

REPORT ON FOSTER CARE - ABC

ABC North & West SA (Port Pirie)
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Report on foster care. There's one inquiry going on that examines the issue in our institutions and churches headed up by Ted Mullighan. Who picks up the pieces in the aftermath of trauma, who cares for **children** who have suffered trauma and are deemed **at risk**? The Australian reported the case of an Adelaide couple who had one such **child** placed in their care, a 12 year old girl had been in foster care since the age of three, who suffered a horrible ordeal where she was raped by an intruder who also murdered her carer. The couple were not told of the **child's** background by the department and had to deal with her behaviour, and informed by a junior social worker 'I've got a university degree, you don't make the decisions'. Freda Briggs talks about a conference she attended on the state of foster care, talks about who was there, and the key issues. She says it will be some time before we can change a culture not only in SA, but nationally. She says foster carers are expected to provide for special needs of **children** in their care, but are not given any information about those **children**. She says the **child** in question was not offered counselling, and would have been highly traumatised by the experience of witnessing a murder. She says one foster parent was a school counsellor in special education, and the foster mother was a qualified teacher and nurse. She says **children** have been removed from bad homes too late when they are severely traumatised, badly damaged, and their behaviours are extreme. She says foster carers are not adequately trained to cope with this, they turn to the social worker responsible for the **child**, and often find it's a new graduate from university with little life experience who has had no **children**. She says you need to be adequately trained to cope with **children** who are severely disturbed and disabled. She talks about the three tiers when it comes to **child protection**. She says we have a good CEO in SA who is trying to implement change in relation to the training of social workers, but there are no national standards for training foster carers. She talks about how we're going to change this 'culture' as foster carers and social workers are being bullied. She says one percent of foster carers are deregistered.

Interviewees: Professor Freda Briggs, Professor in **Child** Development, University of SA
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