

# Annual Report 2024-2025

## Annual Report July 2024 - June 2025

The Foster Care Association of Victoria presents a year in review. As the peak body for foster carers, the Foster Care Association of Victoria's mission is to build Victoria's recognition, respect and resources for foster carers, the volunteers who, every day and night, make a difference in the lives of Victoria's children and young people. Together we stand to make a difference.





VISION

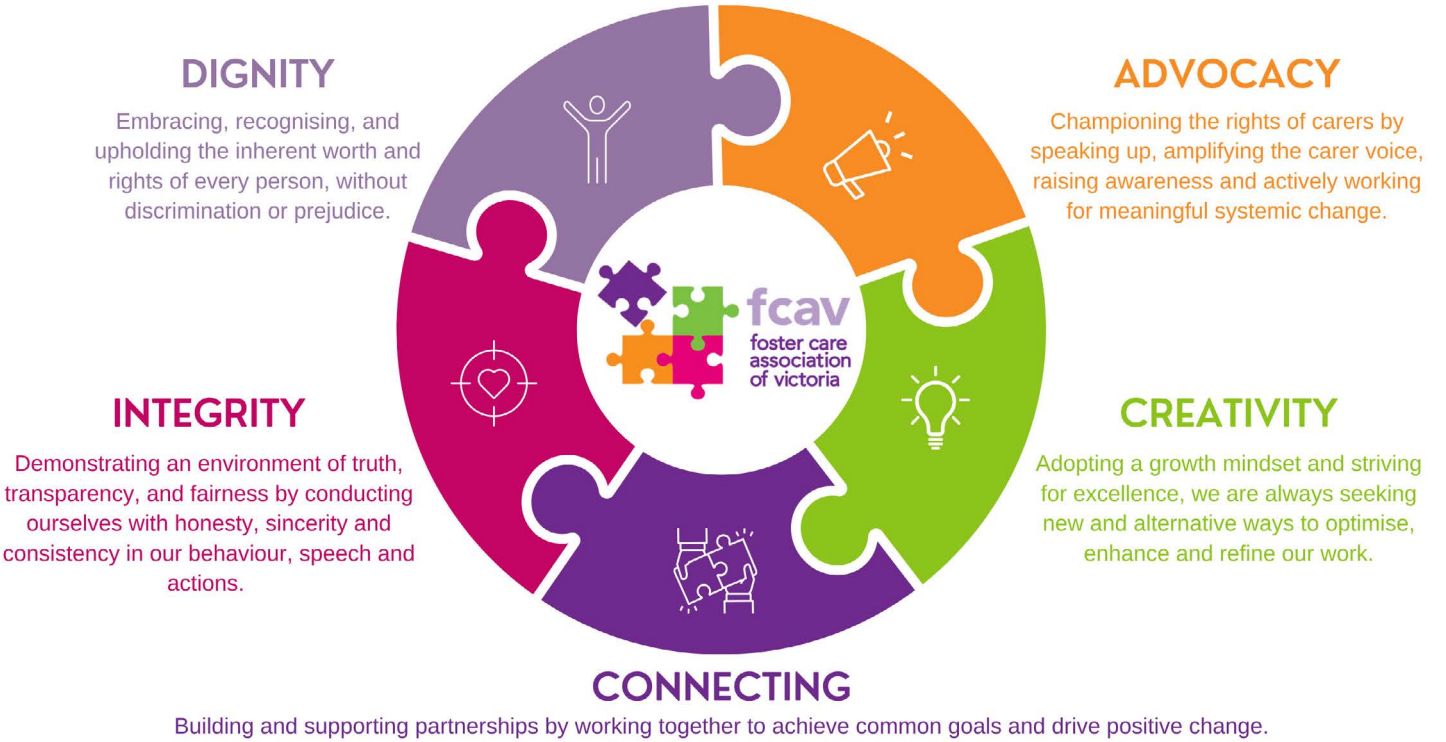
A future where all foster carers are supported, respected and empowered to continue caring, to provide the best possible experiences for children and young people in care, assisting them to reach their full potential.

MISSION

As the peak body in Victoria, we are the united voice of foster carers, advocating for systemic improvements, building productive partnerships and nurturing respectful relationships. We champion foster carers to be recognised and valued for their role in the lives of children and young people in care, and deliver a full range of information and support services to meet carers' needs at all points in their care journey.

Foster Care Association of Victoria

VALUES



**Cover image:** FCAV carers, board and staff were pleased to meet with Minister for Children and Disability, Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn MP in October 2024, who hosted a delegation of foster and permanent carers for an Early Childhood Roundtable. More on page 16.

**Artwork, page 18:** Artist: Paul McCann, **Clan:** Marrithiyel, **Title:** Connections.  
Paul is a Marrithiyel man and a traditional owner of the land of the South West region of the Daly River (Northern Territory). Paul is a talented emerging artist who joined the Victorian Justice Department as an Indigenous Prison Officer then moved into an Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer role to better assist the Aboriginal community. Paul provides art and cultural support to Indigenous inmates across Victoria.



**Acknowledgement of Country**  
The FCAV acknowledges the unceded sovereignty of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their continued connection to Country – including lands, cultural knowledges and their peoples – and pay our respect to Elders past and present. We advocate for systemic change that honours the place of culture, family, community and connection to country in the lives of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people as they grow.

# President Report

## Natalie Pryor

President of the Board of Directors



### **Welcome to the Annual Report of the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) for 2024/25.**

Five and a half years ago, my partner and I were accredited as foster carers and, almost immediately, two life-changing things happened. First, we welcomed two little people into our home in an emergency situation, who are now the centre of our lives. Second, I felt a profound shift in my identity, marked by a deep passion and drive to support the extraordinary community we had just become part of - carers.

As someone deeply involved in the foster care community as a carer, advocate, and passionate supporter, I've had the privilege of serving on the FCAV Board these past three years, and I am honoured to step into the role of President this year.

*"To truly invest in care, we must invest in those who provide it."*

I have immense respect for the work carers do every day in providing stability, hope and love to the children and young people in their care. I know firsthand the challenges, rewards, and unwavering commitment it takes to fulfil this unique and invaluable role in our community. Carers are the backbone of the wider care network and you are at the heart of everything we do at FCAV. It's our privilege to represent foster carers across this state.

Despite a decline in carer numbers (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures report a net loss of **267 Victorian foster care households** in 2023/24), FCAV's membership continues to grow, with more carers drawing on our supports to navigate increasingly complex demands. In what is a challenging time across the foster care field, we are more driven than ever to adapt and respond to the evolving care landscape.

This year, we've seen remarkable moments of care and courage - from a carer supporting a newborn baby with complex medical needs, to a carer who helped a teenager re-engage with school after years of absence, and a family who opened their home to siblings so they could stay together. These moments, and so many more, repeated countless times across our community, are proof of the extraordinary difference carers make.

While we celebrate these achievements, we also acknowledge the challenges. Too often, foster carers are under-recognised, under-supported, and left out of the conversations that shape the systems they uphold. Respect must be more than words - it must be shown through inclusion, investment, and genuine recognition.

As FCAV engages in sector-wide reform discussions, we're equally focused on tackling the issues carers face right now. Our Carer Census and direct conversations with members tell a clear story: carers in this state receive the lowest care allowance in the country; many feel undervalued, frustrated, and overlooked. These pressures are unsustainable - and yet we have carers who continue to show up with resilience, skill, and heart. That dedication deserves more than thanks. It deserves action.

Foster carers are highly skilled, unpaid professionals. Their lived experience, alongside the perspectives of children and young people, must guide change if we want reform that is both effective and sustainable. At FCAV, we are committed to ensuring carers have a meaningful role in shaping change - because when their voices lead the way, reforms become more than policies; they become real, impactful improvements that positively shape the lives of children, young people, and carers alike.

FCAV is driven by the passion, expertise, and commitment of our carers, members, Board, and exceptional staff, led by our CEO, Samantha Hauge. Whether supporting individuals, influencing policy, or amplifying carer voices through campaigns, their vital work is truly appreciated.

There's important and hopeful work ahead, and FCAV will continue strengthening partnerships with carers, agencies, and government, towards a fairer, more sustainable care network for all.

Thank you for your extraordinary dedication and care. You are amazing.

# CEO Report

## Samantha Hauge

Chief Executive Officer



### ***I am pleased to present the 2024/25 Annual Report of the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV).***

The past year has marked another period of significant growth in service delivery and advocacy at the FCAV. We were proud to welcome Natalie Pryor as our new Board President. As a dedicated carer and long-time advocate, Natalie brings carer insight and enthusiasm to the role. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Megan Sadlier, who concluded her outstanding eight-year tenure on the Board, including four years as President.

Our membership continues to grow, with an increase of **300 new members** this year we are more than **4,500** members strong. The FCAV Carer Support Team responded to more than **1,000 calls**, delivering over **2,200 hours** of advice, support, and advocacy. This represents a **500-hour increase** from the previous year, reflecting both growing need and our unwavering commitment to meet it.

Demand for the Carer Assistance Program, which offers free therapeutic counselling to carers, rose significantly, highlighting the increasing pressures on carers and the critical importance of mental health and wellbeing supports.

As the only independent service in Victoria dedicated exclusively to supporting foster carers, FCAV plays a vital role in helping carers navigate the complexities of the out-of-home care system and challenges of providing care to children and young people, many of whom have experienced trauma and have complex and challenging behaviours. We advocate based on the lived experiences of our members, the frontline insights from our Carer Support Team, findings from our Carer Census, and feedback gathered through forums, consultations, and events.

This year, we delivered an extensive program of carer engagement sessions, with hundreds of carers attending more than **20** in-person and online events across the state. These included webinars, New Carer Induction sessions, Art Therapy workshops, and our Chat with the CEO sessions. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and these sessions continue to inform both our advocacy and the services we offer.

A standout achievement was the launch of the **Parliamentary Friends of the Foster Care Association of Victoria** in the Victorian Parliament. This cross-party initiative provides a crucial new platform for political engagement. We acknowledge the leadership of **Paul Edbrooke MP** and **Roma Britnell MP**, who co-chair this group and champion a bipartisan focus on foster care.

Our team conducted **20 Roadshow** visits across metropolitan and regional Victoria, building vital connections with carers, agencies, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). These visits not only provide an opportunity for the FCAV to promote our services, they provide an invaluable platform to hear from agencies about some unique challenges carers face in local areas. These visits, in turn, have established a number of regular liaison meetings with team leaders, helping to address practice issues and reduce challenges for carers.

One of our most pressing campaigns this year focused on the urgent need to raise care allowances. Victoria continues to offer the lowest Level 1 care allowance in Australia, a stark contrast to the **20% increase** recently announced in New South Wales, backed by **\$1.2 billion investment** to reform their out-of-home care system. Carers in Victoria are consistently leaving the system at significantly higher rates than in any other state. Our campaign, backed by more than **3,300 heartfelt petitions**, calls for a fair and immediate increase to the allowance, as well as broader structural reforms that centre the needs of children and the carers who support them daily.

At the national level, FCAV has strengthened its voice through active participation in the National Foster and Kinship Care Collective. This strategic alignment is driving consistency in messaging across jurisdictions and amplifying and expanding our impact on national policy discussions. It remains an essential partnership in the push for systemic reform that transcends state borders.

To all our carers, I warmly and sincerely thank you. Your dedication, strength, and compassion are the reason for every advancement we make. To our Ambassadors Fiona and Michael te Wierik, our Board, staff, and sector allies, thank you for your tireless work and partnership. Every step forward has been fuelled by collaboration, evidence, and the shared resolve to build a stronger, fairer foster care system in Victoria.

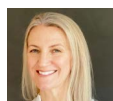


# 2024-2025 Team



**From left:** Biba Dickson, Tessa Hughes, Anna Viola, Rowan Pulford, Sarah Wauters, Bronwyn Hume, Samantha Hauge, Tonya Bavaro, Leigh Hillmann and Deb Collard (Not pictured: Jake Iaria, Niraj Shah, Rebecca Butterworth).

## FCAV Board of Directors



Natalie Pryor, President  
(from May 2025)



Rob Whyte, Director



Kym Philips, Vice President  
(from May 2025)



Melinda Carlyle, Director



Stephen Bowers, Treasurer  
(co-opted)



Nicole Williams, Director (co-opted)



David Gutteridge, Secretary



Ali Haidari, Director  
(co-opted)



Cathy Hutton, Director



Alexis King, HR Consultant  
(co-opted)

Sarah Witty, Director (exited 15 May 2025), Megan Sadlier, President (exited May 2025), Janine Voisey, Director (exited 15 May 2025), Mathew Fredricks, Secretary (exited 13 September 2024).

## FCAV Carer Ambassadors

Fiona and Michael te Wierik



## FCAV Staff

**Chief Executive Officer** – Samantha Hauge

**Communications Manager** – Anna Viola

**Office Manager** – Bronwyn Hume

**Member Relations Coordinator** - Sarah Wauters

**Policy Analyst** – Rowan Pulford

**Finance Manager** – Niraj Shah

**Finance Officer** - Rebecca Butterworth

**Partnership Manager** – Lisa Silver (exited 12 September 2024)

**Carer Support Manager** – Tessa Hughes

**Carer Advocate** - Leigh Hillman

**Carer Advocate** – Biba Dickson

**Carer Advocate/ L&D Coordinator** – Deb Collard

**Carer Assistance Program Counsellor** – Tonya Bavaro

**Carer Assistance Program Counsellor** – Jake Iaria

# With Gratitude

By investing in the Foster Care Association of Victoria, donors and subscribers assist the organisation to provide the support that carers need beyond our core funding. Your support helps us give carers the tools, advice, and advocacy they need to provide safe and nurturing homes for children in foster care. By investing in FCAV, you directly strengthen foster households and improve the lives of thousands of children across Victoria.



The Foster Care Association of Victoria is funded through the state government of Victoria, agency subscribers, foundation grants, fundraising campaign donors and the generous volunteer support of individuals and organisations. Thank you to all subscribers and donors who provided the FCAV with generous donations throughout the year.

## Case Studies: Your Donations in Action

### Carer Assistance Program

The Carer Assistance Program at FCAV was developed in response to FCAV's acknowledgement of carers' increased stress and complex needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. FCAV was able to develop and pilot the program through generous seed funding from a large donor. This Program is now a core offering, providing vital and exemplary therapeutic support to carers in their role.

### FCAV Carer Events

The FCAV's Carer Retreats, Cultural Days and Conference scholarships were developed through funds raised by generous donations from the community. The FCAV has long held a mandate to offer statewide, independent opportunities for carer peer to peer support to meet and share experiences and focus on self-care.

### Donations

Donations of goods, services and gifts such as tickets to events, quilts, toys and other donated opportunities facilitated through the FCAV are invaluable gifts for carer households. These gifts and donations serve to demonstrate the value that carers hold in our community, as well as supporting them to provide a fun day out or a new toy for the children in their care. Carers often put themselves last in order to provide for the children in their care, so a bottle of lotion or a day at the theatre is welcome respite.

## Pro bono and Volunteer Support

**Kate Gray**  
Proof reading



A huge thank you to Digby Morell and the students at Parade College who continue to support the FCAV Carer Celebration each year. Carers can take home Eddie's Backpacks filled with life and education essentials for children and young people.

Thank you also to Hope in a Suitcase for the donations of toys, games, clothing and more!



### Eddie's Backpacks





## MAKING A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION THIS EOFY?



www.fcav.org.au

(03) 9416 4292

THE FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA IS A REGISTERED CHARITY WITH DEDUCTIBLE GIFT RECIPIENT STATUS – THAT MEANS ALL DONATIONS OVER \$2 ARE FULLY TAX DEDUCTIBLE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES.

YOUR VALUABLE DONATION FEEDS DIRECTLY INTO THE SERVICES AND SUPPORTS WE PROVIDE TO THE FOSTER CARERS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE IN VICTORIA. THANKYOU!



SCAN TO DONATE TODAY!

Thank you to the generous donors who made a tax deductible donation to the Foster Care Association of Victoria during our **End of Financial Year** drive.

As a registered charity, individuals and companies can make a valuable contribution towards the support the FCAV provides to foster carers of children and young people across the state and receive a full tax deduction for every amount over \$2.

Please consider FCAV as your charity of choice:

[shoutforgood.com/b/AfES9F](https://shoutforgood.com/b/AfES9F)

The FCAV is a registered donation partner for Victoria's Container Deposit Scheme. This year, we held a fundraising drive in partnership with local pub, the **Marquis of Lorne**. Funds raised were donated to the FCAV and used to sponsor a foster family to enjoy a free restaurant meal.



Thank you to Faye (centre) who delivered over 50 handmade quilts to the FCAV in November 2024 on behalf of the **Australian Quilters Association**. This is not the first delivery of these beautiful quilts which have gone to carers for the babies, children, and young people in their care. Carers tell us how much these quilts mean; to be able to give children in their care a unique, handmade quilt of their own.



## Our Donors

Thank you to these supporters who made significant donations to the FCAV and our carer members throughout the financial year. **For more details on making a donation, you can visit the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) website at:** [fcav.org.au/get-involved/donate-now](https://fcav.org.au/get-involved/donate-now)

- Kryal Castle - Family Pass
- Circus Quirkus - Free tickets
- Pancake Kitchen Ballarat - 8 x \$25 vouchers, 8 x \$50 vouchers
- Pancake Parlour - 5 x \$50 vouchers
- My Forever Family NSW - blankets and knitted toys
- Patagonia via Good360 - \$8,000 worth of clothing for \$480
- Lego via Good360
- BIG4 Holiday Park - Eildon - \$150 voucher
- Rocky Creek Strawberry Farm - 5 x \$30 vouchers
- Metartworld - 2 x family passes
- Link Community and Transport - Carer's Day Out
- Melbourne Fringe Festival - Free tickets
- Jo, Catnaps Pyjamas - Children's handmade pyjamas
- Melbourne Comedy Festival - Free tickets
- Victorian World Festival of Magic - Free tickets
- Amaze'n Things Phillip Island - 1 x family pass
- Ashcombe Maze and Gardens - 5 x family passes
- Australian Quilters Association - Quilts
- Grilled Restaurant Local Matters Community Program - \$300
- Scienceworks - 2 adult passes
- Wavlink and Brookfield farm - Free carer lunches and dinners. June and July at Zest restaurant in Glen Waverley for carer families
- Marquis of Lorne - Donation and CDS Vic Fundraising Partner
- AG Theatre family pass - Three Little Pigs
- Container Deposit Scheme (CDS Vic) - Donations
- Karen Brown - Donation over \$100
- Thomas Robertson - Donation over \$100
- Joanna Leece - Donation over \$100
- James Philpot - Donation over \$100
- Profile Products Australia - 50% discount for photo cubes

## Special General Meeting of the FCAV

The FCAV Association Rules is a governing document that describes the Association's basic processes and structure – a roadmap for how the FCAV operates and a legal requirement for the FCAV and our members to follow.

The FCAV Association Rules were last updated in 2017, so a review and update was timely.

A Special General Meeting to amend the FCAV Association Rules was held on 30 April 2025, inviting members to vote on the proposed amendments to the Rules.

We extend our sincere thanks to all members who participated to reach quorum and pass the changes. The engagement of members plays a vital role in ensuring that FCAV's governance structures remain strong, transparent, and responsive to the evolving needs of the organisation.

The registered voting members unanimously accepted the proposed amendments.

In summary, the main changes are:

- To allow for a meeting of the FCAV members (including an annual general meeting) to be held wholly or as a hybrid meeting online to provide all members a reasonable opportunity to participate and allow electronic voting.
- To remove references relating to subscription or joining fees as there are none for FCAV membership.
- To update the roles of the secretary as some tasks that were listed as responsibilities of the secretary are performed by other organisational staff. [Read full Association Rules](#)

## Our Agency Subscribers

Thank you to the Community Service Organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations that formed our subscription base for 2024/2025.



- Anchor Community Care Ltd.
- Anglicare Victoria
- Baptcare
- Berry Street
- Brophy Family and Youth Services
- CAFS Child and Family Services Ballarat
- GEGAC Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd.

- Key Assets
- Life Without Barriers
- Lighthouse Foundation
- MacKillop Family Services
- Mallee Family Care
- Mallee Accommodation and Support Program
- Mallee District Aboriginal Services
- MELI
- Njernda Aboriginal Corporation

- OzChild
- Quantum Support Services
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd.
- Uniting Vic.Tas
- Upper Murray Family Care
- Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency
- Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Family Services



The FCAV's support, resources and advocacy helps retain foster carers and supports them to provide great care. Join us... [fcav.org.au](http://fcav.org.au)

### CARER HOTLINE



# 1,002

carer enquiries, delivering  
2,200 hours of support in  
the 12 months to June 2025

# 4,593

welcomed 238 full foster carer  
members and 62 associate members  
representing a net increase of 300  
members in year to June 2025

### MEMBERS





# Membership Report

Over the past year, the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) welcomed **238** new full members and **62** associate members, increasing our total membership to more than **4,500**. This growth reflects FCAV's capacity to represent, support and advocate for foster carers who are providing vital care to children and young people.

FCAV members are spread throughout metro, regional and rural Victoria. FCAV communications, forums and support are accessible and inclusive, with growing engagement from carers of culturally diverse backgrounds.

Member engagement is supported through regular newsletters, social media updates, and quarterly check-ins but starts with new members receiving a welcome pack via both email and post, outlining the wide range of free support services available through FCAV, including simple ways to connect with the Carer Support Team.

The FCAV places a strong focus on proactive outreach, with staff making regular contact by phone and email to check in with members, respond to queries, and provide tailored support based on individual circumstances.

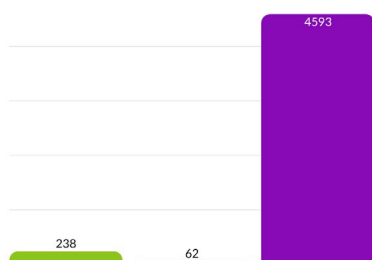
We continue to provide a platform for carers to be heard through carer forums, Carer Voices profiles, Chats with the CEO, events, campaigns and surveys, which not only build a sense of community but directly inform our advocacy and service delivery priorities. Members' lived experiences are essential to shaping policy recommendations to improve outcomes for both carers and the children in their care.

Looking ahead, the FCAV is focused on enhancing its member engagement, including plans to expand outreach capacity to proactively check in and support busy carers.

## FCAV MEMBERSHIP FY 2024-2025



● New Full Members ● New Associate Members  
● Total Membership FY 24/25



## Meet Our Carers



Simon Abrahams has been a foster carer for nearly a decade, dedicating weekends to providing respite care for children who need temporary stability and support.

"It all started before I met Hamish," he says, referring to his partner, who is now an accredited carer as well. "At first, Hamish would just help out here and there, but then he got more involved, and now we do this together."

[Read on for more about Simon Abrahams](#)



[Read more on our website - Our Carers](#)

## Carer Snapshot Report 2025

The 2025 Foster Carer Snapshot Report collected in March 2025, indicates a continued decline of active carer households in Victoria. There are **1,546** active carer households available to take placements of children and young people in Victoria, a **9%** decrease (totalling **137** carer households) compared to last year.

The data by DFFH Division shows the number of active carer households in the East and North Divisions have been comparable throughout the past four years. The South Division saw a significant decrease in active carer households in 2024 but then bounced back this year with a **16%** increase. The West Division maintained relatively stable numbers of active carer households from 2022 to 2024, but there was a notable decline this year with a drop of nearly **26%**.

The foster care system is experiencing a consistent reduction in carer households which impacts placement availability and stability for children and young people. While exits outpaced newly accredited carers again, there were **13** fewer exits than during the previous period. [Read the full Carer Snapshot Report on the FCAV website.](#)

## 2025 FOSTER CARER SNAPSHOT REPORT



The 2025 figures show over 100 fewer active carer households than the previous year

**1546**

Active Foster  
Carer Households

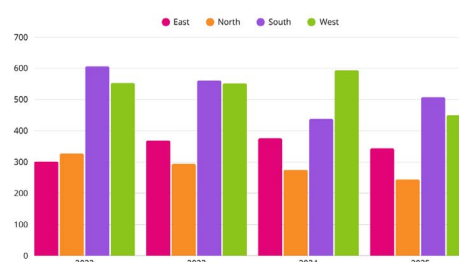
**9%**

Decrease from  
previous year

## 2025 FOSTER CARER SNAPSHOT REPORT



Active households from 2022 to 2025 by DFFH divisions.



# Carer Support Team Report



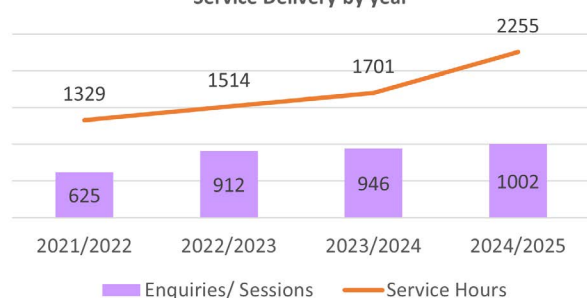
Full CST Report 2024/25 available on the website

The Carer Support Team comprises **Carer Advocates** providing information, advice and advocacy to foster carers (enquiries), **Carer Assistance Program**, providing short-term therapeutic counselling to foster and permanent carers & adoptive parents (sessions) and **Learning & Development**, delivering a range of forums for carers. The Carer Support Team responded to and closed **1,002** foster care enquiries/ CAP sessions, delivering **2,255** hours of service in the 2024/2025 financial year.

## Carer Advocates

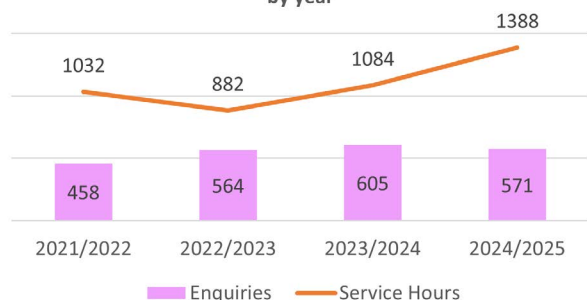
**Figure 1** shows the number of enquiries/ sessions steadily increasing over the past 4 years with a significant increase of over **32%** in service hours this year.

Figure 1: Carer Support Team Service Delivery by year



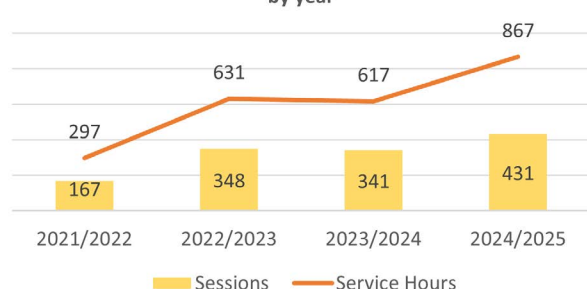
**Figure 2** shows foster care enquiries over 4 years. While the number of enquiries remains consistent, hours of support increased significantly in 2024/25. Support for carers through CIMS investigations continues to dominate.

Figure 2: Foster Care Enquiries by year



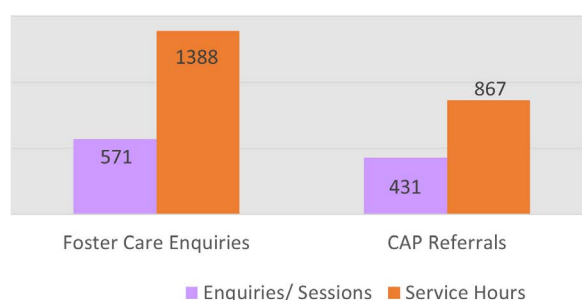
**Figure 3** shows CAP sessions over 4 years. The number of sessions doubled when the service was extended to permanent carers and adoptive families in 2022/2023 and continued to rise when the service offering expanded to an extra day a week in 2023/24. This year has seen a significant increase in carer enquiries and hours of service.

Figure 3: CAP Sessions by year



**Figure 4** shows the Carer Support Team service delivery for the 2024/2025 period.

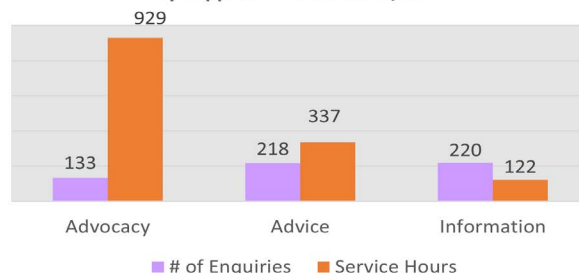
Figure 4: Carer Support Team Service Delivery by Type 2024/25



## Foster Care Enquiries

**Figure 5** shows the Carer Advocates provided advocacy to **133**, advice to **218** and information to **220** foster care enquiries in the 2024/2025 period.

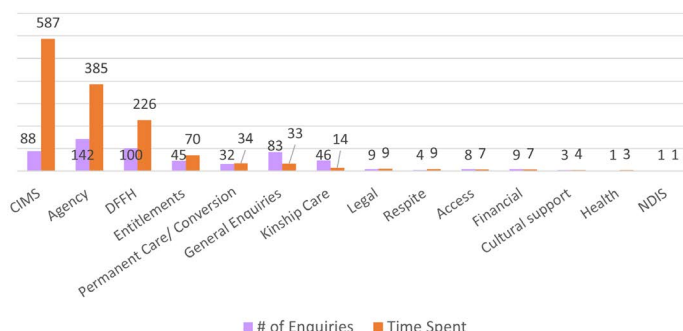
Figure 5: Foster Care Enquiries by Support Provided 2023/2024



## Categories

The most time was spent responding to foster care enquiries relating to CIMS investigations, agency and DFFH matters. Considerable time was spent on entitlements (carer allowance rates/ level) and permanent care (foster to permanent care conversion).

Figure 6: Foster Care Enquiries by Category 2024/2025

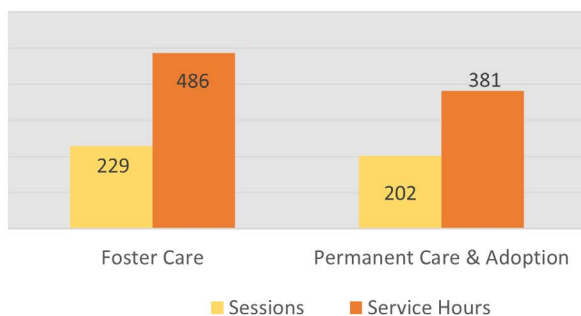




## Carer Assistance Program (CAP)

The Carer Assistance Program delivered **431** sessions of therapeutic short-term counselling, delivering **867** hours of service in the 2024/2025 period.

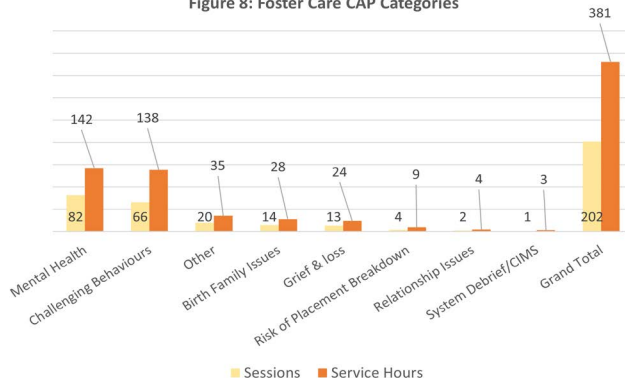
Figure 7: CAP Sessions by Type of Care 2024/25



### Foster Care CAP Categories

Mental health, CIMS investigations and grief & loss continue to be the most common issues for foster carers seeking emotional support.

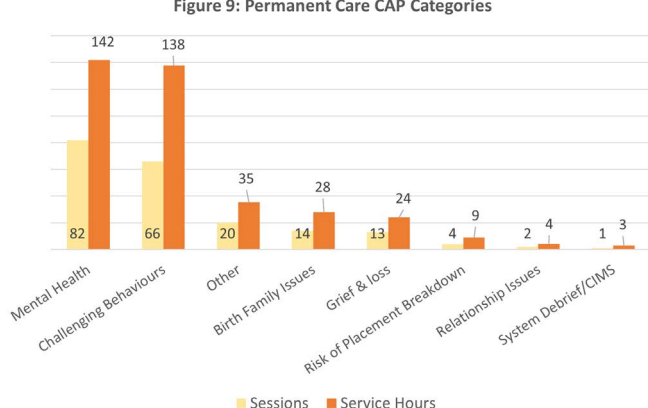
Figure 8: Foster Care CAP Categories



### Permanent Care CAP Categories

Most permanent carers are seeking emotional support due to the mental health and challenging behaviours of children in their care. Birth family issues and grief & loss were also common themes in the year.

Figure 9: Permanent Care CAP Categories



Above: Jake Iaria (Left) and Tonya Bavaro, Therapeutic Practitioners, Carer Assistance Program

## Carer Assistance Program (CAP) Annual Report

Throughout the 2024 – 2025 reporting period, the Carer Assistance Program (CAP) continued its collaboration with Permanent Care and Adoptive Families (PCA Families) to enhance visibility and accessibility of the service for permanent carers and adoptive families, alongside ongoing support for foster carers through the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV).

As part of this collaboration, CAP met with PCA Families to connect with new staff members and share detailed information about the program, helping to strengthen referral pathways and build shared understanding across both services. This relationship has been instrumental in maintaining consistent communication regarding referrals and co-developing strategies to promote CAP through newsletters and targeted e-letters to carers.

The CAP team remains committed to strengthening collaborative relationships and providing timely, compassionate support to Victoria's carer community.

Tonya and Jake  
Carer Assistance Program, Therapeutic Practitioners

“Thank you for this service. Jake has been a lifesaver. He's very understanding of our position. He validated my feelings which made things a little easier. Thank you again.”

“Tonya was an amazing support for me. She has a very gentle approach and brings out complex issues to the surface very effectively in a non intrusive manner.”

# Learning and Development

Over the past year, FCAV delivered a broad range of learning and development opportunities for foster carers, agency, and ACCO staff across Victoria. These initiatives aimed to strengthen carer wellbeing, build sector capability, and support improved outcomes for children in care.

## Webinars

Three webinars were held, focusing on key areas of practice:

- **CIMS and Carer Support for Agency and ACCO staff** – Emphasised the importance of maintaining contact with carers during the CIMS process and ensuring they receive timely information and support.
- **Supporting Carers' Own Children** – Highlighted the often-overlooked needs of carers' biological or permanent care children and the benefits of ensuring their wellbeing.
- **Disenfranchised Grief** – Explored the impact of unresolved grief and loss for carers and provided strategies for carers to manage emotional challenges and seek support.

## Creative Arts and Self-Care Training

Five sessions across Victoria were provided to carers and agency staff who engaged in creative arts sessions aimed at promoting self-care, emotional regulation, and mindfulness. These sessions offered tools carers could use for their own wellbeing and with the children in their care. Many expressed that the training gave them a chance to reflect, recharge, and feel connected with others in the sector.



## New Member Inductions

Three induction sessions for new carer members introduced the FCAV team, clarified available supports, and encouraged connection. Carers reported feeling more confident to reach out for assistance and expressed a strong interest in peer connection, prompting plans for informal social events to build community.



## Chats with the CEO

Eight separate sessions were held for carers and agency/ACCO staff, providing a platform to share insights and raise sector-wide concerns.

Three key themes emerged:

- the need for accurate and timely information in placement referrals
- delays in achieving permanency and securing medical permissions
- financial pressures on carers, including inadequate allowances and lack of superannuation.

## Carer Day Out – Daylesford

A regional day trip in October 2024, in partnership and with funding by Link Community and Transport, offered carers a relaxing opportunity to connect with peers and take time out from their caring role.

Link Community and Transport provides in-home, mobility and community services and offered to host a day with foster carers as a part of their social support offerings.

The FCAV was able to take a delegation of foster carers to participate in this fantastic day out in Daylesford, including lunch at the Boathouse Restaurant.

Link hosted a raffle, and 5 lucky carers won a bag of goodies to take home.

Thank you to Shade Shrovan and Link for partnering with us to provide this opportunity for around 20 of our hard working volunteer foster carers.



Above: FCAV and Link Community and Transport "Carer's Day Out".

FCAV's learning and development program this year has played a vital role in equipping carers and sector staff with knowledge, connection, and emotional support. Continued investment in targeted training and meaningful engagement remains critical to sustaining a resilient and valued carer community.





THE NATIONAL  
**Kinship, Permanent  
& Foster Care**  
CONFERENCE 2024

**9-11 August 2024**  
Melbourne Convention  
& Exhibition Centre



**Above:** Jake Iaria, CAP Practitioner presenting to an auditorium of carers on systemic mental health concerns for carers and CAP support.



**Above L-R:** Kym Phillips, Vice President, Natalie Pryor, President and Jake Iaria, CAP Practitioner hosting the FCAV stall on day 1 of the Conference.



Tessa Hughes, Manager, of the FCAV Carer Support Team, was delighted to accept an invitation to be part of a panel discussion at the launch of MacKillop Family Services commissioned research on 'Understanding the impacts of placement transitions on MacKillop foster carers and their children' and the launch of their podcast that explores the grief and loss foster care families experience when a child leaves their home.

Tessa joined the panel with a current foster carer, a biological child of a foster carer and the MacKillop Principal Practitioner and spoke about the importance of support for foster carers in this area.

In May 2025, FCAV hosted a Disenfranchised Grief Webinar with Tonya Bavaro and Jake Iaria – Therapeutic Practitioners in FCAV's Carer Assistance Program. Many carers have or will experience grief and loss in the course of their caring journey and the webinar explored the specific nature of disenfranchised grief. The webinar covered the key issues and strategies for navigating carer grief – both personally and systemically.

Webinar available here: [fca.org.au/news/disenfranchised\\_grief\\_webinar](https://fca.org.au/news/disenfranchised_grief_webinar)

# Being Heard FCAV's Advocacy Program

The FCAV continues to work in key partnerships to advocate for systemic changes to carer conditions across several areas which carers have identified as negatively affecting carer morale, retention and recruitment.

## Parliamentary Friends of the FCAV

The FCAV is thrilled to announce the establishment of the Parliamentary Friends of the Foster Care Association of Victoria. This initiative brings together members of the Victorian parliament from across the political spectrum, united in a shared commitment to champion the vital role foster carers play in the lives of children and young people in care in Victoria.



The FCAV was honoured to attend the first session of the Parliamentary Friends of the Foster Care Association of Victoria Group in March 2025. The group is an initiative established to bring together members from across the political spectrum, united by a shared commitment to championing the vital role foster carers play in the lives of children and young people in care in Victoria.

The FCAV is grateful to Paul Edbrooke, Labor Member for Frankston and Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, for establishing this multi-party collective of Victorian MPs who share our vision for improving the foster care system in Victoria and recognising and respecting the enormous contribution volunteer foster carers make to the state, to the community, and to the children and young people in their care.

With 42 Members of Parliament from a range of political parties signing on to be part of the Parliamentary Friends

group, it promises to be a game-changer for advocacy and awareness.

The FCAV is grateful to the co-chairs and each of the parliamentarians who have signed up to support a strategic, state-based approach to improvements in the child protection system and we look forward to working with each of them.

The Group's co-chairs are:

- Paul Edbrooke MP, State Member for Frankston, Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer.
- Roma Britnell MP, State Member for South West Coast, Shadow Minister for Child Protection.
- Secretary - Ann-Marie Hermans MP, State Member for South Eastern Metropolitan.



### Cr. Jenna Davey-Burns: Foster Carer and Mayor of Kingston

FCAV CEO Samantha Hauge, had the true pleasure of meeting with the Mayor of Kingston and dedicated foster carer, Cr. Jenna Davey-Burns in July 2024.

Cr. Davey-Burns is passionate about foster care and was supportive and open about the importance of FCAV's advocacy from a political, as well as personal, view, relating to her own experiences caring for children and young people in Victoria's care sector. Cr. Davey-Burns is looking forward to working with FCAV to progress work towards a system that better supports carers and the children in their care.



## National Foster and Kinship Care Collective



FCAV CEO, Samantha Hauge, is the Victorian ambassador to the important National Foster and Kinship Care Collective, along with carer peak and representative counterparts from states and territories around Australia.

The Collective meets regularly on aligned advocacy for the rights, needs and wellbeing of all volunteer foster and kinship carers and the children and young people in their care. Australia-wide, a focus is on recruiting, training, retaining and supporting carers for the best outcomes for the children in home-based care.

As well as pressing for change directly with relevant federal ministers, the NFKCC also advocates for reforms through mechanisms such as federal pre-budget submissions and recommendations to the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) 'Carer payment review and refresh of the Out-of-Home Care standards'. The NFKCC has presented at Out-of-Home Care conferences around Australia and been represented on national working groups to ensure that supporting the role of carers, and the children they care for, is on the national agenda.

The NFKCC was proud to launch its official website in March 2025: [nationalfosterandkinshipcarecollective.com.au](https://nationalfosterandkinshipcarecollective.com.au)

The Collective's aligned priorities include:

1. raising the status of Australian foster and kinship carers
2. appropriate financial support for Australian foster and kinship carers
3. enhancing the wellbeing of Australian foster and kinship carers
4. a national approach to community-led care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
5. disability access and support
6. legal services access for carers.

The NFKCC has successfully influenced change to:

- Medicare dental for children in home-based care.
- Streamlining Medicare referral processes.
- Name change and expansion of the Grandparents Adviser Line Service to include Kinship and Foster carers.

The NFKCC continues its work on:

- Family Tax Benefits - meetings with the Department of Social Services on eligibility requirements for a range of Federal Government family tax and welfare benefits including Family Tax Benefit A&B, Parenting Payment and Child Dental Benefits Schedule
- the NFKCC this year, engaged legal assistance to look more closely at carer eligibility for federal family welfare supports, including Family Tax Benefit A&B and the Child Care Subsidy
- review of kinship & foster care allowances.

The NFKCC meets regularly online, and takes every opportunity to meet in-person. During the year, the NFKCC met in person in Melbourne and also in Tasmania where they were hosted by the Tasmanian Commissioner for Children and Young People, Isabella Crompton.

**Below: (L-R)** Kim Backhouse, Foster and Kinship Carers Association Tasmania; Bryan Smith, CEO Queensland Foster and Kinship Care; Amanda Thompson, CEO Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT; Samantha Hauge, CEO Foster Care Association of Victoria; Renée Leigh, CEO Carers for Kids NSW-Adopt Change; Fiona Endacott, CEO Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA. (Not pictured: Fay Alford OAM, Chief Executive Officer, Foster Care Association, WA).



**Above:** at Thrive 2024 National Summit: A Home & Healing for Safe and Supported Kids held by Adopt Change in Sydney at Allianz Stadium. **(L-R)** Fiona Endacott, CEO Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA, Bryan Smith, CEO Queensland Foster and Kinship Care, Samantha Hauge, CEO Foster Care Association of Victoria and Renée Leigh, CEO Carers for Kids NSW-Adopt Change.

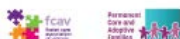
# Being Heard Care Allowance Campaign



## Victorian Care Allowance Campaign

The Care Allowance is too low to cover the costs of caring for children and young people in Victoria.

IT'S TIME TO INCREASE THE CARE ALLOWANCE.



Level 1, first age-range care allowance rates per jurisdiction



The care allowance in Victoria has not received a net increase since 2016, nor has it been indexed to inflation. Its value continues to erode year on year from an already inadequate baseline. Children in home-based care deserve to be supported at least as well as those in other states. However, Victoria's allowance is well below every other jurisdiction and falling. This shortfall places considerable financial strain on carer families and contributes to the highest rates of carer attrition nationwide.

The Care Allowance Campaign has continued momentum over the past year. By 30 June 2025, more than 3,370 heartfelt submissions had been received from carers, care leavers, young people, and their supporters, each calling for urgent reform. The campaign has also secured strong public backing from leading sector organisations, agencies, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, including:

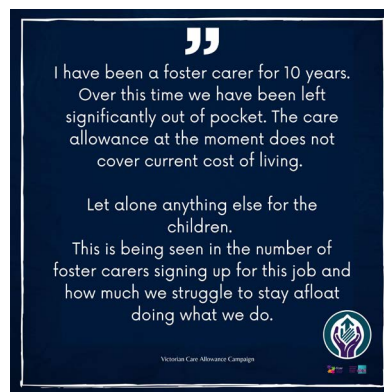
Anchor Community Care Ltd - Anglicare Victoria - Berry Street - Child & Family Services - CAFS Ballarat - Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) - CREATE Foundation - Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) - Lighthouse Foundation - MacKillop Family Services - Mallee Family Care (MFC) - Mallee Accommodation and Support Program (MASP) - Mirabel Foundation - OzChild - Permanent Care and Adoptive Families (PCA Families) - Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA) - Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS).

Following the recent State Budget, FCAV has engaged directly with the Treasurer's office to reinforce the urgency of addressing this issue. These consultations have centred on the immediate need to bring Victoria's care allowance into line with other states and to ensure it is indexed annually, so carers can continue to provide safe and stable homes for children and young people.

Sign the petition today. Every story counts.



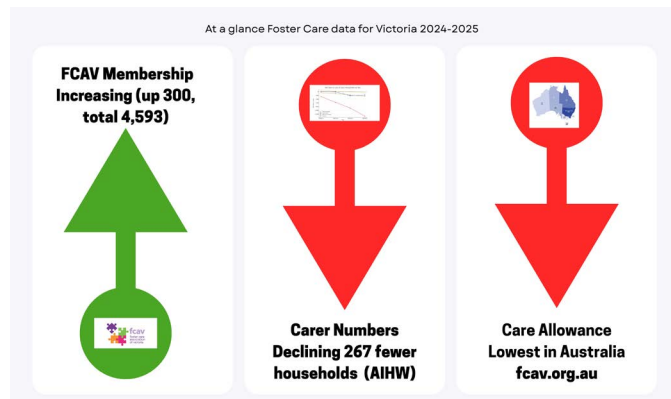
[Find out more about the Care Allowance Campaign](https://www.fcav.org.au)



**Left:** Kinship, Permanent and Foster Carers continue to submit to the Petition to Increase the Care Allowance in Victoria.



**Left:** VACCA joined the public campaign in 2024 calling on the Government to increase the Care Allowance in support of carers and the children in their care.





# The Carer Voice

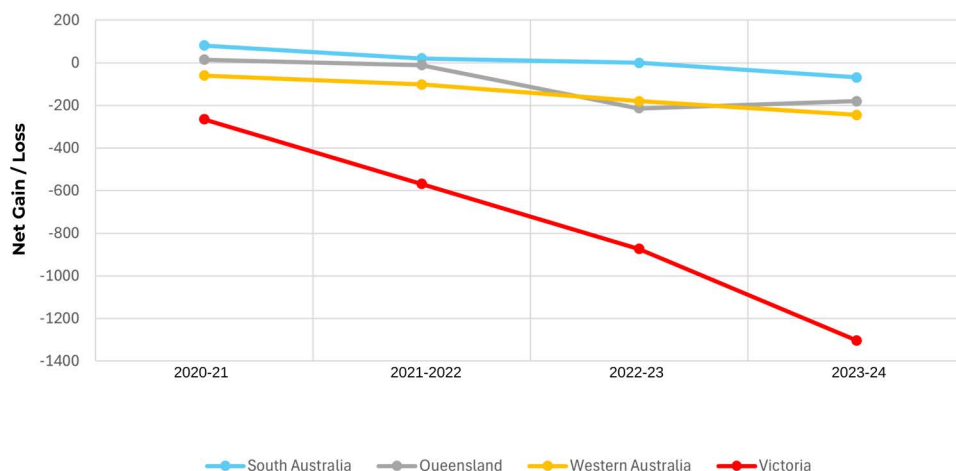
## FCAV CARER CENSUS 2024

SURVEY OF FOSTER CARERS  
BY ORIMA RESEARCH  
ON BEHALF OF



JUNE 2024

Net Gain or Loss of Carer Households by Year and State



The Foster Care Association of Victoria has drawn on the carer-led data in our 2024 Carer Census to highlight the urgent need to address carer attrition in Victoria. Carers told us that they feel overextended, undervalued, and unable to continue without stronger recognition and support. Many spoke of the financial pressures of covering day-to-day costs, as well as the emotional toll of fostering without adequate resourcing.

These experiences mirror the data. Victoria has seen the steepest decline in carer households of any state, with AIHW figures showing more than 2000 carer households exiting the system in the past four years. FCAV's Carer Census holds a warning that carers cannot sustain their role under current conditions.

At the same time, Victoria has the lowest Level 1 Care Allowance in Australia. While many carers identify a combination of factors behind their decision to step away, the low financial support and record attrition rates shows that Victoria is faring worst on both fronts.

In 2024–25, FCAV placed carer voices at the centre of our advocacy, ensuring that the experiences and insights of foster carers informed government and sector discussions. Our focus remains on securing recognition, practical supports, and sustainable solutions so that carers can continue providing safe and stable homes for children in care.



[Read more on the FCAV website/advocacy](https://www.fca.vic.gov.au/advocacy)

## Minister's Early Childhood Roundtable

In October 2024 the FCAV coordinated a delegation of foster carers for the opportunity to meet with the **Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn, Minister for Children** to attend a roundtable on **'What it is like to raise children in Victoria'**.

It was an opportunity for carers to discuss the gaps, challenges and barriers to accessing services or staying engaged, and how services may be improved.

It was a great opportunity for carers to raise and discuss some critical issues impacting them as carers.



# Engagement

[www.linkedin.com/company/foster-care-association-of-victoria](https://www.linkedin.com/company/foster-care-association-of-victoria)

[www.instagram.com/fostercarevic](https://www.instagram.com/fostercarevic)

[www.facebook.com/fostercarevictoria](https://www.facebook.com/fostercarevictoria)

## Carer Gifts and Giveaways 2024/25

The FCAV was able to provide carers with the below gifts, giveaways and competition prizes.

| No. | Gifts and Giveaways  |
|-----|--|
| 6   | \$30 Gift Card Rocky Creek Strawberry Farm   |
| 2   | \$50 voucher to Zart - back to school supplies                                       |
| 2   | \$500 Holiday Giveaways  |
| 1   | \$50 e Gift Voucher for Runner-up Holiday Giveaway                                   |
| 1   | A Maze'N Things family pass  |
| 5   | Ashcombe Maze and Gardens family pass  |
| 1   | \$150 Gift voucher BIG4 Holiday Park Eildon + \$150 reimbursement for 2nd night stay |
| 13  | Cat Nap Pyjamas  |
| 1   | Comedy Club for Kids Show tickets various shows                                      |
| 4   | KABOOM! Science show VIP tickets   |
| 1   | Kryal Castle Gift Voucher  |
| 34  | Lego sets  |
| 2   | MetArtworld Family Pass  |
| 1   | Jala Jala treats tea & chocolates  |
| 10  | \$50, \$25 Pancake Kitchen Ballarat vouchers   |
| 5   | \$50 Pancake Parlour VIC vouchers  |
| 1   | Scienceworks Adult Pass  |
| 26  | Patagonia Clothing   |

The FCAV was also pleased to be able to sponsor 5 foster carers to attend the National Kinship, Permanent & Foster Care Conference in Victoria, along with 2 Board members, 3 Staff and our 2 Carer Ambassadors.

## Sector Partnerships

We have valued working closely with allies and counterparts across the sector on several important projects in the past 12 months:

- National Foster and Kinship Care Collective for foster and kinship care organisations around Australia - Federal advocacy
- Association for Children with a Disability - Forums, workshops and training
- Permanent Care and Adoptive Families: Programs and advocacy
- Victorian Council of Community Services (VCOSS) - Research, case studies and advocacy
- VACCA and Wautharong - Cultural information and advocacy
- CREATE Foundation - Peak body for young people with a care experience. Carer support to young people.
- Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) - Research, working groups and advocacy.

## Research

- Australian Institute of Family Studies review of the payments and financial support - Carer workshop and survey, May 2025.
- Fostering Connections, survey of carer experience of the foster care accreditation process, March 2025.
- MIECAT Institute, Lived experience doctoral study, exploring identity - foster and kinship care, July 2024.

## Website



[Visit Advocacy on the FCAV website](https://www.fostercarevic.org.au)

Research and Data supporting Advocacy

## Launch of advocacy portal including Research and Data Library and FCAV Submissions

The FCAV advocacy platform seeks to inform and provide solutions to the culture, service delivery and systemic issues driving carer high attrition rates, and which prevents successful carer recruitment. The FCAV has assembled a suite of information to inform the development of its platform which is based on information/reporting essential for informed decision making including statistical data, research, and analysis.

The FCAV has launched the foster care advocacy arm of its website, showing strategic alignment with evidence in a comprehensive research and data library.

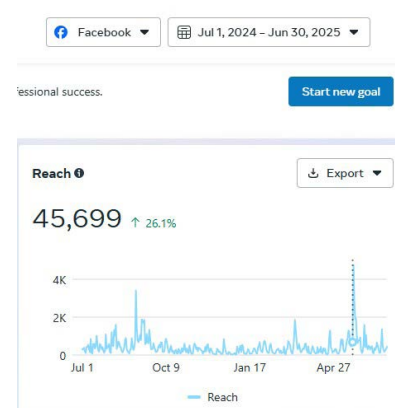
Data shines light on foster care issues to ensure the reality of caring for children is informing relationships, process and service delivery reform. In order to function, foster care support needs to focus on support for the care of young people as well as support for the volunteers doing the caring so they are best equipped, trained, resourced and supported to remain in their role.

The FCAV's library of information forms part of its corporate contribution to the ongoing dialogue in the sector about how best to reform Victoria's Child Protection system so that it is effective for the 21st century.

## Social Media

Social media reach and engagement increased over the 12 months with Instagram followers doubling and Facebook followers hitting 7,780.

Articles and news media on the Care Allowance campaign, news of Board Member, Sarah Witty's election to the Federal Parliament and Carer Profile posts were among the most viewed. Social media continues to be a valuable way of reaching carers and supporters in Victoria and worldwide.



## Newsletters

The FCAV produced and distributed 8 newsletters and several supplementary communications, comprising foster care news, updates, carer information, legislation changes, events, training and carer giveaways in the 12 months. Back issues are available here: [fcau.org.au/newsletters](https://fcau.org.au/newsletters)



# Aboriginal Cultural Safety

The FCAV has valued working with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) throughout 2024-25 and embedding our commitment to supporting self-determination and community led approaches to the care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Our commitment to Aboriginal cultural safety has included staff and Board undertaking further training through **Yarn Bark Cultural Competence Training**. We have increased staff and Board participation in Aboriginal community collaborations and networks including:

- using the Cultural Safety Continuum Reflective Tool in line with the Cultural Safety Framework in building stronger relationships with ACCOs
- reviewing Yoorrook Commission findings and engaged in consultations to align with ACCOs
- catering and gifts from Aboriginal businesses and suppliers where possible
- consulting the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance regarding Section 18 and its implementation strategies, with a focus on supporting carers more effectively
- connecting with several VACCA offices across Victoria to build and strengthen relationships at the local level. These efforts have helped foster deeper collaboration, improve cultural responsiveness, and ensure that regional perspectives are included in broader strategic planning to support carers and children in culturally safe ways
- promoting significant cultural dates such as the National Apology, National Reconciliation Week (NRW), NAIDOC Week and Aboriginal Children's Day.

## ACCO Partnerships & Engagement

FCAV visited ACCOs throughout Wurundjeri, Boon Wurrung, Taungurung, Wathaurong and Dja Dja Wurrung countries, engaging in:

- meetings with VACCA staff and Executives to plan joint resources and supports for carers of Aboriginal children
- attendance at VACCA Pop-Up Hubs, yarning with carers in Dandenong and beyond.
- engagement with BDAC and discussions around their foster care program, alongside Nugel.
- attending VACCA's launch of Strengthening Cultural Connections, a training package for non-Aboriginal Carers of Aboriginal children.
- having VACCA staff visit FCAV to discuss the Aboriginal Foster Care Model Development Project with partner ACCOs - GEGAC, MDAS, Njernda, Rumbalara and Wathaurong.

## National Advocacy through the National Foster and Kinship Care Collective

The FCAV supported the establishment of a National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People. This landmark initiative will give Aboriginal children, families, kin and carers a stronger national voice in OOHG reform.



**Above:** FCAV staff and carers joined Torres Strait Islander, Hudson Fraser for a **Bushfood Walking Tour** at Cranbourne Royal Botanic Gardens for NAIDOC 2024.



**Above: (L)** Deb and Bronwyn from FCAV, were excited to join VACCA at their Pop-Up Hub, yarning with VACCA south carers about the supports and resources available. **(R)** Significant cultural dates and events are celebrated.



**Above:** Damien Murray (L), and Brooke Ponter (R) joined FCAV staff.

## Cultural Learning & Events

Damien Murray, a Yorta Yorta man and Brooke Ponter, a Marranunguu/Amajitere woman from the Tiwi Islands working at VACCA, visited the FCAV to share Damien's lived experience and advocacy for Cultural Support Plans for Aboriginal children in care.

FCAV staff joined a Bushfood Walking Tour at Cranbourne Gardens for NAIDOC Week, learning about native plants and cultural traditions.

FCAV social media campaigns and giveaways supported National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, Aboriginal Children's Day and the National Apology Anniversary.

The FCAV was able to provide resources and giveaways to carers including the books *Dark Emu* and *Young Dark Emu*, SNAICC Children's Day Bags, and Jala Jala Treats.



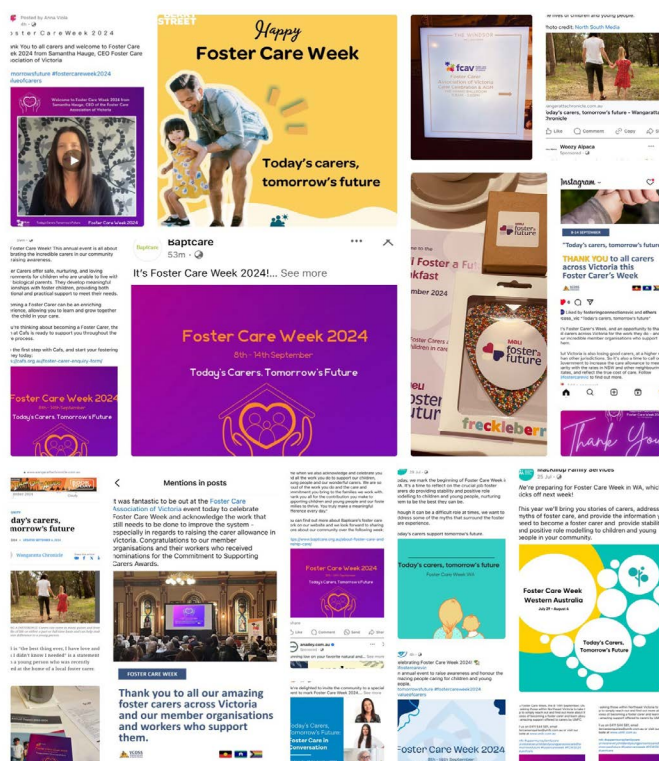
## Foster Care Week 2024

Foster Care Week is an important time to elevate the carer voice and build on sector engagement, to highlight advocacy priorities, and increase collaboration and partnerships for the shared aims of better support to the carers and children in home-based care.

This is an opportunity to capitalise on the greater media and community awareness to promote community awareness of foster carers, who are undertaking one of the most challenging and important roles in our community.

FCAV was so pleased to be a part of carer appreciation events around the state this year including FCAV CEO, Samantha Hauge, attending the OzChild Carer Gala evening, speaking at the Foster Care in Conversation event with Mallee Family Care in Mildura, and their carer celebration events in Swan Hill and Mildura (pictured below). Tessa Hughes, Carer Support Team Manager, attended several events including at CAFS Ballarat, Life without Barriers and at Anchor Community Care. Anna Viola, Communications Manager, attended the Meli Foster a Future Breakfast with Meli carers and staff in Geelong. It was an honour to meet the carers and teams celebrating foster care week around the state.

Many carers were able to join an agency celebration or attend the FCAV Carer Celebration and AGM in Melbourne.



## SPEAKERS



THE HON. LIZZIE BLANDTHORN MP  
MINISTER FOR CHILDREN  
MINISTER FOR DISABILITY



LIANA BUCHANAN  
COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE



FIONA AND MICHAEL TE WIERCK  
FCAV CARER AMBASSADORS

The Foster Care Association of Victoria held its annual Carer Celebration and Annual General Meeting event with over 150 carers, agency, staff and sector colleagues at The Hotel Windsor, Wurundjeri land, on September 13, 2024 to celebrate foster carers and their enormous contribution to the children in their care, families and the community.

We give special thanks to Guest Speaker, former Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People, Liana Buchanan, detailing findings from the "Let us Learn" Inquiry.



## Commitment to Carers Awards

Congratulations to all the nominees in the 2024 Commitment to Supporting Carers Awards including the final shortlist and winners:

- **Stacey Brown** - MacKillop Family Services
- **Teagan Dunn** - Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (Winner, below right)
- **Ari-Elle Dart** - Meli
- **Teah Edelmaier** - Anchor Community Care Ltd (Winner, below left)
- **Carolyn Morton** - MacKillop Family Services
- **Christine Stinean** - Anglicare Victoria

A huge thank you to all the carers who shared their stories and nominated a worker who made a difference. Your experiences remind us of the powerful impact that great support can have in our community.

Congratulations to overall winners Teagan Dunn, VACCA and Teah Edelmaier, Anchor Community Care.



**Winners:** Teagan  
and Teah with  
their awards at the  
FCAV Foster Carer  
Celebration at The  
Hotel Windsor.



# Media



[Read full media stories on our website](#)

In 2024–25, the Foster Care Association of Victoria continued to be a trusted voice in the media, drawing on evidence from lived experience in carer households and insights from the 2024 FCAV Carer Census. Our data, supported by FCAV Carer Snapshot surveys, AIHW figures, and key research, was consistently cited to illustrate the reality for foster carers across Victoria.

Journalists including Richard Willingham, Katri Uibu, Syan Valance and Natasha Schapova of the ABC helped bring national attention to these issues, alongside the powerful voices of carers such as Greg Lacey and Natalie Pryor. Their lived experience, combined with FCAV advocacy, ensured the urgent challenges of foster care remained in the public eye.

## In short:

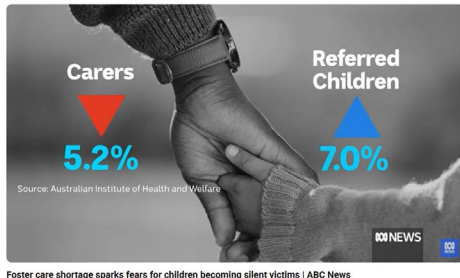
The number of foster carers in Victoria is continuing to decline with many carers citing financial stress as one of their biggest challenges.

The Foster Care Association of Victoria has been petitioning to raise the allowance for carers for more than a year, given it is the lowest in Australia.

## What's next?

The Shadow Minister for Child Protection says the government needs to implement strategies to retain foster carers and to prevent children from ending up in residential care.

On 15 July 2024, ABC News ran a feature highlighting the growing number of carers leaving the system, citing the rising costs of living and stagnant care allowances. FCAV, carers, and members spoke openly about the urgent and critical needs facing Victorian foster families.



Foster care shortage sparks fears for children becoming silent victims | ABC News

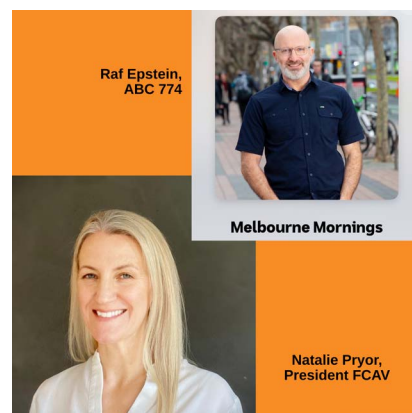
Just days later, on 18 July 2024, the ABC Nightly News on television reported on the alarming rise in children entering care as a consequence of Australia's domestic violence crisis. The story revealed Victoria's struggle with a sharp decline in foster carers, exposing the imbalance between escalating demand and diminishing supply.

The conversation gained further momentum in May 2025, when ABC investigative reporter Katri Uibu uncovered the story of a foster carer who felt "set up to fail" after leaving the role within three weeks. The report underscored systemic shortfalls in preparation and support for new carers, reinforcing FCAV's call for reform.

Victoria has the lowest base level 1 carer allowance — a payment to contribute to the daily costs of raising a child.

Data from Foster Care Association of Victoria shows that for a child up to age seven, carers are given the fortnightly base rate of \$446, whereas for a child aged between eight and 10, they receive \$462.

On 23 April 2025, FCAV President and foster carer Natalie Pryor joined Raf Epstein on ABC Radio's What You Need to Know. Speaking with passion and purpose, she outlined the pressing need for stronger support, explained the different types of care available, and highlighted who can become a foster carer. This segment reached a broad audience and deepened public understanding of both the challenges and opportunities within foster care.



Across traditional media and through our own social platforms, FCAV ensured that the voices of carers were heard, respected, and amplified. These appearances were instrumental in driving awareness of the sector's challenges and in strengthening the case for urgent government action.

Data from Foster Care Association of Victoria shows that for a child up to age seven, carers are given the fortnightly base rate of \$446, whereas for a child aged between eight and 10, they receive \$462.

| Fortnightly base rates for first age range |                                  |           |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------|
| State/territory                            | Amount                           | Age range |
| ACT  | \$620                            | 0-4       |
| Queensland                                 | \$623                            | 0-5       |
| New South Wales                            | \$604                            | 0-4       |
| Northern Territory                         | \$531                            | 0-5       |
| South Australia                            | \$499                            | 0-4       |
| Tasmania                                   | \$456                            | 0-4       |
| Western Australia                          | \$478 (incl. clothing allowance) | 0-6       |
| Victoria                                   | \$446                            | 0-7       |

Source: Foster Care Association of Victoria

Victoria has the lowest base level 1 carer allowance. (ABC News)

## Yearly trends of foster carer households

From 2020 to 2024



The number of foster carers in Victoria has been declining since 2020. (Source: Foster Care Association of Victoria)

# FCAV Roadshow

Over the past year, FCAV has prioritised state-wide engagement with Community Service Organisations (CSOs) and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) through a series of Roadshow visits. These visits aim to strengthen sector relationships, promote FCAV's services, and support shared advocacy for improved outcomes in the Out-of-Home Care (OoHC) system.

This year's focus was on continuing these Roadshows, and 20 visits were conducted across a diverse range of services, both metropolitan and regional. Visits were predominantly delivered in-person (with some online), with strong engagement and positive feedback from agency teams.

The benefit of face-to-face contact continues to be significant, fostering stronger professional relationships, creating opportunities for candid dialogue, and ensuring greater awareness of FCAV's offerings. These interactions have reinforced FCAV's reputation as a responsive and accessible peak body for carers.

As a result of these visits, liaison meetings have been established with team leaders across multiple agencies. These meetings now occur on a regular basis and focus on discussing practice issues and emerging themes within the sector. This initiative has had a significant impact on fostering productive, thoughtful practice and has led to a reduction in the number of issues experienced by carers when interacting with their agency. By addressing concerns early and collaboratively, these meetings promote stronger partnerships and more consistent support for carers.

These meetings have created regular touchpoints to induct new staff, strengthen engagement with FCAV activities such as Chat with the CEO and New Carer Induction sessions, and maintain open lines of communication between organisations, including inviting agency staff as guest presenters on our webinars.

With continued high staff turnover across the sector, these visits remain essential. Many agency workers are encountering FCAV for the first time and are quick to engage when information is delivered directly.

## Key Highlights

- Twenty agency visits conducted across metro and regional Victoria.
- Regular liaison meetings were established with team leaders to address practice issues and reduce carer-related challenges.
- Partnerships were strengthened and there was increased participation of agency staff in FCAV programs.
- Ongoing identification of systemic issues helped to inform advocacy and improve carer outcomes.



**Above:** Mallee Family Care hosted a "Foster Care in Conversation" event at the Mildura Powerhouse Hall during Foster Care Week 2024, featuring a moderated panel with current carers, a foster sibling, and a former foster child, along with Samantha Hauge, CEO of the FCAV.

**Below:** Tessa Hughes met with Foster carers and team members including Wendy Sturgess, CEO and Tari Mapfumo, Manager Trauma Informed Practice and Home-Based Care at CAFS Ballarat, Wadawurrung country.





## A year at a glance

# FACTS & FIGURES

FCAV 2024-2025

during this  
year the fcav  
has delivered...

Over 1,000  
enquiries  
delivering  
2,200 hours  
support to  
carers

3,370

submissions to the  
care allowance  
campaign

27

nominations to the  
fcav commitment to  
carers awards

1

acceptance of  
medicare dental  
recommendation

4,593

total  
membership as  
at 30 june 2025

3,950

total full  
members (carers)

643

total associate  
members

20 learning and  
development  
sessions hosted

5 carers fully  
sponsored to  
attend the national  
conference

300

new members  
approved 24-25

238

new full members  
(carers)

62

new associate  
members

20

roadshow visits to  
agencies and accos  
around victoria

7,700

fcav facebook page  
followers

116

carers won prizes in  
our carer giveaways

15

carer profiles and  
media

7

carers engaged in  
minister's roundtable  
on early childhood

# Treasurer's Report

## Stephen Bowers

Treasurer



It is my pleasure to present the Treasurer's Report for FCAV for the financial year ending 30 June 2025. The organisation has continued to maintain a stable financial position while delivering on its mission to build Victoria's recognition, respect and resources for foster carers, the volunteers who, every day and night, make a difference in the lives of Victoria's children and young people.

### Financial Overview

During the year, we achieved total revenue of \$1,378,679, compared to \$1,295,745 in the previous financial year.

Total expenses for the year amounted to \$1,216,280, compared to \$1,117,710 in the previous financial year.

The organisation recorded a net surplus of \$162,399 for the year. This result reflects our commitment to fiscal responsibility while ensuring the continued delivery of:

- free, independent advice and support to foster carers through one-to-one support to carers
- free, confidential short-term counselling to foster carers, permanent carers and adoptive parents
- free forums and carer events, for information exchange, connection and wellbeing support for carers
- advocating on behalf of foster carers to government, to agencies, to the sector and in the community
- building communities as the only centralised body for all foster carers in the state
- promotion of the carer voice through member forums, research and engagement
- providing carer news and information through our comprehensive website, social media pages and regular newsletters

### Balance Sheet Highlights

As of 30 June 2025, the organisation held:

- Total assets: \$1,100,665
- Total liabilities: \$181,786
- Net assets/equity: \$918,879

Our cash reserves remain healthy at \$1,055,072, ensuring we can meet our short-term obligations and sustain operations.

### Financial Management and Accountability

We continue to adopt best practices in financial governance, including:

- regular financial reviews and board reporting
- annual independent audit
- transparent and detailed budgeting processes.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank our Board members and staff for their ongoing dedication and careful stewardship of our financial resources. Special thanks go to our donors, funders, and supporters whose contributions have made our work possible.

Looking ahead, we will continue to strengthen our financial sustainability to support FCAV's mission and expand our impact in the community.



**Further reading:** The Foster Care Association of Victoria full Financial Statement for the year ending **30 June 2025** is available on the FCAV website: [FCAV Financial Statements 2025](#)



# Financial Report

## Profit and Loss

### Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income For the Year Ended 30 June 2025

|   |      | 2025           | 2024           |
|---|------|----------------|----------------|
|   | Note | \$             | \$             |
| Revenue   | 3    | 1,378,679      | 1,295,745      |
| Employee benefits expense                             | 4    | (1,022,927)    | (852,315)      |
| Depreciation and amortisation expense                 | 4    | (17,732)       | (47,429)       |
| Consultancy fees                                      |      | (13,799)       | (9,342)        |
| Administrative expenses                               |      | (8,464)        | (20,585)       |
| Carer and event expenses                              |      | (15,861)       | (37,488)       |
| Office expenses                                       |      | (30,520)       | (20,120)       |
| Occupancy expenses                                    |      | (49,572)       | (21,045)       |
| Other expenses  |      | (55,050)       | (45,834)       |
| Repayment of funding                                  | 2    | -              | (59,683)       |
| Finance costs   |      | (2,355)        | (3,269)        |
| <b>Surplus before income tax</b>                      |      | <b>162,399</b> | <b>178,635</b> |
| Income tax expense                                    | 13   | -              | -              |
| <b>Surplus for the year after income tax</b>          |      | <b>162,399</b> | <b>178,635</b> |
| <b>Other comprehensive income, net of income tax</b>  |      |                |                |
| Revaluation changes for property, plant and equipment |      | -              | -              |
| <b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>        |      | <b>162,399</b> | <b>178,635</b> |

## Balance Sheet

|                                      | Note | 2025             | 2024           |
|--------------------------------------|------|------------------|----------------|
|                                      |      | \$               | \$             |
| <b>ASSETS</b>                        |      |                  |                |
| <b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>                |      |                  |                |
| Cash and cash equivalents            | 5    | 1,055,072        | 882,675        |
| Trade and other receivables          | 6    | 32,198           | 13,446         |
| Prepayments                          |      | 4,195            | 4,332          |
| <b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>          |      | <b>1,091,465</b> | <b>900,453</b> |
| <b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>            |      |                  |                |
| Right-of-use assets                  | 9    | 9,200            | 26,932         |
| <b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>      |      | <b>9,200</b>     | <b>26,932</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>                  |      | <b>1,100,665</b> | <b>927,385</b> |
| <b>LIABILITIES</b>                   |      |                  |                |
| <b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>           |      |                  |                |
| Trade and other payables             | 7    | 69,316           | 49,956         |
| Lease liabilities                    | 9    | 9,540            | 20,807         |
| Employee benefits                    | 8    | 100,990          | 90,887         |
| <b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>     |      | <b>179,846</b>   | <b>161,650</b> |
| <b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>       |      |                  |                |
| Lease liabilities                    | 9    | -                | 7,186          |
| Employee benefits                    | 8    | 1,940            | 2,069          |
| <b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b> |      | <b>1,940</b>     | <b>9,255</b>   |
| <b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>             |      | <b>181,786</b>   | <b>170,905</b> |
| <b>NET ASSETS</b>                    |      | <b>918,879</b>   | <b>756,480</b> |
| <b>EQUITY</b>                        |      |                  |                |
| Retained earnings                    |      | 918,879          | 756,480        |
| <b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>                  |      | <b>918,879</b>   | <b>756,480</b> |

# Auditor's Report


## Independent Audit Report to the Members of Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc

### Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

As part of an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- a) Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- b) Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Association's internal control.
- c) Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Board.
- d) Conclude on the appropriateness of the Board's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Association's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Association to cease to continue as a going concern.
- e) Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the Board regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

  
Mr Benjamin Homer  
Chartered Accountant; Registered Company Auditor  
Director  
McConachie Stedman Audit and Assurance Pty Ltd  
Registered Company Auditor No. 465552  
160 Hume Street  
Toowoomba Qld 4350

21 August 2025

# Statement by the Board of Directors

## Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc

### Responsible Persons' Declaration

The Responsible Persons declare that in the Responsible Persons' opinion:

- the accompanying financial statements and notes give a fair and true view of the financial position of the Association as at 30 June 2025 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date;
- there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Association is able to pay all of its debts, as and when they become due and payable; and
- the financial statements and notes satisfy the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

Signed in accordance with subsection 60.15(2) of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Regulation 2022*.

Responsible Person .....

Natalie Pryor

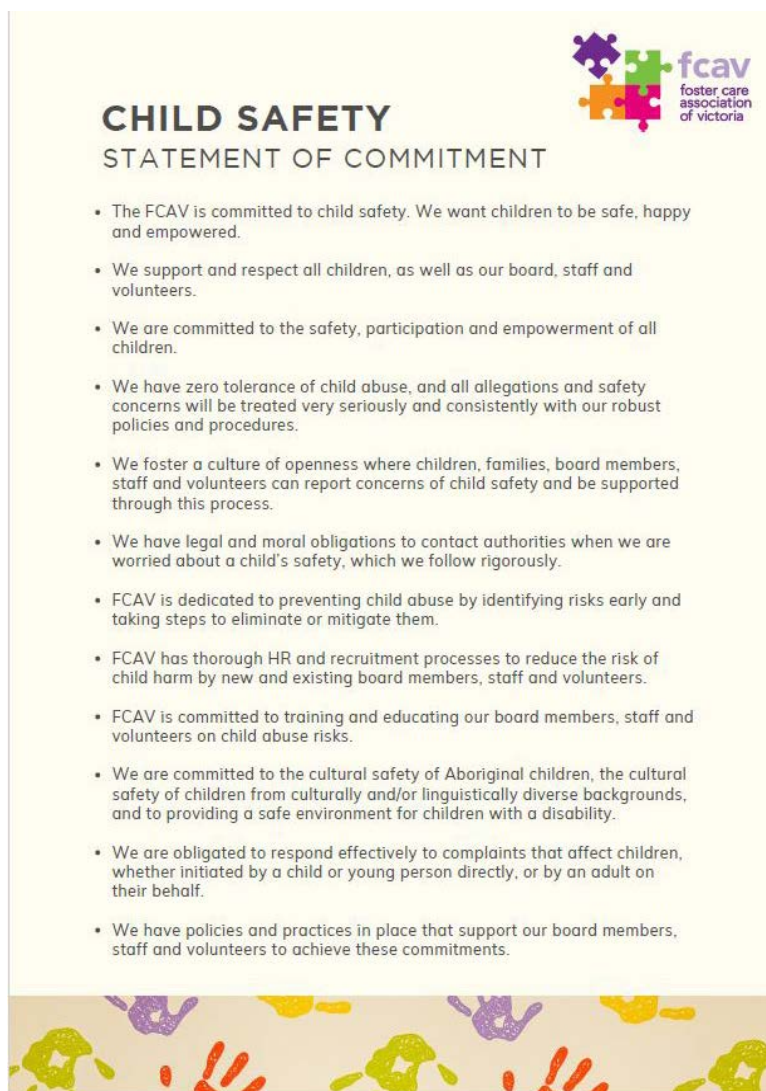
Responsible Person .....

Stephen Bowers

Dated this 19<sup>th</sup> day of August 2025



# FCAV Child Safety



## Child Safety Statement of Commitment

The FCAV is proud to present our Child Safety Statement of Commitment, outlining our dedication to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children across our organisation.

We maintain a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and bullying.

The FCAV is committed to fully complying with the Victorian Child Safe Standards. We ensure that all staff, board members, and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge and awareness to recognise the signs of child abuse or harm, so they can take appropriate action to protect children and prevent further harm.

Staff and Board members have completed Child Safe Training in 2024-25 and we have implemented child safe systems of work across the Association, including: rigorous safety screening and recruitment practices; staff and board induction and awareness of child safety practices a process for identifying and reporting child abuse risk and gap analysis; and communication to our members about Child Safety and fostering a child and culturally safe environment.



**Thank you to funders, donors, volunteers, supporters, carers, staff, board and all members of the FCAV. The involvement of each is critical in the development and continued success of the FCAV's strategic planning, governance, services, supports and advocacy as the peak body for foster care in Victoria.**

**We champion foster carers to be recognised and valued for their role in the lives of children and young people in care.**

## **BECOME A MEMBER!**

**As an FCAV member you have access to free advocacy, support & information. Your membership is instrumental to our strength, striving for a better Victorian foster care system for our children, young people & carers.**

**As the peak body in Victoria, we are the united voice of foster carers, advocating for systemic improvements, building productive partnerships and nurturing respectful relationships. We deliver a full range of information and support services to meet carers' needs at all points in their care journey.**

**FCAV.ORG.AU | (03) 9416 4292**



The FCAV celebrates the diversity of its carer membership, board and staff. We are committed to a workplace, policies and services that are safe and inclusive for LGBTIQA+ communities, young people and families.



### **Acknowledgment of Country**

The FCAV acknowledges the unceded sovereignty of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their continued connection to Country – including lands, cultural knowledges and their peoples – and pay our respect to Elders past and present. We advocate for systemic change that honours the place of culture, family, community and connection to country in the lives of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people as they grow.

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### **Contact:**

Foster Care Association of Victoria  
Ground Floor, 2 Greenwood Street,  
Abbotsford VIC 3067  
Telephone: (03) 9416 4292  
Email: [admin@fcav.org.au](mailto:admin@fcav.org.au)  
Website: [www.fcav.org.au](http://www.fcav.org.au)

