

Foster Care Association of Victoria

Annual Report 2019-2020

Annual Report July 2019 - June 2020

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. We advocate for the value of carers.



ABN 30 747 010 099

President's Report

Toni Hetherington

President of the Board of Directors



For the past five years, it has been an honour to first sit on and then preside over the Board of the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV). Helping this organisation grow and increase its vital support of carers on long-standing issues is something I am immensely proud of.

This has been a year like no other, with increasing challenges that have tested the resilience of our most vulnerable.

Like all carers, I will be looking for significant investment to be pledged by the Victorian Government into the educational, social and emotional recovery of children and young people in care in the coming months.

During my years as President, the FCAV is to be congratulated for initiating major improvements in the way all foster carers are supported to provide essential care in their homes.

Whilst the FCAV continues to focus on a list of issues yet to be addressed, I would like to point out a number of successful FCAV projects that have dramatically improved the sector. These include taking on the Carer Advisory Groups as the voice of carers, initiating the Carer KaFE program as an extensive suite of world-class training sessions to help carers meet the complex challenges of their role and establishing the Carer Strategy, which means we have a clear platform for change.

Another strength in recent years has been the continuing collaboration with our counterparts in sister organisations in the child protection sector and our work to establish joint goals to improve out-of-home care for all children and young people.

I acknowledge the commitment and interest shown by successive MPs and Department heads during the past five years. Special thanks to Hon. Mary Wooldridge MP, the Hon. Jenny Mikakos MP, and the Hon. Luke Donnellan MP as well as Secretary Kym Peake for giving us audience

and taking our challenges into their review processes. I also personally thank the Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People, Liana Buchanan, for passionately taking up the mantle of advocacy for our children and shining a light into the darker corners of Victoria's care of our young people.

I have been particularly thrilled to see the Home Stretch campaign successfully adopted to offer support beyond the age of 18 for those in out-of-home care and the establishment of a formal process for providing birth certificates to all children who enter the system without them.

I take this opportunity to thank CEO, Samantha Hauge, who has worked tirelessly in her first year to steer the FCAV through challenging times and see it emerge stronger and financially healthier than it has ever been.

I would also like to thank the FCAV Board members. Predominantly carers themselves, FCAV Board members dedicate much of their spare time and expertise to the progress of our important work and are a source of inspiration.

As I prepare to step down from the Board, I look forward to a continuing connection with the FCAV, our members, those who sit on the Board, the staff and volunteers – all of whom passionately advocate for and support our Victorian foster carers to build the best possible lives for our children and young people. Thank you all for your dedication.



L-R: Toni Hetherington with Tessa Hughes, Minister Donnellan, Russ Mulry (CREATE) and Sam Hauge at the Hotel Windsor for the FCAV Carer Celebration, September 2019.



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.

CEO's Report

Samantha Hauge

Chief Executive Officer



Welcome to the Annual Report of the Foster Care Association of Victoria, 2019/20.

This year has required dedication and resilience from carers like no other.

When I came onboard the FCAV in August 2019, the world was a different place. I was pleased to be focusing on aligning budgets and bedding in an organisational strategy that fits the goals of the FCAV's support to carers.

The 12 months to June 2020 has seen our jurisdiction hit with compounding crises. The impacts have been felt across the state by all foster care households who have continued to provide care through drought, bushfires and a global pandemic with its restrictions.

Adapting to new and compromised support to care-giving has been the hallmark of this year. The expectations on carers have intensified as they have undertaken not just the supervision of learning at home or supporting students with online learning, but full time commitment to the safety and mental health of children and young people facing an unprecedented situation in all aspects of their lives.

To that end, the FCAV as an organisation has adapted and reacted to circumstances. As we moved to work from home, our commitment to carers has not wavered and it has been very gratifying that, as a team, we have provided continuity of services and supports to carers when they have needed us most.

Within the changing environment, we succeeded in securing a process to expedite registration of births for all children in care after undertaking a broad ranging advocacy program. We were also so pleased that our advocacy for financial support to carers resulted in a supplementary payment for each placement to assist in covering the extra costs of staying at home.

We strongly advocated for the commissioning of statistically verifiable qualitative and quantitative research on carer attitudes and demographics to inform program and policy development. Increasing the client expense reimbursement was also a major advocacy focus as was seeking better support for carers facing an investigation.

Our caring-at-home information and support delivered via social media and newsletters has been well-received and provided up-to-date information on legislation and rules, as well as raising the voice of carers who suddenly found themselves without respite, access or school time to fit around their own work and other commitments.

Carers have been facilitating remote access visits and managing their own stress as well as heightened behaviours of children and young people in their care through very unsettling times.

The FCAV Carer Information and Support Service (CISS) team, listening circles and surveys illuminate the ongoing effort carers are making to provide stability, education, wellbeing and connection for children in care. In an extraordinarily challenging year, we have been honoured to support the resilience and dedication from our invaluable foster carers.

I wish to acknowledge the dedication of our Board of Directors and say thank you for their support and provision of good corporate governance. In particular, I bid a fond farewell to Toni Hetherington, President, who has provided strong and visionary leadership and the FCAV will continue to reap the rewards of her time in the role.

Finally, I take the opportunity to personally thank each of our staff members. I take pride in their hard work and dedication and they have my utmost respect and appreciation. I have admired their resilience to adapt to the constantly changing and evolving work environment and despite all the challenges, the team has upheld their focus and never let an opportunity pass.



Above: Samantha Hauge with Paul McDonald, CEO Anglicare Victoria, after presenting the carer perspective for extending care at the Home Stretch Symposium, Sydney, August 2019.

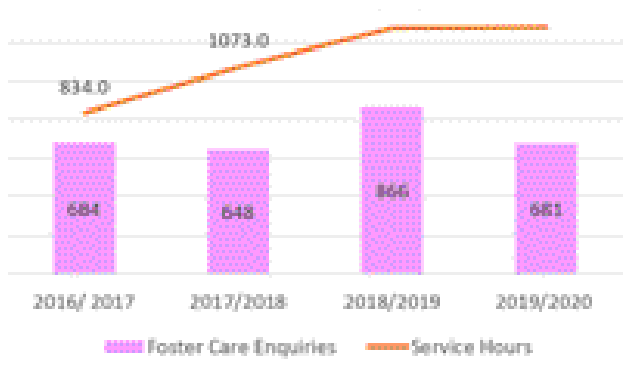
Carer Information and Support Service Report

Tessa Hughes, Team Leader

This Carer Information and Support Service (CISS) report includes the impact of COVID-19 on the home-based care sector over the last six months. (See our website for the full CISS Report)

In the 12 month period, 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020, CISS responded to and closed **681** foster care enquiries, delivering **1282.4** hours of service.

The FCAV is funded to provide support to 400 foster care enquiries per year. The number of enquiries has exceeded this benchmark on average 80% each year since 2016-17 as shown in the Figure below.



Additional fixed term funding was provided in 2019-20 to support over performance of the CISS team.

Call Types

The majority of enquiries CISS responds to are from foster carers, but Agency and DHHS workers also contact the service for information and advice, along with permanent carers and kinship carers who could not find the support they required elsewhere.

The CISS team refer kinship and permanent carers to relevant organisations. There are discussions at senior level with the other services in relation to appropriate referral processes to ensure all enquiries are responded to adequately.

Mode of Contact

An enquiry can involve multiple calls, emails and meetings to support the carer. Email and phone continue to be the most popular forms of communication, however in the past 6 months online platforms have been used more frequently to support carers. This is often in the formal Client Incident Management (CIMS) investigations, where a member of the FCAV CISS team is present to support the carer.

Emotional Support Provided

Of the 3559 separate contacts, emotional support was provided for 2631 contacts (726.4 hours). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CISS team has logged increased time and emotional support required for callers. This is reflected in the data. This has promoted the development of a Carer Assistance Program within the support team so that calls can be appropriately addressed. This service will offer a therapeutic model so that carers have the opportunity to address complex issues. This is targeted at providing

greater support for carers which transfers to the children in their care, and encourages their retention in the out-of-home care system.

Issues raised

Much CISS time was spent supporting carers in relation to Client Incident Management (CIMS) investigations, issues with Agency or DHHS.

CIMS Issues

The CISS team provided support to 122 CIMS enquiries, delivering 410.6 hours of service. CIMS continues to require significant time and it is often from when the investigation commences, which means as a service we offer support throughout the whole process for carers.

Agency Issues

The CISS team provided support around Agency Policies and Procedures, Accreditation/ Assessment, worker communication, planning and support.

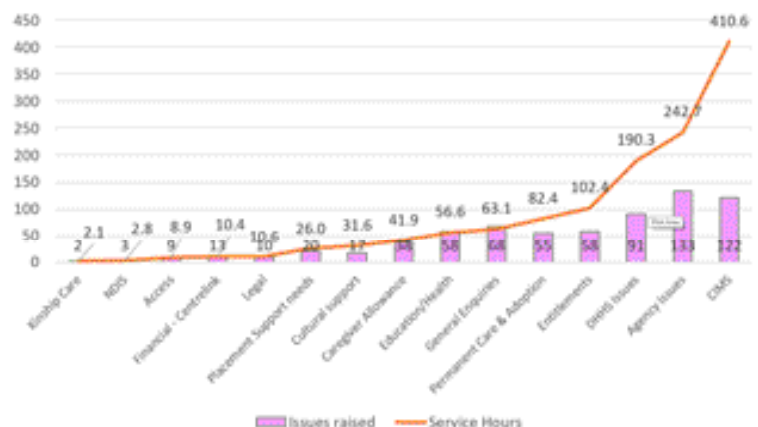
Due to the pandemic, there has been a reduced capacity to connect with agencies and take up issues directly. The CISS team has attended online forums and meetings with agencies and the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare to best meet the needs of carers. There have been fortnightly meetings in relation to COVID-19 specific DHHS directives.

DHHS Issues

The CISS team assisted carers on Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) related issues, providing support relating to case plans, carers disagreeing with the removal of the child to another placement and communication with the child or young person.

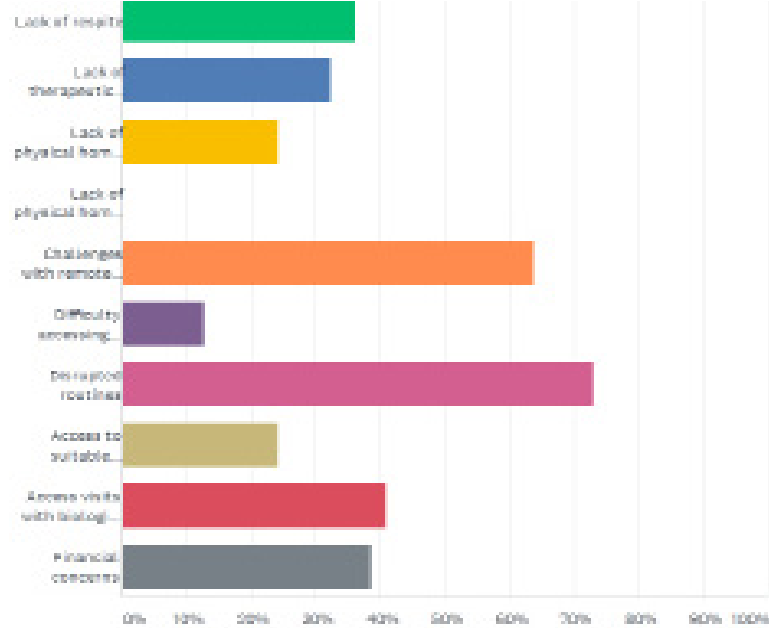
This continues to be a challenging space and as a result we are offering an information webinar for carers in relation to their rights and responsibilities.

In addition, there were many calls in relation to interruptions to implementing Case Plans, as well as reviews of Case Plans. For example, carers have reported that due to COVID-19 there have been reunification plans that have been either accelerated or placed on hold. This has increased stress for carers.





Areas of most difficulty in the period for carers - COVID-19 Carer Survey June 2020



COVID-19 Enquiries

The CISS team responded to 47 enquiries (44.7 hours) relating to COVID-19. The most time was spent responding to General Enquiries such as impact on the child, access and carer expectations regarding travel.

During COVID-19, the emerging trend is that calls have been longer and more complex as carers have attempted to navigate and understand the situation. The carer survey conducted by the FCAV highlighted that 70 per cent of carers have struggled more since the beginning of COVID-19. (Please see our website for full carer survey results).

Carers have indicated they have been anxious about their own health risks and vulnerabilities, as well as those of the children in their care. Comments have been made in relation to the uncertainty for their future and the responsibility of caring in this time.

Another main stressor identified has been the issue of respite. Again, this was evident from feedback obtained from the carer survey. Historically, carers rely on respite for an opportunity to recharge and have a break. During the pandemic, there has been reluctance at many levels for continued respite, resulting in limited respite opportunities. For example, carers have not wanted children to go to other homes as the risks of infection is increased. Carers may have ceased childcare, playgroups and other social contacts with children to further reduce the risk of infection. This has obviously impacted on the children and carers, disrupting routines and placing more pressure on families. Respite options generally reduced within the sector, as respite carers themselves often chose to not offer their services in order to maintain social distance.

Carers have also required support to navigate new access and contact arrangements with birth families. Issues related largely to remote access/contact and how to make it meaningful and age appropriate for children, whilst protecting a carer's privacy and confidentiality, particularly where there have been issues of violence and trauma. Interestingly, birth families have also called the service, which has not happened in the past, to discuss access and the desire to see children face to face.

Much of the work has required the team to navigate carers back to agencies and DHHS to have conversations in relation to child and family safety in this unprecedented time. Alternatively our staff have advocated on their behalf.

There have also been calls in relation to financial pressures. There have been jobs lost and the pressure of families at home all the time using utilities and requiring activities such as art and craft or play equipment to keep children healthy, active and content increases the financial burden. The FCAV received a number of calls in relation to the financial support provided by the one off \$600 payment to foster carers.

As illustrated through the carer survey, over 60 per cent of carers also experienced challenges with remote learning. Carers were often trying to navigate support to online learning, while continuing their own employment.

The added costs of being at home contributed to financial pressures. Other carers had limited access to workbooks or laptops and the family often had to share equipment thus adding to their overall stress.

As well as the CISS phone support, the FCAV also offered online support to address COVID-19-specific issues like disrupted routines. Again, the report highlighted 70 per cent of carers felt disrupted routines were challenging, leaving them with little time to attend to their own self-care. Unfortunately, the online support like the Chat Group we trialled had limited numbers attend, which primarily was a result of caring for children and other priorities. If the FCAV decides to offer online training and live support opportunities again we would want to investigate the need and commitment first. Training is often not prioritised with competing demands and this was evident in the Carer KaFÉ program during this period.

In addition to the Chat Group, we have begun our Carer Listening Circle group with approximately 12 carers attending each month and carers are finding it an opportunity to debrief and gain support from each other. The group is run by experienced carers and Alison from National Association of Therapeutic Parenting is the super mentor and also a carer.

Summary

It is evident from the information reported, that the FCAV CISS team continues to provide a quality service to carers.

It will be an exciting time as we launch the new Carer Assistance Program and will need to be clear in relation to which assistance individual carers require. We believe carers may need to access both services alongside each other in some matters.

The NDIS is another space we are exploring so we are well placed to inform and support carers in a complex area. The FCAV has been flexible during COVID-19 in offering online support, training and information opportunities to meet the needs of carers.

Total number of participants

882

Participant breakdown*:

551 Foster carers

8 Prospective foster carers

185 Statutory kinship carers

21 Non-statutory kinship carers

***other category not shown**

Carer KaFÉ continues to support our invaluable kinship and foster carers across Victoria, delivering high quality training and education with 60 face to face sessions conducted in the first 6 months from Mildura to Morwell.

When COVID-19 became a reality in early 2020 the impact on our key business of face to face training was profound with our final in-person session held on 3rd March 2020.

The outlook and duration of this pandemic is uncertain, compelling Carer KaFÉ to develop new ways to conduct training safely.

Carer KaFÉ successfully responded by partnering with seven training providers, supporting the adaptation of their training product to an online platform delivery, accomplishing a further 14 sessions with around 60 carers in May and June 2020.

We are currently working toward being able to offer further diverse training programs (originally developed for face to face) in an online setting to increase learning opportunities for our carers.

We acknowledge the inherent challenges for many from our carer cohort to engage in this new training direction imposed by COVID-19 (evidenced by the low take-up and increased non-attendance for online training). In response, Carer KaFÉ is taking steps to help carers where possible to embrace this technology-driven world and is confident of growing online participation rates.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inclusion is a key component of Carer KaFÉ along with the provision of culturally appropriate training for non-Aboriginal carers of Aboriginal children, to enhance their capacity to support a child's culture and connection. In the past year 80 Carer KaFÉ training participants identified as Aboriginal carers and over 250 participants indicated they were currently, or had cared, for an Aboriginal child or young person.

Aboriginal organisations hosted around 15 per cent of the total training sessions held and 109 participants attended a 2 day cultural workshop, "Nikara's Journey", for non-Aboriginal carers delivered by Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) across 9 locations. Evaluation forms from carers are overwhelmingly positive with real learning outcomes highlighting the value of this cultural training opportunity.

"I felt the experience of learning about different ways of respecting culture will help me to be more understanding. I am going to embrace our grandson's Aboriginal culture and expand his experiences."

Julia – Kinship carer Bendigo

Carer KaFÉ was excited to have international expert Richard Rose deliver 2 sessions entitled, 'Therapeutic Parenting with the Challenging Child,' attended by over 100 carers. Many carers left the training feeling inspired, re-energised and better equipped to respond to children in their care with challenging behaviours as evidenced by their feedback.

"Not enough time! Richard was amazing, his knowledge is phenomenal. I felt inspired to learn more about emotional literacy and excited about playing some of these new games with my kids."

Fatima – CALD Kinship carer of CALD children, Melbourne

"A 3 hour drive (each way) but a worthy one, I loved it! A safe training environment and lots of new skills to take home."

Hayley – Foster carer Western Victoria

"Love to do again but more thoroughly ie 1-3 days. New strategies for understanding causes behind behaviour – attachment and attunement strategies to take home and share... HOPE!"

Karen – Foster carer, Melbourne



Above: Carer KaFÉ sponsored carers to attend camps and conferences to support their development.



Conferences and Camps

Carer KaFÉ was pleased to enable 7 carers to travel to Perth for the 2019 National Foster and Kinship Care Conference themed 'Walking Together' and join 600 attendees with a united commitment to caring for Australia's vulnerable children and young people.

One worthy recipient, a 25 year old Aboriginal kinship carer for the past 4 years of a younger cousin and sibling noted how it had been an isolating journey that was not well understood and attending the conference helped break down that feeling from the shared connection with other carers.

The 2019 Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) National Conference held in September in Adelaide had a key focus on Growing Up with Strong Identity, Culture and Connection and Carer KaFÉ supported 4 attendees to connect and hear from leading voices working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children.

The Voices in Action Conference hosted by CREATE Foundation in November 2019 at the Melbourne Zoo saw 7 carers participate through Carer KaFÉ investment.

Carer KaFÉ also sponsored over 50 carers currently caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to attend the VACCA Cultural Camp set in the picturesque Rowsley Valley close to Bacchus Marsh in November 2019. Carers expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to enhance their cultural competency and be a part of such an inspiring experience.

New initiatives

Fortunately, without the insight of the events of 2020, Carer KaFÉ had already sought to address the potential for training online for carers who had indicated a preference for this delivery platform through feedback channels. The key aspect is the ability to complete relevant courses in the home at a time that fits with their individual circumstances such as weekends or evenings when children are in bed.

In late 2019, Carer KaFÉ completed a pilot with Foster Care Online Training Australia (FCOTA) with a small number of carers accessing the online training modules. An evaluation of completion rates and overall carer satisfaction provided strong evidence for proceeding with this education opportunity and in February 2020 Carer KaFÉ made 300 places available for Victorian carers to access over 18 different modules online.

Carer engagement has been strong with 216 online modules completed by carers in the first half of this year including 36 modules dedicated to cultural training. There are over 50 modules in progress. The most popular courses based on completion rates are:

- Aboriginal Kids in Care
- An Introduction to Aboriginal Culture
- The Impact of Trauma on Brain Development
- Anxiety Disorders in Children and Young People
- Caring for a Child or Young Person with Challenging Behaviours
- Caring for a Grieving Child or Young Person
- The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children and Young People
- Trauma Informed Care Part 1 & 2.

In June, FCOTA conducted an online carer satisfaction survey with over 150 carers. The vast majority of carers were extremely positive in their responses:

- 98% claimed the quality of the product was of high/very high quality.
- 94% felt the course they completed met their expectations very/extremely well.
- 87% believed their training needs were being met very/extremely well.

Around half had completed at least 4 modules in the past 6 months.

"So easy to do the courses in my own time. Love the quizzes as you progress through the module as it helps you know you are on the right track"

Debbie - Foster carer of Aboriginal children, Gippsland

Carer KaFÉ is actively seeking to extend this online offering whilst exploring other opportunities to support the educational needs of our admirable carers in what is proving to be one of the most abnormal climates in a century.



Membership Report

As a Foster Care Association of Victoria member, carers become part of a special community of foster carers and their supporters.

Our mission is to strengthen foster families and enhance the wellbeing of the children in their care. The FCAV provides carers a full range of support, information, advocacy and training.

Membership is free with benefits to connect with like-minded people on the same journey, keep up to date with sector news, giveaways and training opportunities.



SIGN UP FOR FCAV MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

SUPPORT / INFORMATION / ADVOCACY / TRAINING

WWW.FCAV.ORG.AU/MEMBERSHIP/JOIN



The Foster Care Association of Victoria is pleased to welcome **407** Full Members and **52** Associate Members who joined in the past year, bringing our total membership to **5,469**.

This increase in membership is significant in light of continuing issues facing the foster care sector.

As membership grows, the FCAV is broadened in its scope, enhancing our understanding of the range of issues impacting Victorian carers. It is this understanding that feeds into our focus and strengthens our capacity for advocacy.

Carer Snapshot 2020

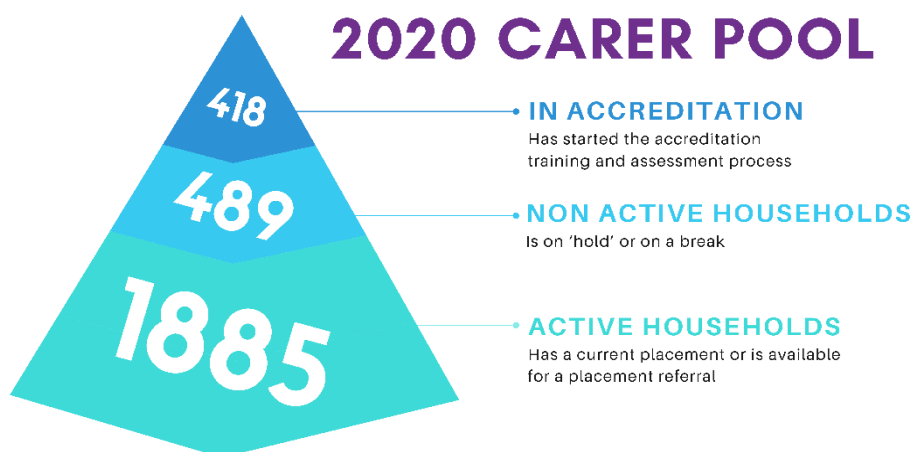
The Foster Care Association of Victoria has conducted an annual review of the state of foster care in Victoria for the past decade. Community Service Organisations (CSOs) including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) provide the data based on the carer households affiliated with each of its offices. Typically data is collected within a two week period in March.

Our March 2020 Carer Snapshot data shows an increase of 23 active carer households since March 2019. The 2019 totals indicated 415 newly accredited households and 311 exited carer households, thus a net gain of 104 carer households from Jan-Dec 2019.

With the ever increasing need for more foster carers across Victoria this slight increase does not meet the demand. Despite this, the higher numbers of carers starting the accreditation process is promising. A key challenge for Victoria is retaining foster carers within the system. Improving conditions for those foster carers is vital to grow a sustainable pool of households, able to meet the needs of children requiring care.

For full results please see our website:

www.fcav.org.au/images/documents/FCAV_CSS2020.pdf





COVID-19 Carer Survey

The Foster Care Association of Victoria conducted a COVID-19 carer survey in June 2020 that had 226 respondents, answering questions about their experiences and that of the children and young people in their care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This excellent response rate means we have access to clear information from carers about their experiences in the last few months as well as their immediate and mid-range support and advocacy needs.

Whilst some carers experienced good support, all carers held increased responsibility for facilitating access visits, assisting children and young people with online schooling, entertaining and moderating behavioural changes, sometimes with increased violence or self-harm behaviours.

Many carers were attempting to work from home whilst facilitating remote learning, access and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children at a time of unprecedented disruption.

Some carers outlined a positive impact on the children in their care from the reduction in home visits and/or family access. A few carers and the children in their care have experienced long awaited court dates or permanency plans being put on hold for an indeterminate time.

Some respite carers have not had a placement since the pandemic hit and have not heard from their agencies.

Unfortunately many carers experienced a gap in requisite guidance or support, some for weeks at a time.

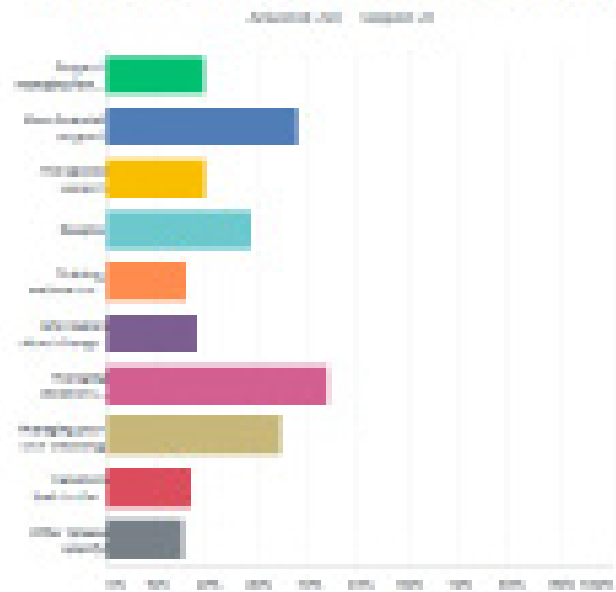
A majority felt financial strain due to the additional costs of being at home or reduced earning capacity. Whilst the support from the education system was good to excellent for most carers, some experienced backlash when inquiring about/sending children to school despite the health guidelines being clear that this was an available option for children in care. Some found the lack of supervision and routine, even when attending school, was dysregulating for the child in their care.

Carers' written responses were illuminating and outlined specific experiences. Strong themes arose from responses regarding respite and support with managing children's wellbeing and behaviour. In the interests of protecting identifying information we have not published the written responses, however, results show that schooling, respite,

Foster Care Association of Victoria - COVID-19 Carer Survey 2020



Q9 What specific support would have been useful to you as a carer during the period that wasn't provided by the sector?



Support Type	Percentage of Carers	Number of Carers
Financial support	35.0%	79
Respite services	45.0%	102
Training and education	45.0%	102
Legal support	45.0%	102
Health services	45.0%	102
Transportation services	45.0%	102
Food and clothing	45.0%	102
Other (please specify)	45.0%	102
Total responses (n)	226	226

access visits and general need for more support during this period are high priorities for carers.

There are clear areas of ongoing fallout from COVID-19 with evidence for where best to channel extra support, funding and resources for this recovery period. The FCAV will use this data to advocate for carers and the children in their care now and to demonstrate where measures for carers' support should be targeted for any future crisis situations.

Read the full survey results here:

www.fcav.org.au/news/covid-19-carer-survey-results

Being Heard

The Client Support Funding Framework Joint Forum



Left: Anne Manne delivered a personal and professional perspective demonstrating the need for increased funding to support children and young people at the CSFF Forum in July 2019.



Above: The CSFF Forum was a joint convention of the Foster Care Association of Victoria and the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW).

The Foster Care Association of Victoria joined the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW) to host the Client Expenses Forum in July 2019.

The Forum was convened to discuss carer issues with the **Client Support Funding Framework (CSFF)**.

The CSFF is the main funding source for accessing health, education and recreational support services, supporting costs of extracurricular, therapeutic and some medical and educational expenses to meet the needs of children and young people in care in Victoria which exceed everyday expenses covered by the care allowance such as orthodontic work, sports activities, reading glasses etc.

Carers regularly report to the FCAV they have difficulty in getting funding for support services for the children in their care. Carers are often forced to pay for support services out of their own pocket and can wait significant amounts of time for reimbursement of out of pocket expenses under the CSFF.

The Client Expenses Forum highlighted the CSFF is used to cover all children under statutory orders as well as all children and families under watch by child protection. It was also revealed the CSFF pays for drug testing of parents where drug testing is a requirement for parent/child access.

In addition, it was revealed the CSFF pools funding on a regional basis. This means depending on the demand, a service may be approved in one area but refused in another area.

The Department of Health and Human Services response to the Forum indicated they were working on a Treasury funding bid to increase the level of funding in the CSFF.

A Process for Birth Registrations

Births, Deaths and Marriages reports approximately 7% of children in Victoria don't have a registered birth. Transposing this to the care sector, this would indicate there are likely to be around 550 children in care without their birth registered. This can prevent carers enrolling children in childcare and kindergarten or registering for Centrelink. It can also prevent access to passports and bank accounts.

The FCAV joined with both the Commission for Children and Young People and the DHHS to consider ways to identify and register the births of children in care.

The FCAV is very pleased that following our advocacy, the DHHS agreed to process outstanding cases we put forward to them. We have been contacted by both carers and agencies to address identified cases.

“An estimated 550 children and young people in out-of-home care may be without a birth registration.”

Carer Strategy Launch



Above: CEO, Samantha Hauge at the launch with Minister for Child Protection, Luke Donnellan MP.

The Minister for Child Protection, Luke Donnellan, launched the Carer Strategy: *Strong carers, stronger children* in October 2019.

The carer strategy will prioritise administrative and policy reforms to better support carers. The development of the Carer Strategy is a significant achievement and a useful first step in responding to long standing carer concerns.

The Carer Strategy has the potential to evolve into an important platform and it is now our job to campaign Treasury and the Victorian Government to fund development and implementation of a work program to meet the strategy's aims.

The Carer Strategy was first proposed by DHHS in the *Roadmap for Reform* and its development was elevated in priority following the FCAV's advocacy. The FCAV believes that carers need to be better represented in the *Roadmap* and that a work program is required with specific aims to address long standing issues with decision making, documentation, respect, training, funding and support to carers.

Funding from the Minister assisted the FCAV to consult with carers to ensure the development of the Carer Strategy was carer-led. Following extensive carer consultation, the FCAV developed the Carer Strategy Discussion Paper to articulate carer concerns and as an input into the development of the Carer Strategy.

The next step is the development of a targeted work program that prioritises issues and outlines timeframes and resources for agreed projects. In order to craft an effective work program (in the context of current resourcing constraints), a dual strategy may be required. In effect this would mean tackling issues that are within the control of DHHS in the short to medium term while building the case for more substantial initiatives, in the longer term.

This could deliver a range of administrative efficiencies and build goodwill across the sector for support of more complex initiatives. More complex issues may require commissioned research as a stepping-stone to a longer term reform objective. This will include a cost benefit analysis of the economic and social benefits of early service intervention to support a funding bid to reform the Client Support Funding Framework. Advocating for commissioned research on carers to obtain quantitative and qualitative baseline data has also been an FCAV priority as we work towards better understanding carers so as to improve recruitment, retention and supports. The FCAV CEO is due to take over the co-chair position of the Carer Strategy sub-committee in 2020. The Carer Strategy is currently unfunded. Read more about the Carer Strategy on our website:

www.fcav.org.au/news/carers-strategy

Read the Strategy document here:

www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/strong-carers-stronger-children

COVID-19 Funding

The FCAV has advocated strongly for improved carer support in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government has provided a one-off \$600 supplementary payment for all carers receiving the carer payment (except for those children under a Permanent Care Order).

In addition, in April 2020 the Victorian Government announced additional funding of a \$31.3 million investment package to increase support for carers and bolster capacity in Care Services as part of its \$77.5 million package of supports for Victoria's most at-risk children during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the provision of a one-off grant to the FCAV to bolster existing carer support to enable flexible and timely responses for carers during the pandemic. The FCAV will utilise this funding to provide additional CISS telephone support and develop the Carer Assistance Program to provide information, support and advocacy for carers on COVID-19 related issues.

Engagement

 www.facebook.com/fostercarevictoria

 www.linkedin.com/company/foster-care-association-of-victoria

 twitter.com/vicfostercare

 www.instagram.com/fostercarevic

Research Partnerships

The FCAV is pleased to partner with leading researchers in the field of child protection and home-based care research. This year, we facilitated carer involvement in:

- Access to Health for Carers - Dr Karen McLean – Murdoch Institute and Melbourne University, 2020 - Citation online
- Understanding Associations Between Foster-Carer Mental Health and Placement Outcomes: A Longitudinal Investigation, BCYF and Deakin University - Principal Researchers: Dr Keriann Little; Associate Professor Melissa O'Shea; Mr. Richard Clark, 2020. Publication pending.
- Exploring Self care for Foster Carers – A. Miko - Monash University, 2020. Findings pending.

Sector Partnerships

We've been honoured to work closely with counterparts across the sector on several important projects in the 12 months.

- Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare – July 2019 – CSFF – E&Y – Co-host Forum on Expenses.
- CCYP – November 2019 - "In our Own Words Inquiry".
- Gippsland Region Bushfire Response Working group - Jan- March 2020.
- Berry Street Take Two program - April 2020 - June 2020 Information on telehealth, e-learning and caring through restrictions.
- Fostering Connections - March-ongoing – Toolkits and information for carers during COVID-19.

Newsletters



The FCAV produced its final printed newsletter in the first quarter of 2020, before taking the financial decision to cease production of the publication as a hardcopy due to the prohibitive costs for the organisation.



The decision means sending the same quality news, updates, legislation changes, events, training and carer giveaways in an electronic format. The new format is not only a more carbon friendly approach, it also

ensures all the FCAV's news, opportunities and updates are accessible online, stored and searchable on our database for future reference.

Back issues available here: www.fcav.org.au/newsletters

Social Media

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of face to face interactions with carers, the need for online communication and engagement has been more important in this period than ever.

During the last financial year, our Facebook page followers increased to 6,524.

The activity of the page has included an increase in posts and also interaction from the administrators. We had post reach of up to 10,000.

The FCAV has continued to diversify and expand our social media platforms. The FCAV Twitter account has 885 followers and over 2,000 tweets. The FCAV Instagram account has been active since March and has 106 followers and 27 posts. The FCAV LinkedIn account has 193 followers.

Our e-news, social media, media, print and online platforms provide connection between our carers, colleagues, sector partners and Government working groups. We continue to build our community of carers and to build community awareness of the foster care journey through these channels. With such broad reach, the FCAV social media channels, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and the new Instagram page, enable instant facilitation of information and feedback for carers in Victoria and the sector as a whole.

Website

The FCAV website was visited 32,054 times with 60,081 pageviews by 23,909 users during the financial year period. Of these users, 86% were new visitors and 13% returning visitors. The most visited pages were in relation to Carer Allowance, the Carer Information and Support Service, Caring and COVID-19 and Membership.

Carer Gifts and Giveaways

- Dream night' Melbourne Zoo tickets - Oct 2019
- 'Come From Away' Musical Matinee Tickets - Sep 2019
- Sukin Gift Packs - Sep 2019
- Body shop Products - Sep 2019
- \$100 Sport and extracurricular activities - Dec 2019
- Wooden toys from Waverley Woodworkers - Dec 2019
- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory Musical Tix- Jan 2020
- VACCA Deadly Diaries - March 2020
- \$100 Visa Gift Vouchers - March 2020
- Tickets to the film 'In My Blood It Runs' - June 2020
- \$100 Officeworks vouchers - June 2020
- Aboriginal Art Colouring Books - June 2020

Reconciliation Action Plan

Our Vision for Reconciliation

The Foster Care Association of Victoria's (FCAV) vision for reconciliation is for Australia to be a nation that acknowledges historic truths and their current impacts and where First Nations' cultures are recognised, understood and celebrated by all, as part of our community and country's identity.

The FCAV advocates for a child protection system that ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are safe and connected to their family, culture and community. We support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination in all areas of the care of children and young people.

Our RAP

The FCAV is implementing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to support growth towards excellence in cultural safety within our organisation and to promote the principles of reconciliation within our membership of foster carers across Victoria. The RAP provides the platform for the FCAV to recognise, monitor and increase the integration of cultural awareness, safety and support into our relationships and membership support. This includes developing our relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) colleagues and subscribers to support communities' focus on self-determination and healing. The FCAV is committed to Aboriginal Child Placement Principles and the Wungurilwil Gaggapduir Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement.

Activities and Events

The FCAV recently had our second Reconciliation Action Plan (Innovate) 2020–2022, endorsed by Reconciliation Australia. This will be launched on 27 August, 2020. Brent Ryan, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) Leader, Learning & Development, will be opening the event.

Due to COVID-19, we are celebrating the launch online. As part of the celebration, we are inviting Staff, Board, RAP Working Group members and sector colleagues to watch a virtual film screening of 'Twelve Canoes'.

The FCAV recently had a professional development session for all staff with Sue-Anne Hunter in relation to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles.

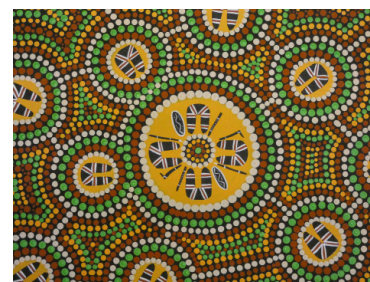
Sue-Anne Hunter is a proud Wurundjeri and Ngurai Illum Wurrung woman, committed to self-determination and advocating for the rights of all First Nations peoples.

Prior to establishing her business in 2019, Aboriginal Cultural Consultancy, Sue-Anne worked in the Aboriginal



Above: FCAV Staff, Board & RAP Working Group Members Walking on Country with our Board Member and Wurundjeri man, Daryl Sloan.

Right: We purchased this original artwork from Paul McCann, a Marrithiyel artist. It was wonderful to have Paul come to our office to present his artwork 'Connections' and explain the meaning to staff. The artwork is displayed in our foyer and used throughout the design of our RAP.



Child and Family Welfare field for over 18 years and has been appointed director on several boards. Following this session, the CISS team has participated in case consultations with Sue-Anne in relation to specific cases and she has provided meaningful guidance and support to the team.

A Team Planning session is being developed to further explore issues in relation to Aboriginal children in care and the impact on children and families.

The FCAV is intending to further develop connections and relationships with ACCOs to assist in the advocacy work with agencies and Department of Health and Human Services.

A Guiding Principles document has been developed with Dana Payne, Executive Manager, Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance and is ready to be presented at our next RAP working group.

The FCAV is part of the Working Group - Transition of Aboriginal Children to ACCOs. Meetings have been postponed this year by DHHS due to COVID-19.

Read the FCAV RAP here: www.fcav.org.au/about/rap

Fundraising



FUNDRAISING PROSPECTUS

The FCAV works towards a community where young people and children in out-of-home care have access to all the opportunities and supports of their peers and that a care experience does not impact their ability to achieve their full potential for positive life outcomes.

As a growing not for profit organisation with a membership of over 5000 foster carers, we have no shortage of experience

of what is required to meet carer needs and we have many innovative ideas to address them, but face the challenge of needing to diversify our income to realise our aspirations. Many of our niche programs do not receive government funding and we continue to look for solutions and partnerships that have maximum impact for carers and the children in their care.

This year, we have been so grateful for the generous donations made during several fundraising campaigns:

September 2019 - Father's Day Drive 2019

October 2019 – beneficiary of the Anything is Possible Trust

December 2019 - Giving Tuesday Fundraising Drive

Dec 2019-Feb 2020 - Entertainment Book membership

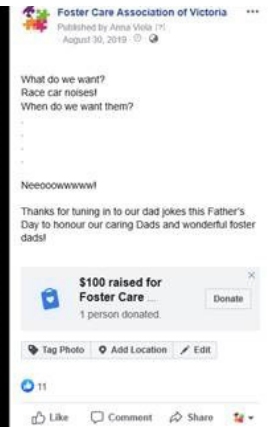
May 2020 - Volunteers Week Fundraising drive - Supporting Care, Supporting Childhoods

www.fcav.org.au/support-us

During **National Volunteers Week** the FCAV ran a #SupportingCareSupportingChildhoods campaign to help us support our volunteer community of carers raising over \$4,500!

Hear from our wonderful board member and volunteer foster carer, Megan and her family, about their care journey and the impact of the FCAV's support for the volunteer foster care community and the children and young people in their care.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXGt_m5PeRI



Ahead of Father's Day 2019, the FCAV ran a series of **Dad Jokes** across social media to celebrate our wonderful foster-Dads, with a "donate" button added to each post.



In December 2019, the FCAV took part in **Giving Tuesday**, an international fundraising campaign for any registered charity, for the first time.



Ahead of Christmas in December 2019, the FCAV signed up to the **Entertainment Book**, to provide carers with an opportunity to benefit from some great discounts with a percentage of the purchase price donated to the organisation.

Treasurer's Report

Luke Sapwell

Treasurer



This year was a momentous year for the Foster Care Association of Victoria. We are proud to report a profit of \$279,367 (2019: \$15,722). This was despite a budgeted loss of \$12,069. Since 2011, FCAV has reported 6 years of losses and only 2 years of profit, with this year being our third year of profit and our largest profit since 1992 when we were founded. This means

we now have a safety net and funds in reserve, which are going to be especially important throughout the next few years as we, as a society, recover from these recent and current events. The Board is very conscious of the reliability of certain funding channels and is working to ensure the FCAV can withstand any potential future funding uncertainties.

The profit we have recorded for the 2020 financial year is largely due to new accounting standards that have been introduced around the requirements for how we report any funding received and isn't necessarily new or unexpected funds for the organisation. We also saw revenue increase by 12.9% to \$2,119,747 and expenses decrease another 1.1% on top of last year's 14.3% decrease. This is off the back of the Board and CEO implementing a successful expense management strategy throughout the past two years.

We have focused on diversifying our funding channels through various fundraising activities and grants. We are looking to further expand on these this financial year and have identified the benefit of hiring a qualified Fundraising Officer to ensure we achieve this goal. To further strengthen our financial position, we have brought our financial operations in-house and recently appointed a Finance Officer.

Donations received have once again supported our operations last financial year and have remained steady at \$22,740 with a grant of \$30,000 also being received. This amount was made up of funds received through Facebook, crowdfunding campaigns, website donations, a bequest and those with automated regular donations setup to donate to the FCAV on a regular and ongoing basis.

Thank you to everyone who supported us this financial year as your donations have allowed us to further expand our key initiatives and help support more carers. I encourage everyone to make use of the various fundraising tools available on our website and thank you in advance for your continued and unwavering support for the year ahead.

Sadly, this will be my final year as Treasurer of FCAV, however I will remain on the Board to support the FCAV in its continued growth. It has been an experience that has truly meant so much to me and I am confident that I am leaving the FCAV in a fantastic financial position and that my suggestions during my tenure have provided immense benefit to the FCAV, ensuring its financial future is a strong one over the years to come.

I would like to thank the Board, CEO, FCAV staff, our auditor, our former bookkeeper and our recently appointed Finance Officer who have all contributed tirelessly to the success of the FCAV to allow for more support for more foster carers across the state. I look forward to continuing to work with you all to ensure that the FCAV continues its positive trajectory and that we secure the financial future of this truly wonderful organisation.



Financial Report

(full financial report available on our website)

Profit and Loss

Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income For the Year Ended 30 June 2020

	Note	2020 \$	2019 \$
Revenue	4	2,118,347	1,879,838
Employee benefits expense		(888,848)	(881,007)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	5	(48,848)	(4,872)
Consultancy fees		(287,854)	(748,044)
Administrative expenses		(94,779)	(46,580)
Client and event expenses		(86,848)	(32,235)
Office expenses		(46,248)	(81,281)
Occupancy expenses		(54,379)	(78,884)
Operating expenses		(46,865)	(84,181)
Margin before income tax		279,587	18,722
Income tax expense		-	-
Margin for the year		279,587	18,722
Other comprehensive income, net of income tax		-	-
Revaluation changes for property, plant and equipment		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		279,587	18,722

Balance Sheet

Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc

Statement of Financial Position As at 30 June 2020

	Note	2020 \$	2019 \$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	6	891,888	802,549
Trade and other receivables	7	75,887	64,320
Other assets		1,889	10,004
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		969,664	876,873
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	8	6,888	-
Right of use assets	9	(6,128)	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		(6,128)	-
TOTAL ASSETS		963,536	876,873
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	10	18,500	108,517
Current liabilities	11	48,001	-
Employee benefits	12	(37,824)	(33,883)
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		(8,323)	(82,166)
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	13	42,873	-
Liability provisions	14	3,881	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		46,754	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES		38,431	(82,166)
NET ASSETS		925,105	794,707
EQUITY			
Retained earnings		888,888	802,549
Total Equity		888,888	802,549

Statement by the Board of Directors

Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc

Responsible Persons' Declaration

I the responsible persons declare that at the responsible persons' control:

- there are reasonable grounds to believe that the registered entity 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 sub-section 60.11(2) of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2012

Responsible persons

 Toni Matheson

Responsible persons

 Luke Cooper

Dated this 18th day of August 2020

Auditor's Report

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


Auditor's Responsibilities under Australian Accounting Standards

The objectives of this report are to express an opinion on the financial reporting system as a whole in accordance with the Accounting Standards, whether they are based on GAAP, and on those accounts which depart from GAAP, and to report on any departures from GAAP which are identified in the course of the audit. The auditor is not required to express an opinion on the financial reporting system as a whole in accordance with the Accounting Standards, whether they are based on GAAP, and on those accounts which depart from GAAP, and to report on any departures from GAAP which are identified in the course of the audit.

An audit of the financial reporting system in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards, as required by professional auditing standards, does not guarantee that the financial reporting system is free from material misstatements.

- (a) identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial reporting system, whether they are based on GAAP, departures from GAAP, and on those accounts which depart from GAAP, and to design and perform audit procedures which are responsive to those risks, and to report on any departures from GAAP which are identified in the course of the audit;
- (b) obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to support the opinion on the financial reporting system as a whole in accordance with the Accounting Standards;
- (c) evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Company;
- (d) evaluate the appropriateness of the Company's use of the going concern basis of accounting, and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists concerning the Company's ability to continue as a going concern. If such a material uncertainty exists, the auditor is to draw attention to it in their audit report in the related disclosures and, where appropriate, to modify the audit opinion;
- (e) evaluate the appropriateness of the disclosures in the financial reporting system, including the disclosures, and whether the financial reporting system is consistent with the Accounting Standards and Australian Accounting Standards.

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


Professional Name
Accounting Firm Name (Registered Company Name)
Address
Business Registration Number (ABN) (if any)
Firm Number (if any)
Contact Number (if any)

17 August 2020

FOSTER CARE WEEK

8-14 SEPTEMBER 2019



The FCAV 2019 Foster Care Week campaign included facilitating a sector wide collaboration on the #ValueofCarers with coordinated agency celebrations around the state.

The FCAV hosted our annual Foster Care Week celebration in September with over 200 carers at the Hotel Windsor for a high tea event featuring presentations from CEO, Sam Hauge, Minister for Child Protection, Luke Donnellan, Commissioner

for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Justin Mohamed and Treasurer of the Board, Luke Sapwell who spoke of his care experience.

Foster Care Week is an annual event that raises awareness about foster care in the wider community and celebrates foster care within our sector. The events and celebrations held during Foster Care Week aim to highlight and appreciate the invaluable role of foster carers.

The year's theme pointed to the tremendous value of foster carers providing the stepping stones of hope for children and young people who cannot live with their birth family and the significance of that contribution to the community as a whole.

The Value of Carers exists in the extra qualities of parenting required to not just raise children and provide for their daily needs but to build stability and love into a child's life where they may have had none. It is all too rare that as a sector we recognise the special skill set and resilience needed to be a carer, which is why our annual Foster Care Week celebrations are so important.



Left: The students of Eddy's Backpacks distributing at our Foster Care Week celebration.

The FCAV Team

Board of Directors 2019/2020

President - Toni Hetherington

Vice-President - Tori Smith

Treasurer - Luke Sapwell

Secretary - Sue Segar

Acting Secretary - Megan Sadlier

Chris Hansen (May 2020)

Malcolm McLeod

Nicole Misurelli (September 2019)

Daryl Sloan

Co-opted Members of the Board

Madeleine Kapira

Alexis King

Staff 2019/2020

Chief Executive Officer

Samantha Hauge (current)

Katie Hooper (August 2019)

Operations

Bronwyn Hume – Office Manager

Kim Cain – External Bookkeeper

CISS team

Tessa Hughes – Team Leader

Betti Gabriel – Carer Support Worker

Biba Dickson – Carer Support Worker

Tonya Bavaro – Carer Support Worker

Deb Collard – Program Coordinator

Engagement and Advocacy Team

Peta Daly – Member Relations Coordinator

Rowan Pulford – Project Officer

Anna Viola – Communications Manager

Carer KaFÉ Team

Penny Daly – Program Manager

Gillian Forsyth – Project Officer (Feb 2020)

Manodi Kath - Project Officer (June 2020)

Marita Dunphy – Project Officer, Carer Ambassadors

APPRECIATION

Thank you to our supporters

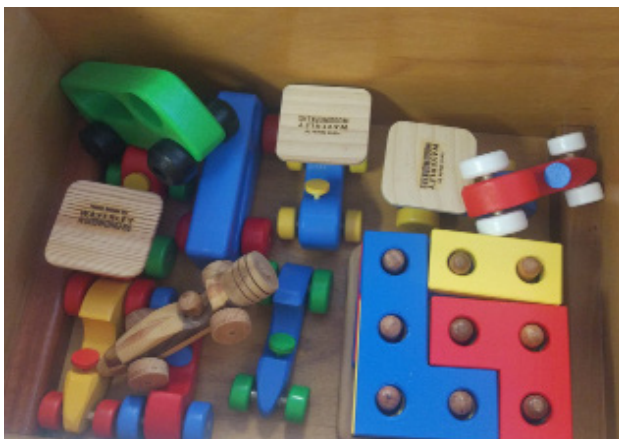
These individuals and/or businesses donated gifts or in-kind support to the FCAV that we were able to pass on as gifts and prizes to carer households:

- Anything is Possible Trust
- [Australian Quilters Association](#) – Quilt donations
- Anaconda
- Bendigo Metro Hotel
- Bodyshop
- Bounce Inc.
- Buzzby & Fang
- Catholic Regional College
- Collingwood Children's Farm
- [Cummins](#) – Regular corporate volunteers
- Eddie's backpacks
- Erin's boutique chocolates
- Go Climb
- Heide Museum of Modern Art
- Kate Gray – Professional editing and proofreading
- Luna Park
- Melbourne Zoo
- Milk the Cow (Cheese)
- NAB – Corporate and professional volunteers
- Officeworks
- Parade College Bundoora – Digby Morrell
- Penleigh and Essendon Grammar – Darrell Cruse
- Pinchapoo
- Squitchy Lane (wine)
- The Hotel Windsor
- Waverley Woodworkers

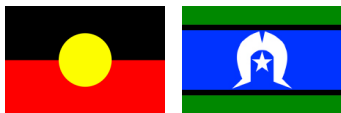
Thank you to our subscribers

Thank you to our Community Service Organisation subscribers for 2019/20 who generously agreed to a slight increase in subscription fees this year to support the FCAV's services to foster carers.

- Anchor Foster Care
- Anglicare Victoria
- Baptcare Family Services
- Barwon Child, Youth & Family
- Berry Street
- Brophy Family & Youth Services Inc,
- Child and Family Services,
- Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative
- Key Assets
- Life Without Barriers
- MacKillop Family Services
- Mallee Accommodation & Support Program
- Mallee District Aboriginal Services
- Mallee Family Care
- OzChild
- Quantum Support Services Inc
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-Op
- Uniting Care
- Upper Murray Family Care
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency.



Left: A range of handcrafted toys was donated and given away to carers from the Waverley Woodworkers.



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Contact:

Foster Care Association of Victoria
Level 1, 398 Smith Street
Collingwood Vic 3066
Telephone: (03) 9416 4292
Email: admin@fcav.org.au
Website: www.fcav.org.au

