ECONOMIC AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

HOME CARE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Old Parliament House Chamber, Old Parliament House

Thursday, 3 April 2025 at 9:30am

(OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT)

PARLIAMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

WITNESS

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MEMBERS:

Mr E.J. Hughes MP (Presiding Member)
Hon. A. Piccolo MP
Ms N.P. Clancy MP
Mr M.J. Cowdrey MP
Ms L.P. Hood MP
Mr S.J.R. Patterson MP
Mr S.J. Telfer MP

WITNESS:

FESZCZAK, MIKE, Chief Executive Officer, Grandcarers SA

72 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Welcome to today's hearing of the Parliament of South Australia's Economic and Finance Committee. I respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of this land upon which the committee meets today and the custodians of the sacred lands of our state. I will ask the committee members to introduce themselves.

73 Ms HOOD: Lucy Hood, member for Adelaide.

74 Ms CLANCY: Nadia Clancy, member for Elder.

75 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Eddie Hughes, member for Giles.

76 Mr TELFER: Sam Telfer, member for Flinders.

77 Mr PATTERSON: Stephen Patterson, member for Morphett.

78 The PRESIDING MEMBER: We also have Jessica, our secretary, and Evan, our research officer.

This is a public hearing and will be broadcast to the public online via the parliament website. A transcript of today's hearing will be published on the committee's website. All persons, including members of the media, are reminded that the same rules applying to the reporting of parliament apply to this hearing.

I understand that information on committee processes and the protections afforded to witnesses has been provided to you. I remind you that, in giving evidence to the committee, you are protected by parliamentary privilege. This means that you are protected from legal action with respect to the evidence you provide to the committee today. This protection only applies to evidence given at the hearing and published by the committee. You are not protected if you publish your evidence elsewhere or repeat your evidence outside of the hearing.

The committee prefers to hear evidence in public where possible. If there is any matter you wish to discuss in private, please indicate this to the committee at the start of your evidence. Unless you have any questions, I now invite you to introduce yourself and make an opening statement, with that being followed by questions from the committee.

Mr FESZCZAK: Thank you. Hi, everybody. My name is Mike Feszczak; I am the CEO of Grandcarers SA. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about a community of carers who have been virtually ignored and unrecognised by successive governments: informal kinship carers.

Can I start by describing Grandcarers SA. We are a small charity devoted to supporting grandparents and other informal carers, whom we refer to as grandcarers, all of whom provide full-time primary care for children from their families. Grandcarers SA currently has over 1,300 registered clients who care for more than 2,200 children across South Australia. We provide a range of services, including peer support groups, information workshops, a telephone helpline, face-

to-face consultations and some limited financial assistance which is supported by philanthropic donations.

Although I am the CEO of Grandcarers SA, I am fairly new to the carer sector, having previously had a career within the justice system. This has raised a passion in me against injustice. I have been surprised at and disappointed in the perpetuating injustice in South Australia, where two groups of carers who perform the same roles are yet treated so differently. The two groups I refer to are formal and informal kinship carers.

Formal kinship carers have a legal status through a legislative instrument and are recognised and supported by the state, both financially and practically. Depending on their situation, they can claim allowances of between $14,000 and $60,000 per annum per child. They clearly deserve this financial support. As I understand it, there are 4,837 children in formal care in South Australia, with the Department for Child Protection supporting about 3,200 carer households at a cost of $130 million. That is an average of almost $27,000 per child, a figure I ask you to remember for later in this presentation.

Informal kinship carers do not have a legislative instrument governing their caring role of the children or their in loco parentis status. They keep children within the family and out of the overburdened child protection and foster care systems. However, they are not formally recognised as carers, nor are they financially supported to provide safe and nurturing home environments for the children in their care. There are no formal statistics on the number of informal kinship carers or the children in their care; however, research strongly suggests that there may be 7,000 children in informal care in South Australia.

I would like to take a moment to paint a picture of informal kinship carers for you. Unfortunately, it's not a pretty picture. About two-thirds of our 1,300 registered clients are informal kinship carers, with the vast majority being grandparents. Over 85 per cent identify as female and have an average age of 65 years. Sixty per cent of them are female carers without a partner. They are probably caring for two or more children. Over half are caring for children under 12 years of age.

About a third of the children in their care have mental health issues. About two-thirds of our clients live below the poverty line. About half are experiencing food insecurity. About half have had to access their super or seek charitable support. In short, our carers tend to be older single women subsisting on pensions and savings who are performing multiple parental roles for children with substantial needs at a time of life when they least expect to.

In relation to the 2,200 children in the care of our clients, we are aware that the majority have experienced trauma. Research shows that kinship care provides better mental health outcomes and more stable placements than other forms of care, reducing the need for health care and income assistance in later life. However, kinship carers, especially grandparents, face considerable challenges, including financial strain, health issues and difficult family dynamics, often leading to carer arrangements breakdowns.

As informal kinship care arrangements continue to rise across Australia, we must recognise the gaps in financial and casework support. As the pool of foster carers shrinks, child welfare staff are increasingly forced to rely on kinship care arrangements. I note the recent DCP publicity stating that, since 2023, they have formally placed 100 children through the Finding Families program. The department have been finding our families and placing children with them for decades, but not supporting them in any meaningful way.

To address the injustice and the challenges of informal kinship carers, we are asking for four key changes. Our first request is that at the time of handing a child over to informal kinship carers, the Department for Child Protection provide formal recognition that identifies the carer as having primary carer status. Informal carers struggle to get the limited government support they are entitled to. This is because proving that they are the full-time carer of a child or children can be extremely challenging, particularly for those carers with limited IT or literacy skills. Formal recognition would also assist with carer involvement at schools, with health care and other matters where some immediate decisions are needed for the benefit of the child.

Our second request is that as informal kinship carers are excluded from the definition of 'carer' within the SA Carers Recognition Act 2005, it be amended to include informal kinship carers. In 2023, the Minister for Human Services commissioned a review of the SA Carers Recognition Act by Mr Richard Dennis AM PSM. We provided a submission to that review, recommending that the definition of 'carer' be amended to include informal kinship carers. He completed and handed over the review in May 2024, with one of his recommendations supporting our submission to change the definition of 'carer' to include informal kinship carers. I am not aware of any action being taken following the completion of the review almost a year ago.

Our third request is to provide financial assistance to informal grandparent carers, with a non-means tested payment for each child in their care. Currently, Western Australia is the only Australian state or territory to provide such a payment, which is currently only to grandparents who have had full-time care of a grandchild for over four months. It is only an annual payment of $1,000 per child per annum and must be applied for annually by the grandparent with proof of their caring situation. I understand this currently supports about 3,400 children in Western Australia. While this may seem a small amount compared to that offered to children in formal kinship care, grandparent carers in Western Australia told me it provides a much-needed contribution to the costs involved in raising a child.

We have chosen to limit our call for financial support to only grandparent carers due to the precedent set by the WA government and because the vast majority of our clients are grandparents who have specific barriers. These include issues such as increased health concerns, limited opportunities to enter the workplace or improve employment, and they are more likely to become isolated and struggle to manage their own traumas. I do have a fund grandparent carers call to action document, which I would like to hand to the members as well, if I may. Is that to be done now, Chair?

79 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Yes, that can be tabled.

Mr FESZCZAK: Now?

80 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Well, yes, you can hand it in now, but it can be tabled as well.

Mr FESZCZAK: It can be tabled?

81 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Yes.

Mr FESZCZAK: Okay, thank you. Our fourth and final request is to provide Grandcarers SA with funding to employ two social workers, and the ability to offer counselling services to help support kinship carers and help to manage their emotional strains. While informal kinship care provides a vital alternative to formal care arrangements, it's risky to leave these families without access to specialised services that formal carers can access.

We currently provide meaningful supports to our clients. For many, their caring arrangements are more likely to break down without our assistance, leading to worsened outcomes for the children. However, we need to be able to offer specialised emotional and practical support for clients to help them provide stable and nurturing care for vulnerable children.

In conclusion, informal kinship care is crucial. We must acknowledge and address the significant challenges faced by these carers. By providing the necessary recognition and supports we can improve outcomes for both children and carers, whilst reducing the long-term economic and social cost to government and society as a whole.

82 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Thank you. Questions?

83 Ms CLANCY: Thank you very much for your submission and your presentation, Mike. I was wondering how many of these informal placements break down and, if they do break down, does the child or the children tend to enter the child protection system formally or do they end up going back to a less ideal situation with biological parents; or do they all kind of—most of them—just keep going and keep trying to just make it work?

Mr FESZCZAK: We have some anecdotal evidence, but there are no actual statistics in relation to that. The anecdotal evidence suggests that it's the whole ballpark of those different things. Some grandparent carers will continue through difficult situations and will do their best not to have the children removed.

I spoke to a client, just a couple of weeks ago, who was in tears saying, 'I'm just going to have to hand the children back,' because they can't cope with the violence that the children are expressing, they can't cope with the financial situation and they are just basically at the end of their tether. They need support but they are not getting the support. There's only so much a small organisation like mine can do. We've got three part-time employees, the rest are volunteers with limited skills, so there's only so much that we can do.

We do know that some children will return into the child protection system, but there's no consistency. We have had a situation with a grandparent who was recently in even formal care of two of his grandsons, and he was advised that it would be 18 months before the children would be considered to be returned to the parents. A change of social worker and two weeks later the children were returned to the parents. So there is no consistency. Again, it's really difficult to provide an accurate answer to that question.

84 Ms CLANCY: I know foster carers, and I presume kinship carers, get this little blue card which says 'this child with this name and this birthdate is in this person's care until this date,' which then can be used when you are signing the child up for things, and you are at schools, etc. Obviously, that's a challenge for informal carers. What does school enrolment, etc. currently look like for informal carers?

Mr FESZCZAK: Well, informal carers don't have a blue card for a start—

85 Ms CLANCY: Yes.

Mr FESZCZAK: —so can you imagine what it's like when you are turning up to school or at a doctor's with a child to say, 'I'm now the person who is looking after this child. I've got full care and the primary care of this child'? Schools are not that well engaged with it. It has been suggested to me that I approach the principals of all the schools. That would be a huge task. The schools are not that well engaged with it, so it's really, really difficult.

For a simple thing like trying to make a Centrelink claim, they've got to go through a whole process to gain evidence to show that they are the carer of the child so that they can make a Centrelink claim. A claim that our informal carers can claim is the family tax benefits A and B. Many of them don't claim it because it would upset the parents who are currently claiming it and it would cause more angst within the family and even possibly have their parents try to remove the children from the grandparents. It's really difficult for them.

The two things that the clients ask me for are: one is recognition and the second is money. They feel they can cope but we know they can't in terms of the social aspects, in terms of the support and the practical casework support that they need, which is why we are asking for social workers.

86 Ms HOOD: Further to the member for Elder's first question, how many of your clients are almost permanently informal kinship carers compared with how many are perhaps floating back and forth between the biological parents and the grandcarers?

Mr FESZCZAK: I can't give you a number, unfortunately, but it is definitely the vast majority. We have carers who have been the carer of their grandchildren from basically an infant to adulthood, so it's not like a year or two years. We have clients who have been clients still looking after children for 10 years. That's about 25 per cent of our clients who have been looking after children for 10 years. You could possibly take that as an indication to answer your question.

87 Ms HOOD: In terms of then their correspondence or communication with the child protection department, there is no kind of written evidence to say that the child is in their care that they could then use for things like schools, hospitals?

Mr FESZCZAK: Yes, that's right. To be fair, the majority of our clients, the last thing they want is involvement with the Department for Child Protection. They would not welcome that.

What they do want is recognition. Quite often, when the Department for Child Protection social workers do their legislative responsibility and remove children from the parental home and take them to a place of safety, over 50 per cent of the time it's grandparents.

They are supposed to carry out a safety plan at that time and that doesn't always happen. It only lasts for 30 days and it's supposed to be repeated. That rarely happens, as I understand it. This is what our clients are telling me. I don't know what the actual statistics are. The involvement with DCP is very, very limited and it's usually limited to somebody knocking on a grandparent's door and saying, 'Here are a couple of children. Either you look after them or we will put them in care.'

88 Ms HOOD: In terms of the $1,000 payment in WA, how is that managed? I notice you mentioned it's not means tested in WA, but how is that managed to factor in that sometimes a grandparent might not always have care of the child? Is it just given regardless, even if perhaps a grandparent applies for it and they may only have the child perhaps a third of the year?

Mr FESZCZAK: It's an annual payment and $1,000 for a third of the year is still probably a low sum. There is an application process that they go through in WA, which is managed by a not-for-profit called Wanslea. Wanslea, I have often quoted as being the Uniting Communities of WA. It's quite a large not-for-profit organisation supporting both children and elder care and various other things.

They manage the applications on behalf of the WA government. They have social workers who go through the applications with the grandparents who are making the claim and establish the veracity of the claim. The grandparents have also got to sign a statutory declaration to support that. I can't remember if there is a clause, but I suspect there is, that says, 'If the situation changes, you must tell us,' but, to be fair, what's $1,000? It's not an awful lot of money when the children that are in formal care, through their carers, are receiving between $14,000 and $60,000 in this state. So $1,000 is a very small amount.

However, if we were to get that in South Australia, and I'm actually not just asking for $1,000, I'm asking for an amount that the government decides on, but if it was $1,000, it would be $1,000 more than they are currently getting, which doesn't go very far when they are paying for laptops and school uniform. This is one of the things that we provide.

The Education and Development Fund that I mentioned is there as a last resort payment for our clients who are informal carers where they cannot afford and do not get an allowance for things like school shoes, school uniform, sports equipment, extracurricular activities, a trumpet, a guitar. We have managed to cobble together through donations—last year, in 2024, we managed to gain $86,000, and we spent that supporting nearly 400 different children. It doesn't go very far, as I am sure you are aware.

89 Mr TELFER: Thank you, Mike. It has been really useful information. A bit further on from that, you spoke about that in Western Australia there are around 3,400, I think was the number, who are supported.

Mr FESZCZAK: Yes.

90 Mr TELFER: Have you got an estimation of what the equivalent demand in South Australia might be?

Mr FESZCZAK: I can only do it on population size. The WA population is greater than ours, but we think it would be around two and half to three thousand. It's really difficult to gauge, because there are a lot more out there who could claim it, and I think we would probably get a bit of a rush initially. We are estimating in South Australia it would be between two and a half and three thousand.

91 Mr TELFER: With regard to that process in Western Australia, as the member for Adelaide was asking about, you would recommend having it as an administrative arrangement model, but would there be changes and adjustments that would need to be made? It's obviously a pretty dynamic and fluid space, but you do point out that there are a significant number of long-term carers in this informal arrangement—not sporadic, changing month by month. From your

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understanding of the Western Australian model, would you take the vast component of it but adjust it a little bit? What is your insight into that model in Western Australia?

Mr FESZCZAK: As I understand it, there are going to be people who are going to rort the system. I think we have to accept that that happens, but WA and Wanslea are very, very confident that it is a tiny percentage who are able to do that, because of the process that they go through. It is actually qualified social workers who take the clients through the application process and even will, if it's necessary, take it further and try to gain some further evidence to show that the grandparents are caring for those children. I am not sure if I have answered your question.

92 Mr TELFER: How much of the framework component from Western Australia do you think could be just copied and pasted into the South Australian system?

Mr FESZCZAK: All of it. Wanslea get funded by the state government there to employ the social workers, to employ the administrators to process the applications and to make sure there is some veracity around the applications. That could be lifted. Grandcarers SA, I would say, because we already do this through the Education and Development Fund, are running a very similar process. The Education and Development Fund is done on reimbursements, so the clients have got to provide evidence that they have actually purchased the items or paid for the fees or whatever it might be, and then we will pay them an amount that comes within our own limited financial ability. So we are already doing that process. I would be looking for the government to provide us with funding so that we can manage that process on behalf of the government but the funds are held by the government.

93 Mr TELFER: How much funding do Grandcarers SA currently get from the South Australian government?

Mr FESZCZAK: Grandcarers SA get about $2,200 currently per annum. That currently pays for three part-time employees, our office rent and our operational costs. The operational costs for the Education and Development Fund come out of that, because we don't take a cent out of the philanthropic funding that goes towards it.

94 Mr TELFER: Sorry; can you say that number again, please?

Mr FESZCZAK: $2,200.

95 Mr TELFER: The review that you spoke about before that you are waiting to hear, have you not heard at all from either the department or the minister about what steps may come next?

Mr FESZCZAK: No.

96 Mr TELFER: Not at all?

97 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Can you clarify that figure again, that $2,200?

98 Ms HOOD: You said $2,200.

99 The Hon. A. PICCOLO: Or $200,200?

100 Ms HOOD: In terms of what you get funded from the government. I think you said—

Mr FESZCZAK: Sorry, $220,000—I do apologise.

101 The PRESIDING MEMBER: I thought, 'That's a lean operation!'

Mr FESZCZAK: No, I do apologise. It's $220,000 a year and we are on a three plus three plus three-year contract. Three-quarters of our money comes from the Department of Human Services and one-quarter comes from the Department for Child Protection. We are in the first year of our second tranche of three years—so we have another five years, basically, of payments to come, depending on reviews of our organisation. Apologies.

102 Mr TELFER: That's alright. I got you to repeat it once.

Mr FESZCZAK: I know I don't get paid a lot but it is a bit more than that.

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103 The Hon. A. PICCOLO: Mike, first of all I would just like to thank you for your thoughtful and passionate presentation. I am aware of the work you do because one of the grandparents in my constituency was actually Grandparent of the Year. I would just like to follow up on the work that the member for Elder and the member for Adelaide just asked you about, to make clear in my own mind.

If we are to recognise that informal relationship which exists—which is an incredibly important relationship, because I am sure we all see these families in our electorate offices—how do we do that? What are the mechanics? I'm sure you have thought about how you can do that. What grandparents don't want is some bureaucratic process day in, day out. I have seen some of them just get frustrated and worn down by bureaucracy. What would be an easy way, but also one which has financial integrity about it, to actually do that? How could the state do that, in your opinion?

Mr FESZCZAK: We don't know what the percentage is, but a large number of the children who end up with grandparents or grandcarers are handed over by the Department for Child Protection. The Department for Child Protection know they are going to turn up at somebody's address; they can come with some formal identification for the carer, whether that be a certificate, a blue card or a badge, I really don't care.

104 The Hon. A. PICCOLO: Even a letter.

Mr FESZCZAK: As long as they are given something that identifies the role that they play that is recognised. I have just had a discussion with the South Australian Ambulance Service because the children of informal kinship carers are not included in ambulance cover. I have just had a discussion with them. They will now accept a statutory declaration, which they told me earlier they wouldn't. So there are ways of doing it.

I think the department have a part to play. I am in discussions with the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection about that. She is considering it. It is just something that we would like to keep pushing along. It is important for the carers. Recognition is such a large barrier for them.

105 The Hon. A. PICCOLO: Recognition is important just so they can actually care for the child day to day: take them to school, as the member for Elder said, take them to the doctor. They are going to be asked everywhere they go what right they have to make decisions for that child, so that is really important.

Mr FESZCZAK: Yes, exactly.

106 The Hon. A. PICCOLO: You mentioned the ones who come to grandparents via DCP. What about the ones where the grandparents just literally go in and say to their child, 'These grandchildren are not being looked after. We're taking them,' or 'We're going to report you,' or whatever they are going to do? How do we deal with those situations?

Mr FESZCZAK: If we were to be supplied with social workers—because we need qualified people—I think that we could play a part in that. We could act as the conduit between the carer and the department to get them some identification of some sort. I think there is a role for us to play in that.

107 Mr PATTERSON: Mike, thank you for your presentation and, as we have all said, we really respect all the work that you do.

Mr FESZCZAK: Thank you.

108 Mr PATTERSON: We would like to find a way to progress and recognise that. Can you maybe talk through the interplay between formal recognition and then what flows from there in terms of financial assistance? At the start of your presentation you said that some carers are paid between $14,000 and $60,000. Would formal recognition then trigger that sort of quantum of payment?

Mr FESZCZAK: It depends on the situation of the child and the family, because some are income means-tested. It is not easy for me to say, 'Actually these are the things,' because it is actually quite complicated. I have a three-page table about the different types of allowances that

they can claim. But basically, there are a series of allowances and payments that formal carers can claim that informal carers are not allowed to claim. I am happy to provide you with that table at a later date if that is okay.

109 Mr PATTERSON: That would be good. Do you feel potentially that is the barrier as to why the recommendation that was made hasn't been progressed? Do you feel that it comes down to dollars and cents potentially?

Mr FESZCZAK: I am sure that any government is considering cost, and I am sure that is a barrier, yes.

110 Mr PATTERSON: The way I am seeing it is, in lieu of that formal recognition, then this is where this potential of the WA payment of $1,000 non-means tested comes in.

Mr FESZCZAK: Say that again, sorry?

111 Mr PATTERSON: In lieu of formal recognition and the pathway for probably more formalised funding, then the alternate is just a smaller quantum of $1,000, like WA?

Mr FESZCZAK: I see it as stepping stones. There is no financial support from the state for informal kinship carers. For me to say, 'I think they should be treated equally to formal kinship carers or to foster carers,' I don't see that being a realistic ask at this stage. We are asking for the precedent that WA set. I'm not asking for $1,000; I actually think it should be more. But if I was able to say to my clients, 'I've got you $1,000 per child per annum,' they'd probably carry me around in that throne.

It would be a help, but I think they deserve an awful lot more for the benefit they provide keeping children out of the child protection system, keeping children out of the foster care system. They provide early intervention. The cost of managing and keeping a child in residential care is anything between half a million and $1.5 million per child per annum. The cost of providing $1,000 to our clients is probably the cost of two or three children in residential care.

112 Mr PATTERSON: That was going to be a corollary question, because with many volunteer organisations—I am a member of a lifesaving club—quite often the way it hits home to people is to say, 'If this service was a paid service, it would cost X million dollars,' and then it does put it in perspective. Thank you for your answers, Mike.

113 Ms HOOD: My question is more to the anecdotal evidence you might have around the fact—and I can't imagine how challenging it is for the grandparents as well, because they are obviously dealing with a breakdown perhaps with their own children. From what you have heard from your clients—and obviously we always want to make sure that children are raised in a beautiful and loving home, with their biological parents—what have you seen anecdotally are the stories behind some of these breakdowns, where the grandparents have perhaps felt that they have needed to take the children from their own children? What do you believe have been some of the anecdotal causes of that?

Mr FESZCZAK: I hope I'm not going to traumatise anybody by telling you these stories, but I am going to tell you. The first two clients that I met told me why they were looking after their children—and this is genuine, the first two children, so I apologise if anybody is traumatised in this group. It's not a nice story.

I went to one of our villages. We manage and run about a dozen villages which are peer support groups for our clients across South Australia. They breach isolation and support them in lots of different ways. The first one that I went to, I spoke to the clients there, and the first client that I spoke to told me why she was looking after her granddaughter and her great-granddaughter. The reason is that the granddaughter's father raped her and the great-granddaughter is the subject of that offence.

The second grandcarer—I'm sorry, I'm getting a shiver down my spine at the moment—that I spoke to, I asked her why she was looking after her grandson and she said, 'Because his father tried to kill the rest of his family.' These are the things that we are dealing with; these are real life. Yes, there are other issues, such as mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse,

incarceration, all the ills of society, but it goes an awful lot deeper than that in many, many cases. These are the people who are not supported.

114 The Hon. A. PICCOLO: I have had a case in my electorate where different departments look at a child in a silo, for example, say DCP and Education. I had a case where these informal parents were going to look after this child and the Department for Education, because the child had a disability, wouldn't accommodate them. The schooling had to be somewhere else and the grandparents said, 'Then, in that case, you can have the children.' The school was happy to have them. They just needed extra funding.

The two departments couldn't agree on who should help fund that. In the end they resolved it, but there was a risk the child would go to DCP and go into residential care. The example you gave was that it cost X amount of money. Does that sort of approach still exist? They don't do a whole-of-government approach: what is best for the child and what is best for the taxpayer basically, so that the child gets a better outcome and the taxpayer gets a better outcome. Do you come across those sorts of examples on a regular basis?

Mr FESZCZAK: Yes. We don't see an awful lot of joined-up thinking between the different departments, which surprised me, to be quite honest. Being new to the sector, I am still learning. It surprised me that we don't have that connection and communication between the departments. I was fortunate to meet the Minister for Education last week, I think it was, and was able to raise a number of issues with him and found him very supportive, so I was grateful for that.

115 The PRESIDING MEMBER: What proportion of your clients are based in regional South Australia?

Mr FESZCZAK: Not the vast majority, probably one-third. There are a lot in the north particularly, the Gawler area, and we have a lot in the Barossa Valley. We have people in the outer metropolitan area and the regional area, is the best way to describe it. We have clients in Mount Gambier, on the Eyre Peninsula and the Yorke Peninsula.

116 The PRESIDING MEMBER: What is your involvement when it comes to Aboriginal children with all the sensitivity around formal care and their kinship care?

Mr FESZCZAK: We have very few grandcarers who have an Aboriginal cultural background. We haven't been very good at collecting data in the past and it is something I am trying to resolve, but we think we have about 240 children who have an Aboriginal cultural background. The majority of those are not with their Aboriginal grandparents but with non-Aboriginal grandparents, which creates issues around culture and connection to culture as well.

117 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Thank you for your presentation and submission today. I think it has been really insightful. It has been very useful. It is an incredibly important issue, so we really appreciate you coming here today to present. Your transcript will be provided to you for you to review and that will be done fairly shortly.

Mr FESZCZAK: Thank you.

118 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Will someone move to accept receipt of the additional information?

Moved by Hon. A. Piccolo.

Carried.

119 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Once again, thank you.

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