hopes and dreams), **leaves** (special people), and **fruit** (gifts).

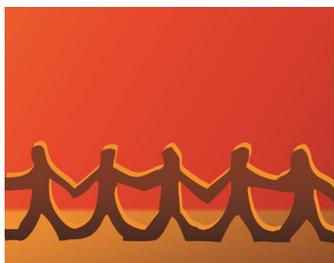
Thirty-six children participated in our pilot Tree of Life Program. It ran over the first weekend of the school holidays at Richmond West Primary School. The Children who attended ranged from 5 to 13 years of age, all having some 'lived experience' of Permanent Care and Adoption.

Parents gathered for a Friday night briefing, with facilitators, peer mentors and staff. The session gave parents a chance to understand the training and what it entailed. Several questions and concerns were openly shared, explored and addressed, particularly in terms of how and what the program could raise for children and families involved. We were privileged to have trained and skilled facilitators leading each group of children, as well as several trained volunteers who are adoptive parents, adult adoptees and/or professionals themselves. They shared a myriad of lived experiences, cultures and backgrounds. This was a key component and special feature of the program, as it provided and allowed children direct and safe access to a variety of mentors and role models, with similar shared life experiences.

The feedback from children, parents, volunteers and staff has been overwhelmingly positive. Children have said they 'fitted in', made new friends and connections with peers and adults. Parents were grateful that their children had the opportunity to reflect on and share about different parts of their lives, within a safe, supportive and creative setting, with peers and facilitators/mentors. There was a great energy and atmosphere throughout, especially during the whole group celebration, held in front of peers, parents and other special people in the children's lives.

PCA Families are in the process of applying for grants to allow us to roll out this wonderful program state-wide as it is a very expensive program to run. We will keep you updated on how we are going as we have the enthusiasm and all the materials to run with this magnificent program; we just need some finance to help us out!





Volunteering with PCA Families

Are you interested in working with us to make a difference in the lives of parents, carers and children in permanent care, kinship care and adoption?

Then you may be interested in becoming a volunteer with PCA Families as soon as we launch our new volunteer program.

We will be looking to recruit volunteers for a number of roles; people who are willing to make a regular, ongoing commitment in any of the following positions:

- *General Administration Support*
- *Volunteer Peer Trainer*
- *Peer Support Phone Volunteer*
- *Peer Support Group Facilitator*
- *Publicity and Promotion*

So watch this space, or contact Rita on 9020 1833 or rita@pcafamilies.org.au for more information.



Research Project:

'It takes a village to raise a child': The support needs of non familial kinship carers

The University of Melbourne and the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare are conducting a survey of kinship carers who are not relatives of the children - 'kith' carers. Kith carers may be family friends, neighbours, teachers, or other people known to the children – carers whose needs may be somewhat different from family kinship carers. The aim is to develop policy and practice through a better understanding of the support needs of non-familial kinship carers.

The survey is being conducted online and is also available on paper. It can be accessed at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/survey_of_non-familial_kinship_carers It will remain open until the end of October.

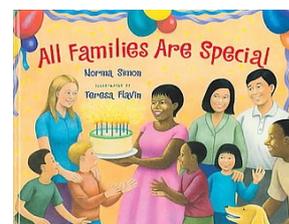
We know that carers have their hands full, but we need a number of questionnaires returned if we are to help develop policy and practice in this area, including influencing government to address unmet support needs. If you are a non-familial kinship carer, it would be great if you could fill out the survey and provide information about your circumstances and your support needs. You do not need to provide your name or any other identifying information.

If you would like to fill in a paper copy of the survey, please let us know and we can mail it to you with a stamped, self-addressed envelope for returning to the university.

For further information please contact Meredith Kiraly on 0400 913659 or mkiraly@unimelb.edu.au

All Families are Special

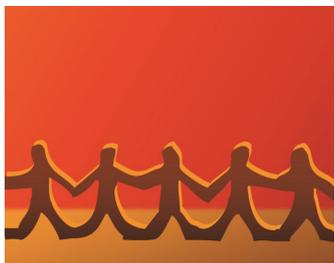
By Norma Simon



All Families Are Special is a lovely, considered storybook about many of the different kinds of families that exist. The book is organised into twelve short scenes featuring different families, as told through the eyes of those children in a classroom. This is not an adoption-specific book, although it does feature adoption, kinship care and blended families. Divorce, parental death and illness are mentioned; however the book remains positive and thought-provoking throughout. The children's differences are celebrated, and they learn that sometimes what makes us different or "special" is what makes us just like everyone else.

The book features many different races and cultures, and children and families of all backgrounds will find someone in this story to identify with. There is also fertile ground to explore new ideas about family and the different forms they come in. *All Families Are Special* would suit a young school-aged child, and some of the themes may need explaining and unpacking.

To purchase this book, visit <http://shop.ppps.org.au/all-families-are-special>



New Support Group in Eastern Suburbs

PCA Families holds an eastern suburbs peer support group on the fourth Friday of every month from 10.00—11.30 in East Ringwood.

We meet at the newly built Bendigo Bank, 62 Raliway Avenue, Ringwood East.

There is an option to buy a cappuccino from the café or make your own tea or coffee which is available in the room.

We provide biscuits and a welcome smile. We would love you to join us. If you have any queries, please contact Deb on 9020 1833 or info@pcafamilies.org.au

There is no need to RSVP; you can just arrive!

New Support Group on Peninsula

Join us on the third **Thursday of each month from 7.00—9.00pm** for our peer support group in **Mornington**.

The group is tailored to the participants needs and meet monthly to discuss the joys and challenges of raising children through adoption and permanent care

Where: Mornington Library; Vancouver Street, Mornington.

If you would like to be involved or attend, please contact Deborah on 9020 1833 or email info@pcafamilies.org.au



"I often feel a need to be the best parent I can be, not only for myself and my child, but also on behalf of my child's birthparents."

Parent of locally adoptive children

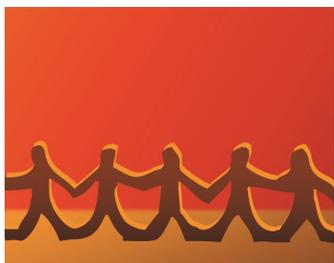
In October 2012, 50 adoptive families who formed their family through local adoption in Queensland in the last 10 years were invited to participate in the Local Adoption Support Group (LASG) survey "What keeps you awake at night?". These families were asked to share the questions that keep them awake at night so that the LASG could gain a greater understanding of the experiences and needs of adoptive families in Queensland and Australia.

The results of the survey were anonymous and provide an invaluable insight into the concerns of contemporary adoptive parents as they raise their children in a social environment that does not always understand the needs and nuances of modern adoption.

To read more of the report, visit our [website](#)

Some statistics from the report

- 38.1% were unprepared for the intensity of their child's emotions
- 47.1% were simply exhausted upon placement
- 40.9% think about adoption daily
- Another 31.8% think about adoption weekly
- 69.9% think they have higher expectations of themselves as parents because of how their family was formed
- 52.4% said the intensity of emotion they felt on becoming parents was more than they expected.



New Directions in Permanent Care



Twilight Seminar

On June 26, The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare in cooperation with PCA Families hosted a twilight seminar with guest speakers, Jenny Conrick the Vera Scantlebury Brown scholarship holder, Jo-anne McMahon, Connections, and Graham Brewster from DHS. It was well attended with over forty CEO's and workers with standing room only.

Jenny reported on the findings of her UK and US tour which was courtesy of the Vera Scantlebury Brown scholarship. Of special interest was the UK's whole of Government approach to reducing the delay in placing children into adoption; and their range of interventions which supports both pre- and post placement. Jenny concluded that 'stability and permanency' are the cornerstones for recovery for the children who have been through out-of-home care; and that a suite of services were needed both pre and post placement, and over the child's lifespan.

Jo-anne presented on Concurrent planning which is a pilot program being developed by Connections Uniting Care and MacKillop Family Services. Concurrent planning is a pilot program which considers all reasonable options for permanency at the earliest possible point. It breaks down silos working with all parties equally; birth parents, concurrent carer, DHS, Legal System, Agencies and child protection to obtain the best possible outcome for the child.

Graham Brewster, Senior Policy Advisor in the Child Protection Service Development and Design Unit then reflected on the current progress of the DHS Stability Planning and Permanent Care Project and where this is at. Unfortunately, Graham could not reveal much, at this stage, about any possible legislative changes, as the recommendations from the project are still "Cabinet in-confidence", and therefore not yet public.



Thank you!

Post Placement Support Service (VIC) Inc. trading as Permanent Care and Adoptive Families thanks its supporters: **The William Buckland Foundation, The Collie Foundation, The Felton Bequest Committee and The Truby & Florence Williams Charitable Trust**, which are managed by **ANZ Trustees**; and **The Jack Brockhoff Foundation**. We depend on your support; donations enable Permanent Care and Adoptive Families to continue to deliver high quality programs in support of families formed through permanent care and adoption. [Please give.](#)