

Dear Sophie* and Ben*,

For the past two years I've been working hard to get kids back with their birth families through OzChild's Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) program.

I started my care journey by providing respite care for other carers in the program, so they could have a bit of a break.

I would care for a child one weekend a month or during school holidays. I could see the difference being made, so I decided to give it a go full-time.

As a TFCO carer my job is simple; help change the trajectory of kids in the out-of-home care system, reunite them with their parents or next of kin so they have the opportunity to grow up with family, something many of us take for granted.

I have two granddaughters, I cannot imagine them not being part of my life, so working with Alice* it was always important to me that she had the best chance at being restored to your care.

While I am here for Alice, to prepare her for reunification with you, I am absolutely not here to compete with you, but rather build a bridge for you to be the best parents you can be.

I know you want nothing but the best for your kids, that's why you agreed to give TFCO a shot. And Alice knows that too. We often talk about the challenges families face, and she gets it.

Alice also really wants to come home, she is a smart kid, she knows being with her mum and dad, and her siblings is the best thing for her so has been working hard on the behaviours which made her a little hard to handle.

Being a parent is a tough gig, there's no doubt about that. There is no manual given to you when you are handed your baby. As a TFCO carer I am specially trained to promote emotional and behavioural improvement in kids like Alice. So, while you might think Alice is having a grand old time here with me, believe me it's been far from a holiday. But the best thing is Alice has been learning new skills, better ways to manage her feelings and behaviours and express herself.

I want you to remember how important you are in this process. TFCO is not just about Alice. You have a team of professionals surrounding you, they are there for you, with no judgement.

While I work with Alice, you take all the time you need to get everything you need from those who are here to help you. Make the most of the opportunity to work with your family therapist, they will give you as much support as you need, and they have plenty of advice and insights to offer.

There is no hurry, everybody wants this to work, nobody more so than Alice, she loves you both very much.

So until we celebrate Alice's graduation from the program, and see her returned to you both, we will continue to call you, to share with you our progress and all the good things we are learning. Alice really looks forward to her weekly visits and the time we spend talking to you on the phone.

Sophie, Ben, you are not alone, you are surrounded by a village.

Love and kindness,

Janet*

Your friend and greatest supporter (and TFCO carer)

