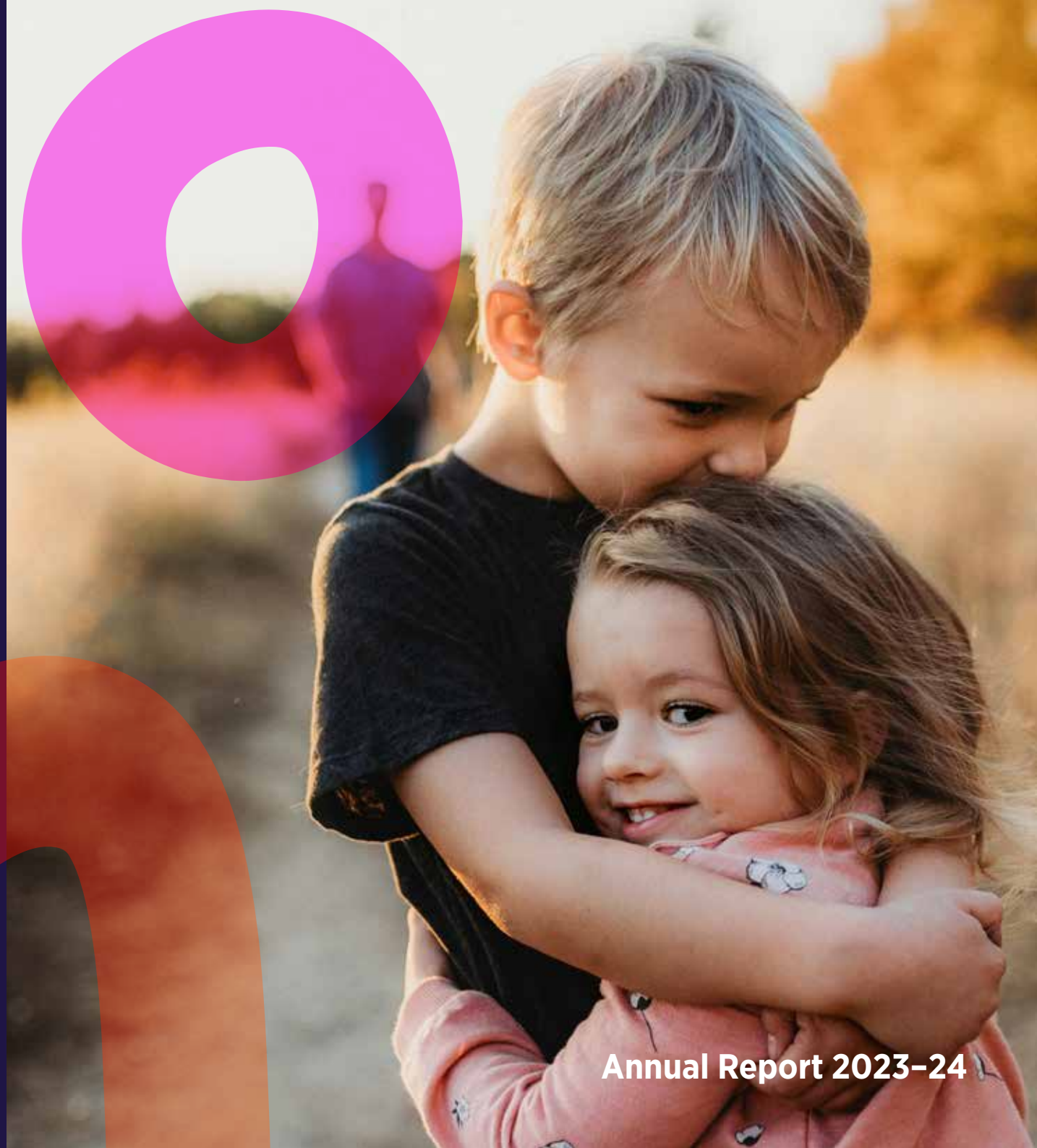




**Advocating
for the rights
and wellbeing
of children,
young people
and families.**



Annual Report 2023-24

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare is the peak body for child and family services in Tasmania and Victoria. For over 100 years, the Centre has advocated for the rights and wellbeing of children, young people and families in Victoria, ensuring their right to be heard, to be safe, to access education and to remain connected to family, community and culture.

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 @CFEFCFW

 cfecfw.org.au



We appreciate and celebrate diversity in all its forms. We believe diversity of all kinds makes our teams, services and organisation stronger and more effective.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (The Centre) is in Naarm/Melbourne, which forms part of the traditional lands of the Kulin Nation.

The Kulin Nation is a collective of five First Nations clans: Wurundjeri, Boonwurrung, Wathaurung, Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung.

The Centre respectfully acknowledges Victorian Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waterways where we live and work and recognises that our work is delivered on many lands across the Kulin Nations.

We are proud that First Nations cultures continue to enrich our lives by sharing values, places, resources, and stories. We pay our respect to the ancestors of this Country, Elders, knowledge holders and leaders – past, present and future.

Through our leadership, we collaborate closely with First Nations organisations to ensure they play a leading role in the decisions that affect their children, families and communities.

At the Centre, we acknowledge the grief and loss that First Nations peoples have endured and we celebrate their survival and resilience. We stand in solidarity now and always, acknowledging that First Nations peoples have never ceded sovereignty in Australia.

Always was, always will be.

Our commitment to self-determination

The Centre supports the right of First Nations peoples to self-determine and recognises that self-determination leads to better outcomes for First Nations children and families.

We acknowledge the strength and diversity of First Nations children, families, and the leadership of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in our sector.



Artwork by Nakia Cadd, Gunditjmarra, Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Bunitj, Boon Wurrung, Taungurung woman

About the Centre

The Centre is the peak body for child and family services in Tasmania and Victoria. We advocate for the rights of children and young people to be safe, heard and connected to family, community and culture.

We provide a powerful voice for child and family services organisations and their workforce

We advocate on behalf of our members on the frontline of child and family services, representing member organisations at all levels of government. The Centre's strong and established relationships with federal and state governments, departments, agencies and ministers provide us with a unique leverage to drive meaningful change for our sector.

We collaborate with our members

Centre members have exclusive access to information, resources, networks, training, and funding opportunities to enhance capabilities, bolster existing work, and strengthen relationships across our sector. We facilitate monthly network forums covering areas including out-of-home care, foster care, kinship care, and leaving care.

We build sector capacity

We provide accredited and non-accredited training for the child and family services sector, offering substantial discounts for members

Learn more about membership at cfecfw.org.au/join

Our vision

Tasmanian and Victorian children, young people and families are safe, happy and connected, with access to support when they need it.

Our purpose

Policy and ideas: Develop, influence and advocate for public policies that advance the rights and wellbeing of children, young people and families, and address the social, economic and cultural barriers to improving their lives.

Research and practice: Lead and share research to support innovation and evidence-informed practice.

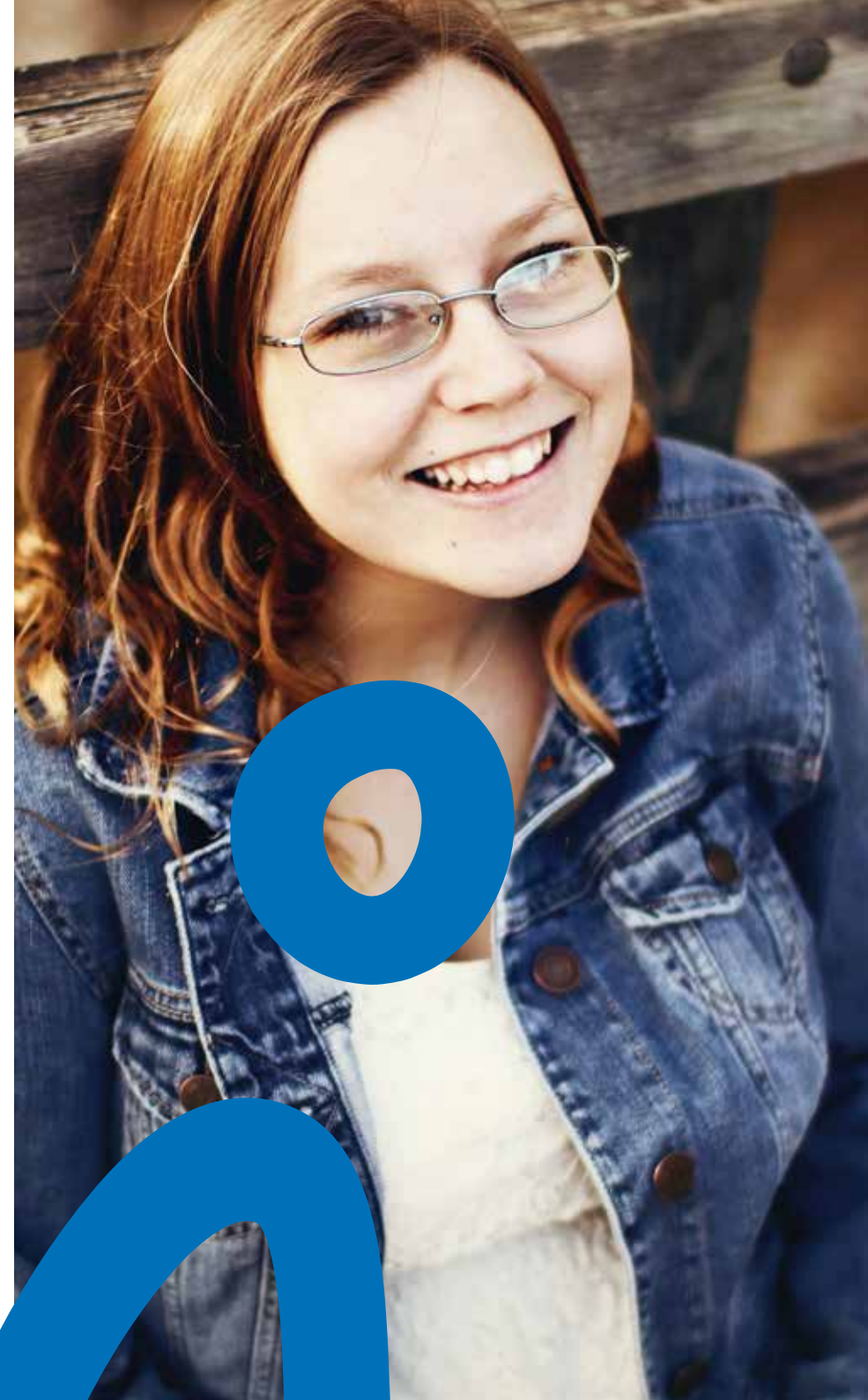
Capacity building: Strengthen the capacity of organisations to provide services that best suit the needs of children and families experiencing vulnerability.





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CHAIR'S REPORT

It is an honour to present my final report as Chair of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and reflect on the Centre's achievements and progress over my nine years on the board and the past four years as Chair.

Over almost a decade, I have seen immense change and growth across the child and family services sector. The Centre and its Board have been steadfast in its leadership and commitment to its vision for all children, young people, and families across Victoria and now Tasmania, to be safe, happy, and connected, with access to support when they need it.

In my time as Chair, I have had the privilege of working alongside a team of dedicated professionals and supporters who are deeply committed to our goals. Together, we have strengthened the Centre's programs, expanded our membership and engagement with organisations throughout the state, and deepened the sector's impact. I thank the Centre's CEO, Deb Tsorbaris, for her dedication, guidance, and friendship over this time.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns in Victoria, the Centre pulled our sector together. We moved quickly into online delivery, paving the way for other organisations to continue to deliver their services and provide support in new ways. I have watched organisations evolve considerably in this time. We now enjoy some of the many benefits of the new hybrid way of working, for both national collaboration, workforce connection and service delivery.

As the peak body for child and family services, we have achieved many significant milestones that will lay the groundwork for future success.

Building a skilled, compassionate, and prepared workforce remains at the heart of the Centre's work, and I have seen many notable programs and developments during my time on the Board. One example is the Switch to Social Work program which aims to attract and support those looking for a career change into social work, through an earn-and-learn supported pathway.

In addition to this, the community and social services graduate program has provided new graduates with a structured pathway into the sector, which has been essential in meeting the growing needs of the child and family welfare sector in Victoria.

Striving to develop the leaders of tomorrow, the Diploma of Leadership and Management Qualification Course has been equipping emerging leaders in our sector with the skills to effectively guide organisations in a complex and dynamic environment since its implementation in 2016.

We have also seen significant growth in customised and online training, creating accessible and tailored professional development opportunities to meet our members' needs.

Creating system change through advocacy has always been a core part of our work. In my time on the Board, we have worked to bring the voice of children and young people to the table and to create and improve policies affecting child and family welfare, including:

- **Ongoing advocacy to Raise the Age and beyond**, with our recent success in the *Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic)*, which brings the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years in Victoria. The Centre will continue advocacy to provide supportive, rehabilitative alternatives for children and young people.
- **Advocacy for Improved child and family welfare systems**, centred on robust systems that serve families equitably and effectively.
- **Early Years Strategy work**, with active participation in initiatives that support the early years, ensuring that children and families have access to vital resources and support during critical developmental stages.
- **Contributing to Aboriginal reforms** through our work with Beyond Good Intentions, Wungurilwil Gaggapduir, and Transitioning Aboriginal children in out-of-home-care.
- **Treating Families Fairly** has informed policy and practice, emphasising dignity, inclusion, and equitable treatment for all families.

The Centre's funded programs continue to drive impactful change within communities, addressing both immediate needs and long-term goals.

Since its inception in 2017, **OPEN** has been established and expanded as a central resource for sharing knowledge and best practices across the sector. Most recently, OPEN launched a cross-sector partnership to deliver the Family Violence Sexual Violence Knowledge Hub.

The **Raising Expectations** initiative has successfully increased the educational aspirations of young people in care, collaborating with seven TAFE and university partners to support care-experienced students, and **Fostering Connections** has provided foster care agencies with a coordinated process to recruit safe, nurturing foster care homes, addressing a critical shortage in the community.

Meanwhile, **Carer Kafe** has come under the Centre's umbrella, offering training, connection, and support to kinship, permanent, and foster carers. Additionally, **Home Stretch** has been a key advocacy platform for the Centre, championing the push for extended support for young people in state care up to the age of 21. This advocacy has resulted in legislative reform in the ACT, with all other states committing to this critical change.

This year, we laid out ambitious plans for the future that will strengthen the Centre's organisational foundations. These include:

- Release of the Organisational Forward Plan 2024–2026, which outlines the pathway forward for the Centre over the next eighteen months, reflecting the evolving needs of our member organisations and a rapidly changing external environment.
- Merger with Families and Children Tasmania (FACT), creating a new peak with a strong voice at both state and national levels.
- Relaunch of the *Children Australia* Journal, bringing this important publication back to life and providing a vital link between research and practice in child and family welfare.

- Expansion of collaborative relationships, through deepening our partnerships with other peak bodies, the hugely successful Tri Peaks partnerships, releasing the Embracing Equality Charter, and continuing to foster a culture of cross-sector collaboration.
- Office space refurbishment: The updated workspace has created a central space for our team and members to collaborate.

I am proud to report these accomplishments and incredibly grateful to the Centre's leadership team and dedicated staff, my fellow Board members, and our member organisations, who contribute to our success. Together, we are building a stronger, more equitable future for children, young people and their families.

As I step down from my role as Chair, I am filled with optimism for the path forward and look forward to watching and supporting the Centre's profound impact.



Dr. Lisa J. Griffiths

Chair, Centre for Excellence in
Child and Family Welfare

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Lisa J. Griffiths'.

CEO REPORT

I am very proud to present the Centre's Annual Report for 2023–24 and reflect on the many great things we have achieved in the past year.

This is an opportunity to thank the Centre's passionate staff, who show immense dedication to supporting members and creating better outcomes for children and young people in Victoria and Tasmania. This year we have put together some incredible events, both online and in person, that celebrate and elevate the great work being done by the Centre and across our sector. I thank my team for all they do for the Centre and for the supportive and generous work environment they contribute to for each other.

I want to thank our Board for their ongoing support and guidance, and I look forward with optimism to what we will achieve together.

This year we say farewell and thanks to our outgoing Chair, Dr Lisa J Griffith. Lisa has been a superb leader on our Board and generous with her time and energy for the Centre and our staff over her four years as Chair and nine years on the Board. Lisa, thank you for your leadership and for all you have done, and continue to do, in support of children and families.

We also farewell Graham Boal from MacKillop Family Services, who is leaving our Board, but will continue to support the Centre through our finance committee. Thank you, Graham, for all your work as a member of our Board.

Looking back over the year, we see just how critical the child, youth and family services sector continues to be in the lives of children and families. Children's rights, and our collective responsibility for children's wellbeing, increasingly feature in the media and in the political arenas in our states, nationally and internationally.

Eliminating violence against women and children has been at the forefront of our minds. Concerns for children's and young people's safety online have escalated into political action.

There is a crisis in Australia, and it is set deep in the hearts of families who are under pressure as the increasing cost –of living impacts parents, young people and children.

The [Victorian State Budget](#) in May responded to the economic and social pressures on families by funding early years and education programs and the Housing First response for families experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and by continuing to fund the child and family services sector over the next two years. The budget allocated \$374 million to protect at-risk children and young people and to continue early intervention and family reunification services to keep families together and children safe.

This cost-of-living crisis puts housing at the top of the national agenda. Despite Australia's commitment to housing as a human right through international agreements like the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the fundamental right to secure housing is not a reality for every child and family.

The Centre surveyed over 100 member organisations working with children and families earlier this year. We found that 85% of organisations, regardless of their focus, regularly support families experiencing housing insecurity, and there has been a sharp rise in employed families seeking housing support.

These pressures take a heavy toll on families, with impacts that ripple through every aspect of their lives. Our members told us this can look like:

- Parents and children going without essentials, from food to adequate sleep;
- Disruptions to education, as families struggle to enrol children or keep them in school without a stable home;
- Fear of child protection involvement due to homelessness or housing instability, leading to heightened anxiety and distress; and
- Families splitting up because they simply can't stay together.

Despite challenges, we have achieved a great deal this year. I am grateful to our members for their generosity and insights, which contribute to the Centre's policy, advocacy and capacity-building work.

We continue to support members and sector organisations to use evidence in their work, and I look forward to the role that the Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network (OPEN), the Centre and the Family Preservation Model will play as we approach the next evidence horizon

The **expansion of the Centre into Tasmania** marks a significant moment for the Centre and the Tasmanian child and family services sector, which worked tirelessly over many years to merge Family and Children Tasmania (FACT) with the Centre to create a peak that works across jurisdictions. Our successful Connecting Communities Tour expanded into Tasmania this year, with workshops in four centres and targeted visits to West Coast agencies to learn about our new member communities' unique challenges and strengths.

We launched the **inaugural Family Services Symposium**, Working Together with Families, to showcase the incredible and valuable work family services do daily to keep children safe, families together and communities strong. We brought 300 family services practitioners together to share their work and offer inspiration and connection to a group of people who work tirelessly behind the scenes, supporting tens of thousands of families each year in Victoria.

Our work supporting care-experienced young people in higher education expanded over the year. **Raising Expectations** now partners with all 13 TAFE institutions and six universities, with more partners expected to come on board. Commonwealth funding has provided free matched mentoring programs for care-experienced young people aged 15 years and over to support them in engaging with study at any level.

Mentoring support has been a recurring theme; The **Community Services Mentoring Program** was expanded to our member organisations following a successful cross-sector trial through the Tri-Peaks partnerships, with 32 mentoring pairs currently building the leadership capacity of contemporary and next-generation leaders in child and family services.

Our engagement with members and the wider sector is an increasingly important focus for our organisation. We have delivered **exclusive briefings for our members** with Peta McCammon, Secretary of Families, Fairness and Housing, and Katherine Whetton, Deputy Secretary of Mental Health and Wellbeing at the Department of Health. EY People Advisory Services partners Sonia Sharp and Georgina Gates delivered a hugely popular briefing on Global Workforce Trends, sharing evidence and trends in our sector workforces now and into the future.

It is increasingly difficult to recruit new carers, and we are grateful for the amazing collaboration of agencies and the Fostering Connection program in Victoria. In April, we brought Victoria's foster care agencies together to discuss the **future of foster care**, which kicked off a national conversation alongside the formation of the National Foster Care Sustainability Group. We work together to advocate for the collective responsibility of Commonwealth and state governments to support children and young people in out-of-home care and their carers. I was appointed Chair of Families Australia at the end of 2023, which brings a national perspective and insights to our work in Victoria and Tasmania.

I was appointed Chair of Families Australia at the end of 2023, which brings a national perspective and insights to our work in Victoria and Tasmania.

During August 2024, the Centre led a [member study tour](#) to attend the ISPCAN Congress in Sweden and visit some child and family service organisations in Sweden and Switzerland. The Study Tour was an incredible opportunity to explore innovative approaches beyond our borders and bring back valuable insights to benefit the children, young people, families and carers we support.

Our year was tinged with great sadness with the [passing of Joe Tucci](#) from the Australian Childhood Foundation in March after a short illness. Joe was a deeply passionate, tireless and fearless advocate for children's rights and needs, with an incredible legacy of achievements as a driving force behind the establishment of the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse. I was honoured to present the Centre's Leaving a Legacy Award in recognition of his lifetime of great work at the 2024 Victorian Protecting Children Awards. Joe is greatly missed by us all.

We look ahead with optimism at some big shifts are gathering momentum for children and families and I want to acknowledge that, while the outcome of the Voice to Parliament referendum was a major disappointment, the Centre continues to walk with First Nations peoples as they strive for self-determination and treaty.

Thank you to all our members, partners and staff who supported a Voice to Parliament. We will keep listening and advocating for the rights of all children, embracing the Uluru Statement from the Heart and promoting its message: *"When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country."*



Deb Tsorbaris

Chief Executive Officer, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deb Tsorbaris".

Ensuring children, young people and families are safe, happy and connected

At the heart of the Centre’s strategic and organisational forward plans are children and families affected by inequality, along with our member organisations dedicated to supporting them.

The Centre has made significant progress in implementing the actions outlined in our previous [Organisational Forward Plan 2022–2026](#). However, we acknowledge that there’s still work to be done to fully achieve our aims. We’re committed to continuing to pursue actions aligned with our strategic priorities while considering some significant changes in the external environment.

An updated [Forward Plan 2024–2026](#) was developed in March 2024, which outlines a refreshed pathway forward for the Centre over the next eighteen months, reflecting the evolving needs of our member organisations and a rapidly changing external environment. It also acknowledges that the Tasmanian child and family services sector has welcomed the Centre as their peak body.

The Centre’s Board reviewed our strategic priorities and identified the key actions needed to achieve them. Our Board has made the strategic decision to concentrate our efforts over the next eighteen months where we know we will have the greatest impact.

Three key activities were outlined to drive our progress throughout the plan. We eagerly anticipate our broader Strategic Plan Redesign process, commencing in 2025, to develop an updated Vision, Purpose, and Strategic Plan informed by our Board, our members across Tasmania and Victoria, and the views and aspirations of the children, young people, carers, and families our sector serves.

Updated strategic priorities

Our refreshed strategic priorities build on our existing priorities, and will shape our work over the 2024–2026 period:

1. Empowering children, young people, carers and families across the jurisdictions in which we operate;
2. Enabling collaboration within and across systems, sectors and workforces to achieve the best outcomes for children, young people and families;
3. Promoting and embedding lived experience and the voices and rights of children, young people, carers, and families;
4. Supporting the sector in drawing on evidence, knowledge and insights to enable innovation in practice and policy; and
5. Continuing our role as a responsive, proactive and transformative peak for the child and family services sector.

Our focal activities

The Centre’s Board have identified three key focal activities that will shape our work to enable us to achieve these strategic priorities over this period.

1: Supporting the design of a contemporary foster care system

(Strategic Priorities 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5)

2: Driving a response to the Australian Childhood Maltreatment Study

(Strategic Priorities 2, 4 & 5)

3: Providing meaningful support to the Tasmanian child and family services sector as the peak body for children and families in Tasmania

(Strategic Priorities 1, 4 & 5)

[VIEW *Organisations Forward Plan 2024–2026*](#)



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:

Empowering children, young people, carers and families across the jurisdictions in which we operate





Tasmania welcomes a new peak for child and family services



In 2019, Families and Children Tasmania (FACT) approached the Centre with the idea of a merger. This merger was formally finalised with FACT in April 2024 after extensive consultation and due diligence. The new peak for Tasmania and Victoria was officially launched by Hon. Roger Jaensch, Tasmania’s Minister for Children and Youth, and Prof. Leah Bromfield, Director and Chair of Child Protection at the Australian Centre for Child Protection, in October 2024.

Minister Jaensch said: “The Centre for Excellence has an ambitious strategic plan for 2024–2026. Its priorities are clear: empowering children and families, fostering cross-sector collaboration, embedding lived experience into policy and practice, and ensuring that its work remains at the forefront of innovation in child and family services. I look forward to the Centre’s contribution as we embark on an unprecedented period of reform and innovation in these services in Tasmania.”

[READ our media release](#)



Connecting Tasmanian Communities Tour

As the peak body for children and family services in Tasmania, we know how important it is to hear directly from our members.

The Centre's inaugural Connecting Tasmanian Communities Tour allowed us to connect with Tasmania's child and family services sector and understand the unique challenges and opportunities for children and families in their communities.

Events were open to our member organisations, local government representatives, community leaders and the child and family services workforce. We visited Burnie and Devonport in the North West, Launceston, Zeehan and Queenstown in the West, and Hobart.

The insights from this tour will shape how we represent and support our Tasmanian members.



Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

Connecting Tasmanian Communities Tour 2024

Burnie
25th July 2024

Devonport
26th July 2024

Launceston
24th September 2024

Zeehan & Queenstown
25th September 2024

Hobart
8th October 2024

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (The Centre) is keen to hear directly from our Tasmanian members to understand the specific challenges and opportunities faced by children, young people, and families in your communities. These events are open to our member organisations, local government representatives, community leaders, and child and family services workers.

Register your spot today at cfefw.asn.au/ctct24

What we heard

During our tour, we heard from Tasmania's child and family services sector about how we can better support children and families across Tasmania.

Shifting focus from crisis response to early intervention

One major takeaway was the overwhelming demand for our services. Many people stressed the need to invest in early intervention strategies that help families and children before they reach crisis points. There's a strong desire for more evidence-based support, especially during the critical first 1000 days of a child's life.

Supporting families doing it tough

We also heard urgent calls to ensure that disadvantaged families – particularly those facing intergenerational poverty – have access to quality services and the financial resources they need. Concerns about the rising cost of living were widespread, with families feeling the strain from higher grocery prices, fuel costs, utility bills, and car expenses. We were told we need to find ways to ease these financial burdens so families can focus on what truly matters: their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their children.

Supporting and building our workforce

Another key theme was the need to improve support for our dedicated professionals in the child and family services sector. We met passionate individuals working hard with and for children and families across the state, and it's clear that we need to keep these committed professionals in our field – and we need more of them.

Addressing basic needs

Our child and family services workforce also told us we need to address ongoing challenges with waitlists and the availability of essential services like healthcare, childcare, and housing. These basics are crucial for families, and we need to work together to find solutions that improve access and availability for those who need them most.

The Connecting Tasmanian Communities Tour highlighted the important work ahead and the unique strengths of Tasmania's child and family services sector. It gave our team a great understanding of what's working for children and families and the opportunities ahead of us.



Submissions and research

Reducing the harm caused by gambling

July 2023 Victoria

With Australians losing \$25 billion to gambling annually, gambling is a pressing public policy issue that affects the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families in many ways. Despite compelling data showing a link between gambling and damage to mental ill health, gambling harm is rarely discussed in mainstream public health dialogue. Harmful gambling often presents with co-existing health issues such as cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse and drug use. The harm caused by gambling should be addressed by efficient harm reduction and preventive strategies, supported by strong public health messaging on the harms of problem gambling.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK inquiry](#)

Rental and housing affordability crisis

July 2023 Victoria

Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living, which includes access to safe housing, food, clothing and necessities. Families should not have to choose between rent payments or meeting other basic needs, but the rising cost of living and the housing affordability crisis in Victoria are most affecting those experiencing economic disadvantage. A growing number of Victorians do not have access to safe and secure housing.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK inquiry](#)



Recognition of unpaid carers

July 2023 Federal

Unpaid care work is essential to the social and economic wellbeing of individuals, families and societies. Australians make many valuable unpaid care contributions to our country, such as caring for children, caring for family members and volunteer work. Our work and caring commitments may change over the course of our lives, but some of these will be measured and valued, while others are not. The work of unpaid carers in Australia is significantly undervalued. Some forms of care are undervalued by way of underpayment, namely formal foster and kinship care arrangements. Failing to measure and monitor social production contributions suggests that our society does not value these as highly as the paid work that contributes to our nation's healthy GDP – even though social production has an estimated economic value of more than \$287 billion. All care work, paid or unpaid, adds value to the economy and should therefore be included in our country's economic calculations.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK inquiry](#)

State education system

July 2023 Victoria

Research highlights evidence of disparities in pre-school (in terms of academic readiness, self-regulation and attention), K-12 (engagement in schooling, performance) and educational attainment (on-time graduation, post-secondary readiness). There is a large body of literature that describes the factors contributing to these disparities, with children's socioeconomic status being a significant predictor of educational success. Providing equity in education means providing a 'level playing field' for all children and young people so that background characteristics do not predict children's educational performance or outcomes. The Centre recognises the critically important role of government in providing all children with equal access to high quality education and the same opportunities to succeed.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK inquiry](#)

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment

(Strengthening the Safety Net) Bill 2023

July 2023 Federal

The Centre supported the passage of the Strengthening the Safety Net Bill, so that Australians on low and very low incomes who rely on government financial support can receive the benefits of the slightly higher proposed payments.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK bill](#)

Inquiry into the worsening rental crisis in Australia

July 2023 Federal

The issues of high rental costs and low housing affordability have broad implications for communities in Victoria. When individuals and families cannot find affordable housing, they may be forced to move away from their established communities, disrupting social connections, support networks and community cohesion. This loss of social capital can have long-term consequences for community wellbeing and resilience.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK inquiry](#)

Discussion paper on permanency settings under the *Children, Youth and Families Act*

August 2023 Victoria

Permanency can provide stability and security to a child or young person living in out-of-home care. *The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.) has been instrumental in providing continuity of care in permanency arrangements for children who are unable to be cared for by their parents or families. Investment in the Family Preservation and Reunification (FPR) initiative has provided opportunities for service providers to empower families in decision-making about their lives with a strong focus on preservation. However, there has been less focus on preparing families for reunification as part of the FPR.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK Act 2005 \(Vic.\)](#)

A stronger, more diverse and independent community sector

November 2023 Federal

The Centre's membership comprises mainly community services organisations (CSOs) delivering services to children, young people and families, working across the spectrum of human needs, including poverty, family violence, alcohol and other drugs, mental health and disability. As noted in the issues paper, community services are bearing the brunt of higher cost-of-living expenses. The impacts of COVID-19 and natural disasters, and a decline in volunteer numbers at a time when there is a shortage of key workers, have also presented strategic and operational challenges for our service system.

[LINK full submission](#)
[LINK discussion paper](#)

Review of legislative instruments on income management

Social Security (Administration) (Enhanced Income Management Regime – Volunteers) Determination 2023

Social Security (Administration) (Enhanced Income Management Regime – State Referrals) Determination 2023

Social Security (Administration) (Enhanced Income Management Regime – Commonwealth Referrals and Exemptions) Determination 2023

November 2023 Federal

While the Centre welcomed the Federal Labor Government's announcement that it would end the Cashless Debit Card and transition from compulsory to voluntary income management, this review of the three legislative instruments is a reminder that the issue of income management continues to be put forward by the government for comment despite all the evidence questioning the efficacy of welfare programs like ParentsNext and the Cashless Debit Card.

[LINK full submission](#)
[LINK inquiry](#)

Victorian State Budget Response: 2024–2025

January 2024 Victoria

This budget submission from the Centre comes at a time of significant challenges for many families and individuals in Victoria as they grapple with spiralling cost-of-living pressures, lack of affordable housing options, the implications of climate change and the sobering result of the recent Voice referendum. The most recent Australian Council for Social Service survey from September this year indicates that the most vulnerable amongst us are “regularly rationing meals, going without heating and cooling, forgoing essential medication and medical care, and experiencing social isolation”.

[LINK full submission](#)
[LINK State Budget](#)

Developing a Not-for-Profit Sector Development Blueprint

December 2023 Federal

Values, ethics and a commitment to the public good drive the not-for-profit (NFP) sector. It is, by definition, not a sector motivated by profit. From the Centre's perspective as a peak body for agencies providing services to children, young people and families, we believe the commitment to developing a blueprint for the NFP is more important than ever. While the [Issues Paper](#) developed for this consultation recognises the value of the NFP sector, one missing element that our members rate highly is the crucial role the NFP sector plays in advocating for structural reform to improve the circumstances of people experiencing hardship and vulnerability, often poverty related. Unlike the for-profit sector, the NFP sector has a strong motivation to raise awareness about and redress the causes of hardship and inequality in the interests of service users who are generally amongst the most vulnerable people in the country.

[LINK full submission](#)
[LINK inquiry](#)



Review of Financial Wellbeing and Capability programs

January 2024 Federal

The Centre's response to the consultation paper is focused primarily on the impact of financial hardship on those experiencing co-occurring vulnerabilities and aligns with earlier feedback we provided in response to the consultation on A stronger, more diverse and independent community sector. At a time when many Australians are feeling the pressures of rising costs of living, government-funded financial wellbeing and capability programs provide critical support to people experiencing hardship and vulnerability.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK inquiry](#)

Federal pre-budget submission

January 2024 Federal

The Centre welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on priorities for consideration by the Australian Government for the 2024–2025 budget. Our submission is consistent with the five wellbeing themes of the Measuring What Matters Framework relating to good health, security, sustainability, cohesion and prosperity. We have also applied an equity lens in developing our recommendations. Our members' firsthand experience informs the submission of the challenges facing families experiencing hardship and/or with co-existing vulnerabilities.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK Federal pre-budget](#)

NDIS participant experience in rural, regional and remote Australia

February 2024 Federal

All Australians with disability have a right to accessible mainstream services and supports. However, as the recent *Working Together to Deliver the NDIS* report shows, despite over ten years of the NDIS, change has been slow and many services remain inaccessible. As we know from our members, this is exacerbated for participants in regional, rural and remote locations. Few services are currently available in regional and rural areas that can support participants from start to finish.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK inquiry](#)

Inquiry into the operation of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*

January 2024 Victoria

The Centre endorses the insightful and informed content in the submission from the Find and Connect service (Child Welfare Records and Freedom of Information), which focuses on suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the current *Freedom of Information Act* as a process for releasing child welfare records.

We note the difficulties care leavers face in accessing personal information about themselves and the emotional and psychological impacts of lengthy delays and bureaucratic processes. Care leavers have asked the Centre for assistance in negotiating their trauma histories and can speak from experience about the psychological impacts and distress this process has caused. Care-experienced people have the right to information about their own lives and the decisions made by others in relation to removal from their family and placement decisions.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK inquiry](#)

Draft action plan addressing gender-based violence in higher education

January 2024 Federal

Sexual Assault Services Victoria and the Centre provided a joint submission on the draft action plan addressing gender-based violence in higher education. Recommendations include resourcing specialist sexual assault services for counsellor advocates in higher education providers, co-designing perpetrator accountability measures with victim-survivors, students and staff, and co-designing reporting pathways and resources with relevant peak bodies and victim-survivors to ensure accessibility.

[LINK full submission \(SASVic\)](#)

[LINK inquiry](#)

Productivity Commission inquiry into early childhood education and care

February 2024 Federal

The Centre supports the key findings and recommendations in the Productivity Commission Early Childhood Education report and believes this inquiry and the potential policy reforms that may come from it are timely. We particularly welcome the Commission's recommendation to boost the childcare fee subsidy from 90% to 100% for lower-income families. Though the draft report addresses significant issues around accessibility, affordability and workforce reforms that are needed to achieve universal early education and care in Australia, the Centre highlights some of the opportunities the report presents to improve outcomes for some of our most vulnerable citizens. These include infants and children aged 0–5 years, children living in out-of-home care and children experiencing co-occurring forms of disadvantage.

[LINK full submission](#)
[LINK inquiry](#)

Strong Foundations: Building on Victoria's Work to End Family Violence

February 2024 Victoria

The Centre's submission has a strong focus on the impact of family violence on children and young people and the need for more targeted and evidence-informed responses to address their needs. We look at each of the five key priorities and provide some introductory comments about the document.

[LINK full submission](#)
[LINK inquiry](#)

Inquiry into Climate Resilience

May 2024 Victoria

The Centre's advocacy promotes the rights of those experiencing disadvantage and vulnerabilities, and our submission recognises that this cohort of families, children and young people are likely to be the most impacted by the changing climate in Victoria. Building climate resilience means recognising and seeking to prevent and/or mitigate the forecasted impacts of natural disasters. This includes making sure those experiencing vulnerabilities are foremost in government decision making.

[LINK full submission](#)
[LINK inquiry](#)

Inquiry into Vaping and Tobacco Controls

(letter submission)

March 2024 Victoria

The adverse health impacts of vaping and vape products are well documented. Despite the public health messaging aimed at deterring the use of vape products, the incidence of vaping and tobacco use continues to rise, particularly among young people. Though current Victorian laws prohibit the sale and use of e-cigarettes that contain nicotine without a prescription, significant numbers of teenage 'vapers' use these products knowing they contain nicotine. The risk of addiction and additional health complications are significant, particularly in the developing adolescent brain. Many e-cigarettes claim to be nicotine-free and are generally perceived by young people to be safer than cigarettes, suggesting the need for targeted health messaging to address these and similar assumptions.

[LINK full submission](#)
[LINK inquiry](#)

Inquiry into Compulsory Income Management and Human Rights

May 2024 Federal

The Centre has consistently advocated against compulsory income management over many years. The Centre would like to see the Albanese government commit to ending all forms of compulsory income management, including the BasicsCard bank account and the SmartCard, delivered through the enhanced income management regime. Since its inception in 2007, the Cashless Debit Card and income management programs have been evaluated in several states and territories. These evaluations have consistently failed to demonstrate that the programs have achieved their primary objectives or show any tangible policy benefit. The lack of a robust evidence base raises questions about the rationale for the continuation and potential expansion of the scheme with the Determinations added to the Social Security (Administration) (Enhanced Income Management Regime Commonwealth Referrals and Exemptions) late last year.

[LINK full submission](#)
[LINK inquiry](#)



Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria

May 2024 Victoria

Data collection provides valuable insights to better understand perpetrators' patterns, trends and common characteristics, which feeds into prevention strategies, policy development and practical support for victim-survivors. Quality data collection helps to give service providers in child and family services a better understanding of the risks of violence and the circumstances surrounding each family's experience. Information about the perpetrator is key to these understandings. Without this data, threats to the safety of women, children and young people are very real. Workers themselves are not always safe from perpetrators when working with victim-survivors. There is also less chance of a perpetrator receiving the interventions and supports they might need to facilitate behaviour change and prevent further violence.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK inquiry](#)

Review of Online Safety Act 2021 (Australia)

June 2024 Federal

The Centre's response focuses primarily on Part 3 of the Issues paper: Protecting those who have experienced or encountered online harms. The Act defines online safety for children as the capacity of Australian children to use social media services and electronic services in a safe manner. It also includes protecting Australian children using those services from cyber-bullying material targeted at Australian children. However, this barely scratches the surface of the range and types of risks to which children and young people can be exposed in an online environment.

The Australian Childhood Maltreatment Study (ACMS) highlighted five types of harm that Australians have experienced in childhood and the profound impacts of this maltreatment on the mental health of Australians. The study found that 28.5% of Australians (aged 16 to over 65 years) have experienced child sexual abuse, with girls experiencing higher rates than boys (37.3% vs 18.8%). Much of the literature on online safety relates to child sexual abuse in its different online manifestations. In the current debate about how to keep children and young people safe online, the ACMS offers a stark reminder of the long-term costs of failing to act. At the same time, other studies show the immediate impacts of exposure to a range of harmful behaviours on children and young people.

[LINK full submission](#)

[LINK inquiry](#)



Increasing the access, participation and success of care-experienced young people in TAFE and university

Raising Expectations is funded by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) and supports young people in out-of-home care and care leavers to aspire to, access and succeed in vocational and higher education. By working across the community and post-secondary education sectors, we are changing a culture of low expectations for care-experienced young people to one that recognises their strengths and potential.

Program expansion

2023–24 was a period of significant growth for Raising Expectations, with expansion to an additional three TAFE and university institutions. Our peer mentoring also expanded to cater for a wider age range.

Raising Expectations university partners now include:

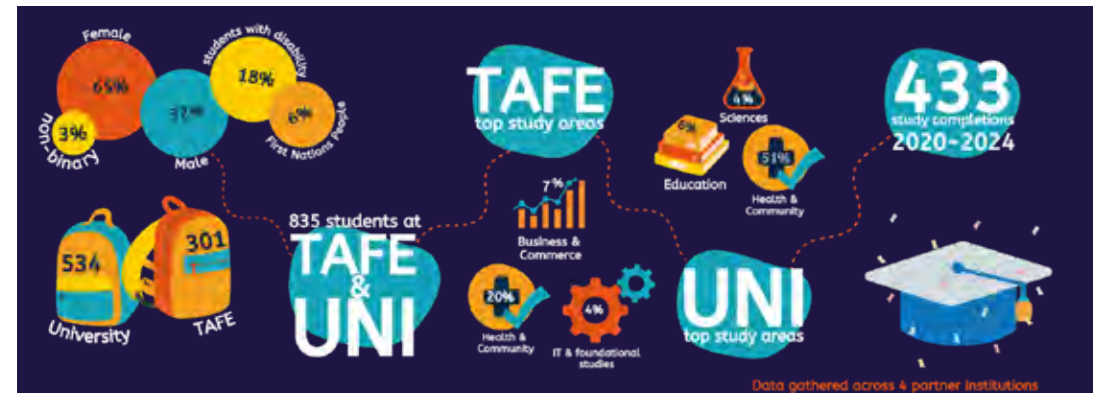
- Federation University Australia
- La Trobe University
- Swinburne University of Technology
- Victoria University
- Monash University
- Deakin University

Raising Expectations also supports **all 13 TAFE institutions** across Victoria to grow their support for young people with a care experience via our TAFE Network.

Together, the Centre and our partners support care-experienced young people in achieving their post-secondary education goals, setting them up for success now and in the future.

“ When I started Uni, I had no support system in place. I met my peer mentor in 2023 and that’s when I received the support and care I had needed. Education means a lot for me. I’m more aware my opportunities and the future I can achieve with the skills I gain through education.

- Peer Mentee, (Bachelor of Science)





Increased access, participation and success

Raising Expectations continued to increase the numbers of care-experienced students participating in TAFE and universities across Victoria.

In the first year of our program, we identified 43 care-experienced students. In 2023–24, we recorded 835 care-experienced students studying at our partner institutions, and more than 400 care-experienced students have completed their studies since 2020. This number continues to increase as Raising Expectations expands across more institutions.

Increasing awareness and building capacity

The Centre has worked to increase awareness of care-experienced students and the challenges they face in accessing and participating in tertiary education. Raising Expectations delivered training to more than 200 TAFE and university staff, increasing institutional awareness and staff capacity to support care-experienced students.

Raising Expectations also hosted a successful event in 2023 with the Commission for Children and Young People exploring the ‘Let Us Learn’ inquiry, with Youth Council members sharing their perspectives on several recommendations and findings.

“ Blown away by how good this has been – each of you has presented such a thought-provoking and motivating presentation. Seriously, this is the best session I’ve attended all year.

- Event attendee ”

Supporting young people through peer mentoring

Raising Expectations peer mentoring programs are free, online and flexible. Students who have had any out-of-home care experience, past or present, are eligible to participate.

In 2023–24, we grew our peer mentoring offering by launching our Level Up program. The development of Level Up, alongside the Commission for Children and Young People's *Let Us Learn* Inquiry findings, allowed us to review and refine our peer mentoring offerings. We have redeveloped our mentor training package, created additional resources to support students, refreshed our website and recruitment material and updated our policies and procedures to reflect the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Our peer mentoring models centre around three core principles: the power of peer-to-peer relationships; strength-based support; and keeping goals manageable (e.g. SMART goals). Mentees and mentors are carefully matched and meet regularly online to work through the mentee's goals with the support of our team at every stage.

[LINK Peer Mentoring Programs - Raising Expectations](#)

Program evaluation

The Centre commissioned the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to undertake an evaluation of the Raising Expectations program from 2018 to 2023.

This purpose of this evaluation was to assess the Raising Expectations program's efficacy and impact on the educational outcomes of care-experienced young people.

ACER found that the program is impacting student participation in post-secondary education through:

- Building greater awareness of educational pathways and lifting the aspirations of partner institutions staff and care-experienced young people towards post-secondary education;
- Creating more inclusive engagement strategies, policies and systems to support care-experienced students at partner institutions and the TAFE network;
- Improving professional practices and trauma-informed approaches to teaching and learning in post-secondary institutions and supporting those working in child welfare and community services; and
- Improving access to support services and availability of targeted fee waivers, bursaries and scholarships for care-experienced students.

These initiatives directly contribute to increased student engagement, retention and improved learning outcomes.

“ Raising Expectations is the only program of its kind in Australia and is making a significant impact on improving care experienced students' participation in higher education and VET through improving visibility and support of this cohort through its institutional partnerships and collection of baseline data, training and education initiatives, and advocacy work.

- ACER, 2023

”

FINDING US

Our programs are promoted through service providers, tertiary institutions, schools and word-of-mouth. Students apply directly, or a referral can be made.



INDUCTION

Students first meet with staff to determine readiness, get to know each other, and collect some data. Mentors receive training on child safety, mentoring skills and making referrals.



MEETINGS

Pairs are matched by study areas, strengths, needs & personalities. They meet online for one hour each fortnight, to work on the mentee's goals. The mentor uses their lived experience to guide the mentee.



SUPPORT TEAM

Staff facilitate sessions and remain available to answer questions, guide the mentor, and step in if the mentee needs more support. The mentee, mentor and staff become a team to help achieve the mentee's goals.



CONNECTION

Mentors & mentees join our community of care-experienced students, with social events and activities to boost confidence and their social networks. Mentees can later become mentors.



Join the Raising Expectations Conversation



News

Breaking barriers through education

Meet Ruby, a remarkable journalism student, volunteer and advocate with solid ambitions for the future. Their inspiring journey demonstrates the ways education and advocacy help break down barriers and allow care-experienced people to dream big.

Ruby's tertiary education journey began with VCAL at GOTAFE, followed by a Certificate IV in Professional Writing and Editing at Federation University. With the turbulence of life, Ruby soon realised this course was not the right fit for them and did not complete the certificate. Ruby continued to be driven by an insatiable thirst for knowledge and, when life allowed, they began a Diploma of Communications at Deakin University, from which they graduated in early 2023. They are currently studying a Bachelor of Communications, majoring in journalism, and finding this incredibly fulfilling.

Ruby's primary and high school years were marked by disruption and constant movement. They attended numerous schools throughout this period, including a year of homeschooling in year nine. Year ten brought some disheartening encounters with teaching staff, who questioned Ruby's abilities and undermined their hard work.

Ruby's education journey was often complicated by the expectations of others – some pushing for a great deal from them and others anticipating their failure. Ruby persevered, refusing to let competing expectations mar their determination to build a bright future.

Ruby has forged strong friendships and has found a sense of community and belonging in Melbourne. Their studies have fed their passion for storytelling and advocacy, and they hope to continue using their platform to amplify the voices of other care-experienced people and help them recognise their boundless potential.

“

I'm doing it for the young person who grew up not knowing who they were or who they wanted to be.

”





Education in Out-of-Home Care

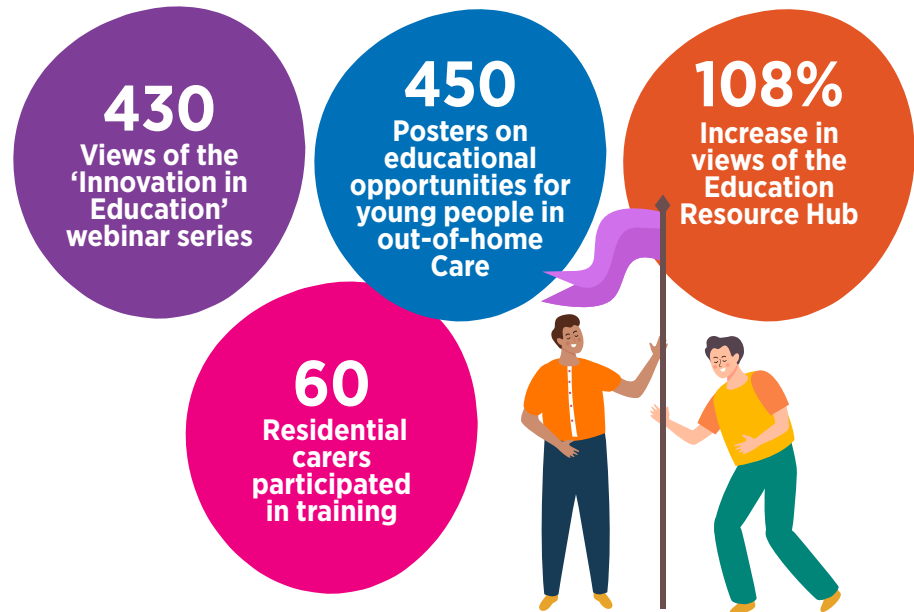
Improving education engagement and outcomes

The Centre's Education in Out-of-Home Care program is funded by the Victorian Department of Education and aims to improve educational engagement and outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care.

The program develops resources and implements approaches to build the capability of professionals and carers, as well as children and young people, to understand the education system, services and supports.

The work also involves supporting the LOOKOUT program and helping to progress work related to the Education and Early Childhood Partnering Agreements.

At a glance



Innovation in Education webinar series

The 'Innovation in Education' webinar series in December brought together the child and family services sector, education practitioners and young people to explore innovation in education and what works to strengthen young people's engagement in education over three sessions.

The series showcased a range of programs, research and models that holistically support the educational engagement and subsequent life-long outcomes of children and young people in the early years, middle years and post-secondary education spaces with a particular focus on disadvantaged students' engagement in education. Over 430 people have interacted with the webinars so far, either tuning in live or watching the session recordings.



“

I had been feeling despondent about getting our kids to go to school, in fact had nearly given up. Because of the messages and learnings from the forum, I had a general conversation with a young person who was adamant he was not even going to talk about education ever again. Not only did he engage in the conversation but... he is now considering going and checking out an education program that has been offered to him previously.

- Residential carer

”



Innovation to Support Engagement in Education

[Watch HERE](#)

The first session featured two presentations. Dr Matthew Harrison spoke about Game on Collaborative Learning, which uses digital games-based learning to foster educational engagement and inclusivity for neurodiverse young people.

Yvonne Lindros explored the Mackillop ReLATE Model, which looks at changing school culture using a trauma-informed lens.

Innovation in Early Years Education: PEEP Learning Together Program

[Watch HERE](#)

The second session featured Claire Georgiou from Playgroup Victoria and Sue Porter from Murrindindi Shire showcasing the PEEP Learning Together Program. PEEP is an evidence-based learning program that guides parents to understand more about how children learn and improve home-learning environment to support children's development.

Innovation in Education: The Transformative Power of Peer Mentoring

[Watch HERE](#)

The final session focused on the transformative power of peer mentoring to support engagement in education. Speakers included a mentor and mentee from The Centre's Game Changers program and a panel of other speakers working on mentoring programs across Victoria and NSW: Ailsa Gibson-Sheridan, Community Connections Coordinator, Whitelion; Adam Hansen, RISE Manager, Aurora Foundation (NSW); and Julian Nation, Team Leader Youth Support, Centre for Multicultural Youth.

Interview series on education in out-of-home care

This series included ten in-depth interviews with LOOKOUT staff, education professionals, early years experts, a lived experience consultant and residential and foster carers.

The interviews explored education for children and young people in out-of-home care education such as key elements of the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment, trauma-informed practice and strategies to support engagement with education. The insights gathered from these interviews have informed the development of several resources by the Centre.

Education Resource Hub

The Centre's Education Resource Hub provides links, downloads and guides for professionals supporting young people in care to stay connected to education.

[LINK Education Resource Hub](#)





Child Wellbeing Project

Improving engagement with children and young people

The Child Wellbeing Project is an initiative funded by Family Safety Victoria (FSV) aimed at improving worker capability and confidence in direct engagement with children and young people, to assist in elevating their voices through practice.

The focus of the project over the last twelve months has specifically related to uplifting practice within the Orange Door sites across the state. The program of work has included the planning for, and facilitation of, workshops co-designed with each of the local areas to provide practical support and information designed to improve practitioner knowledge of, and confidence in interacting with and promoting the needs of, children and young people throughout their involvement with the Orange Door.

To date, the Centre has worked with twelve of the eighteen sites, visiting regional and metropolitan areas, with the remaining six to occur by the end of 2024.

At a glance



[VIEW all practice guides](#)



Practice guides build stronger connections

The Centre developed eight practice guides to enable practitioners to keep children first and foremost in service system responses.

Funding for these guides was provided by Family Safety Victoria. The guides support key workforces involved in maintaining child safety and wellbeing to:

- Use a child rights lens;
- Identify and prioritise children's best interests;
- Work in ways that promote children's participation in the decision making and processes that affect them; and
- Document what happens to children so that they are kept in mind and in view.

The guides make sure that children and young people are at the centre of our thinking and our practice, providing practical, simple and accessible information that will increase practitioner understanding of how to work with children and young people and enhance confidence in their ability to do so.

In engaging with children, particular attention needs to be paid to the safety and wellbeing of children who are non-verbal or very young, who have developmental challenges, who have a disability, who are from a non-English speaking background, who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, who have a parent with a disability or mental ill-health, who identify as LGBTIQ+ or who experience (and/or use) violence in the home.

The guides address confidence and knowledge gaps for practitioners across the sector and promote the importance of effective and meaningful observation, communication and empowerment of children and young people. They provide an easy to understand, practical reference tool for new practitioners, or for practitioners who have not had significant experience in working with children or young people.

Statewide Implementation Group – Framework to Reduce Criminalisation of Young People in Residential Care

As a Signatory to Framework to Reduce Criminalisation of Young People in Residential Care, the Centre is working with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to socialise and promote information regarding a current recording tool to be used by residential care service providers across the state. The Centre has developed two E-Learns. One focuses on supporting the greater understanding of the framework across residential care staff and service providers, and the other appeals to sector wide practitioners and the workforces represented across the signatories. Both are in the final stages of review.

Improving multi-agency responses to support a reduction of criminalisation of young people in residential care

The Centre was commissioned by the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) to partner in Improving multi-agency responses to support a reduction in the criminalisation of young people in residential care. As part of the project, the Centre has been developing a self-assessment tool to be used by Local Site Executive Committees (LSEC) and operations groups in seven of the DFFH areas across the state, hosting information sessions and recruiting participants for the evaluation of the existing multi-agency collaborations.

Sector Implementation – Group Community and Social Services Graduation Program

The Centre is a partner in the Community and Social Services Graduation Program, a pilot program designed to streamline graduate intake for community services. The program provides graduates with early career experience to improve practice, job-readiness and retention rates for organisations. The Centre is participating in steering and providing consultation on peer network groups and assisting in linking DFFH with member organisations to provide home agencies for graduates.



UPLIFTING PRACTICE TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We understand the inherent need for good practice to protect and support children and young people who experience harm in the many ways that it is presented. We also learn of the many limitations and practice gaps that are preventing children and young people from being able to access care and support, which can be increasingly disenchanting.

This Child Wellbeing Project has shown that there are many things that need to change on a systemic level, as well as in local policy and practice, has also provided examples of practice that we can learn from and that can be shared and replicated.

We have also learned through this project that there is significant professional interest in embracing and seeking opportunities to hear directly of ways in which we can confidently incorporate direct engagement with children and young people into our direct practice. Many practitioners identified a keen interest in embracing and seeking opportunities to hear directly from children and young people and incorporate their views and their wishes in assessment and planning.



“ It has been exciting to see enthusiasm and interest in improving practice and work with children beyond a superficial level, to ensure that they are genuinely listened to, with radical acceptance: a motto for life, work and play and all efforts are made to create outcomes where their wishes are truly represented. ”

- Lisa Abbey, Senior Manager Social Policy and Research

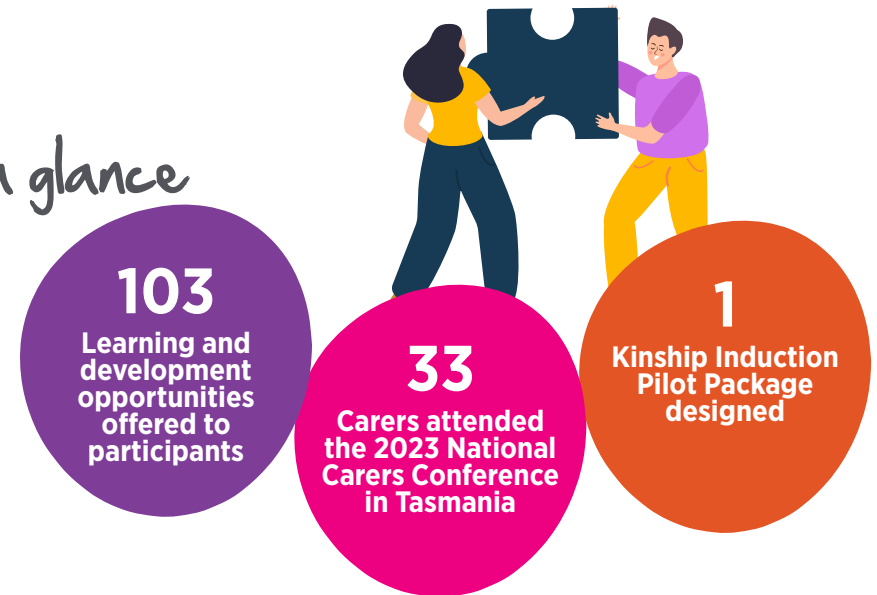
Building community for carers

Carer Kafe

Carer Kafe provides free learning and development opportunities for Victorian kinship, permanent and foster carers. Online and in-person sessions are delivered by specialists across a broad range of topics to support carers in their critical role.



At a glance



Retreat for carers of First Nations children

It was wonderful to host 36 carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at the first Carer Kafe retreat of the year at Hotel Bellinzona at Hepburn Springs in April, on the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung people. The two days were filled with connections, activities and a powerful keynote from AJ Williams-Tchen, a proud Wiradjuri social worker, nurse and youth worker, discussing the responsibilities and possibilities of caring for First Nations kids and young people.

[LINK April retreat for First Nations carers](#)

“ I feel so honoured to be caring for Aboriginal children and being able to walk this walk, and learn, and grow together with them. That the way forward is together. ”

- First Nations Carer

Kinship carers retreat

The Kinship Carers Retreat in May was held in Ballarat, on the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung people. After the event was postponed due to the bushfires in February, it was wonderful to invite more carers to attend and engage with each other. Highlights included a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony from Traditional Custodian Shannen Mennen, yoga and mindfulness sessions and advice on therapeutic parenting with radical acceptance: a motto for life, work and play.

[LINK May retreat in Ballarat](#)

“

It is the first time that I have connected with other carers and I learnt so much about the system that can help me advocate for my child. Thank you for an amazing experience. It far exceeded my expectations and I know now that I am not alone and much of what I experience as a carer is ‘normal’. Everything was so well organised. Sessions were brilliant and everyone created a safe supportive space.

- Carer

”



Home-based carers retreat

A combination of kinship, permanent and foster carers gathered in June in the Yarra Valley, on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri People, welcomed by Uncle Ringo Terrick. Highlights included a keynote by Joanie Bartolo on emotion coaching children and young people. Carers spent time building peer connections, attending grounding yoga and mindfulness workshop by Laura Grace and attending workshops on navigating support systems.

[LINK Home-based carers retreat](#)

“ The first time ever that I found out I am not alone. For the past eight years I have been through so much and I was so overwhelmed. Tuning in to kids/teens gives me so much hope. Being able to connect with them emotionally is key to keeping the relationship going through tough times.

- Carer



Join the Carer Kafe Conversation



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:

Enabling collaboration within and across systems, sectors and workforces to achieve the best outcomes for children, young people and families





Switch to Social Work



Supported pathways for a career in social work

Switch to Social Work is a new employment-based Master of Social Work (Child and Family Practice) program. It was created to address skill and workforce shortages in the child and family services sector. The program is being delivered in partnership with the Victorian Government, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, community services organisations and La Trobe University.

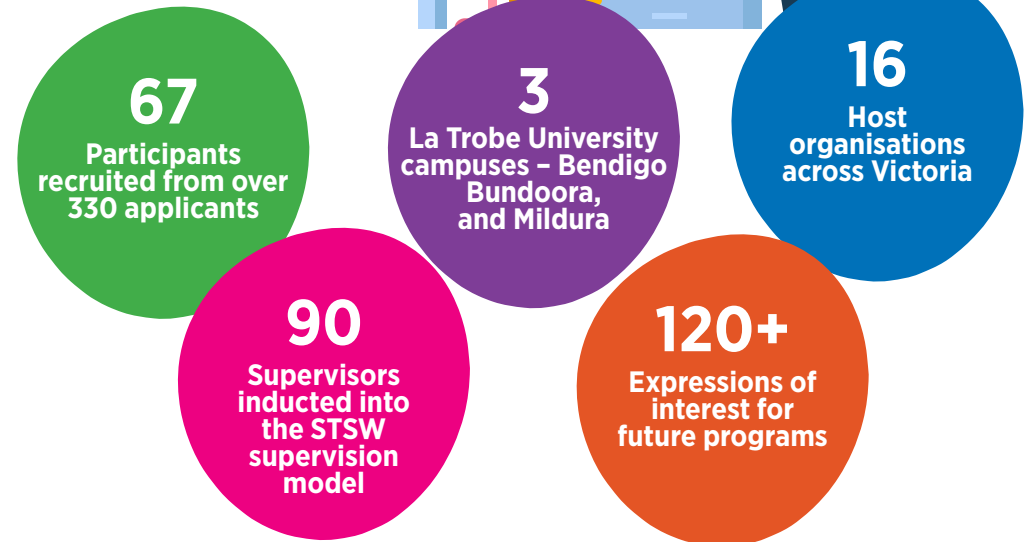
Switch to Social Work is a two-year program that combines study, training and paid work. It is a new pathway for people with a bachelor's degrees who want to change careers.

Switch to Social Work will:

- Create a highly-skilled, diverse, and fit-for-purpose child and family services workforce;
- Remove financial barriers to entry into social work;
- Provide extensive work-integrated learning opportunities;
- Improve workforce capability, job readiness, employment retention, and workforce diversity;
- Recruit applicants looking for a career change; and
- Operate throughout Victoria in metro, regional and rural locations.



At a glance



The Centre provides really incredible leadership for Switch to Social Work; what they've done is worked with industry every step of the way.

- Sue Sealy (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Anglicare)





First day of class

The first day of class for 67 Switch to Social Work participants was marked with a hybrid celebration across La Trobe's Bundoora, Bendigo and Mildura campuses, with welcomes from the Centre's CEO Deb Tsorbaris and representatives from the Department of Families Fairness and Housing, La Trobe University and sector partners.

Ms Tsorbaris congratulated students and thanked all within government and the sector who had worked together over the last five years to launch the innovative program.

"Today is a significant milestone in the careers of our participant and also a day for celebration for all the people behind the scenes who are all working towards supporting the future of child and family services in Victoria," she said.

[LINK First day of class for Switch to Social Work](#)



Pictured: Deb Tsorbaris – CEO at the Centre, Rachel Green; Executive Director at the Centre for Workforce Excellence, Danny O'Kelly; Deputy Secretary, Community Operations and Practice Leadership (COPL), DFFH, Lisa Brophy; Discipline Lead, Social Work at La Trobe and Associate Professor Matt Oates; Associate Professor and Head, Clinical Education at La Trobe.

“ Bringing in career changers is really wonderful because they bring with them such a depth of experience. Given we work in such a complex sector with families that are facing a multitude of challenges, the career changers can bring a lens of experience that maybe we haven't seen before. ”
- Dr Lisa J. Griffiths, (CEO, OzChild)

“ A Master's degree is overwhelming anyway, but having the level of support has made it feel easier. I feel like I've got really good support around me. And of course, the earn-and-learn means I can live, and my family can live while I am studying. I can put in 100 per cent without trying to work whilst being a student – certainly makes it achievable. ”
- STSW Participant



Concierge support for participants

The Switch to Social Work program provides participants with one-on-one support through monthly individual check-ins, phone and email support, and monthly drop-in information sessions. An online participant portal provides a space for announcements, program resources and key dates. It also includes open forum discussions where participants can connect, share tips and tricks, suggest topics for drop-in or information sessions, and more.

The concierge support model is designed to provide participants and host organisations with additional assistance beyond the usual supports available for individuals undertaking a Master's qualification. The service, which operates throughout the two years of the Switch to Social Work program, is specifically tailored to encourage successful engagement with, and completion of, the program.

The Switch to Social Work concierge service:

- Provides a first point of contact for participants and host organisations/employers, providing a warm and culturally sensitive response to those who contact the service;
- Supports participants to navigate the dual requirements of their academic and workplace loads by collaborating closely with La Trobe University staff and engaging with host community service organisations;
- Responds promptly to the calls, queries, and concerns of participants and/or host organisations in relation to the Switch to Social Work program. Depending on the nature of the inquiry, the service can quickly link callers/inquirers to the relevant information, support, or service;
- Provides monthly check-ins, as needed, for participants and host organisations to support their ongoing involvement in the program, proactively engaging with host organisations and participants to help resolve any emerging issues; and
- Collects data relating to use of the service to inform continuous improvement and the Switch to Social Work evaluation..



Join the Conversation



News



Sign-up

Collaborating for foster care recruitment

Fostering Connections is a collaborative initiative of foster care agencies across metropolitan and regional Victoria designed to streamline the process for prospective foster carers to become accredited foster carers. Run by The Centre, the program provides information, support and connections to local agencies while promoting public awareness about foster care.

Established in 2016 with support from the Victorian Government, Fostering Connections simplifies the journey for prospective carers, ensuring they find the right agency and resources. Over 40,000 enquiries have been received by Fostering Connections and directly to agencies since the beginning of the program.

As the only program of its kind in Australia, it plays a vital role in educating and guiding Victorians on how they can contribute by becoming foster carers.

At a glance



63
Million
impressions
of the digital
recruitment
campaign

2.5
Million
people reached
through social
media advertising

700
Calls to the
1800 013 088
foster carer
enquiry

70,000+
Annual visitors
to the Fostering
Connections
website

4200
New carer
enquiries added
to Family
Journey

Foster Care Practice Network

The Foster Care Practice Network meetings are a key platform for professionals across the state involved in foster care, including practitioners, program managers and agency representatives, to share insights, discuss challenges and explore best practices. All of the 24 agencies delivering foster care services in Victoria are represented in the network. These sessions focus on topics such as improving carer recruitment and retention strategies and enhancing support for carers and children in care. The meetings often feature expert presentations, updates on recent research, and collaborative discussions that lead to actionable outcomes, such as the development or refinement of strategies for implementation across agencies.

Marketing and Recruitment Working Group

The Marketing and Recruitment Working Group is a collaborative platform that fosters sector-wide participation and cooperation on essential operational and marketing strategies for foster care recruitment in Victoria. The group includes senior recruitment and marketing representatives from member agencies, including representatives from other community service organisations. Members work together to share information, review developments and contribute to best practices for foster care recruitment.

Fostering children with disability report

In March 2023, the Centre conducted a survey of foster care providers across Victoria representing 1480 children and young people to gain a better understanding of the prevalence of children with disability according to agency estimates, an understanding of whether the disability had been formally diagnosed and whether the child had an NDIS plan. Of this group of children represented, 41%, were reported as having a disability and only 56% had an NDIS plan.

[LINK Fostering children with disability in Victoria report](#)

Becoming a foster carer: Motivations and barriers



Findings from the 2024 Fostering Connections market research

80% of Victorians agree that when a child cannot live with their family, the community should step in and provide support.

33% of Victorians have considered becoming a foster carer.

Becoming a foster carer: motivations and barriers

2024 Annual Market Research was released, providing an updated view of the foster care landscape and helping agencies better understand market dynamics and sector needs.

We also released the Foster Care Enquirer Demographic Trends report, capturing trends from data collected across agencies in Victoria. This report highlighted key demographic shifts and patterns among those inquiring about foster care, offering valuable information to agencies for targeted recruitment and support strategies.

Launch of Foster Care Recruitment and Retention rapid review

The [Rapid Review: Foster Care Recruitment and Retention report was released](#) in April 2024 to address concerns from foster care service providers and the Victorian government about the declining numbers of foster carers. This review aimed to identify effective strategies and programs, both internationally and in Australia, for recruiting and retaining foster carers.

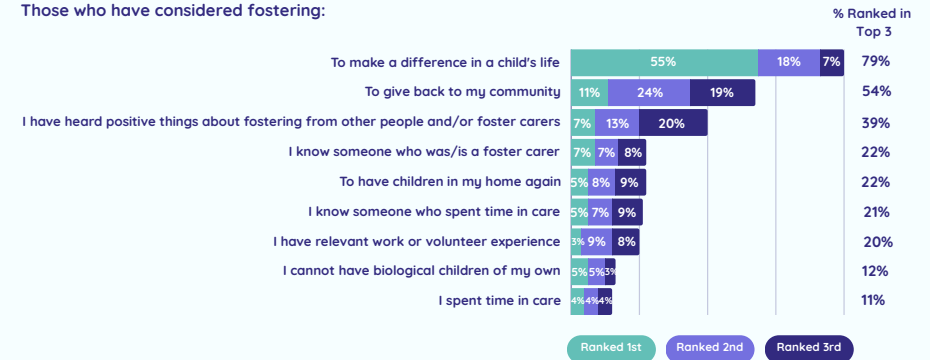
This research supported greater collaboration within the sector, facilitating regular discussions and consultations and ensuring the Centre's work was grounded in the real challenges faced by those on the front lines of child welfare.

Over the past year, our research initiatives have strengthened collaboration, provided a solid evidence base for continuous improvement, and contributed to better outcomes for the sector, including children, families and carers.

[LINK Rapid Review: Foster Care Recruitment and Retention](#)

Motivations

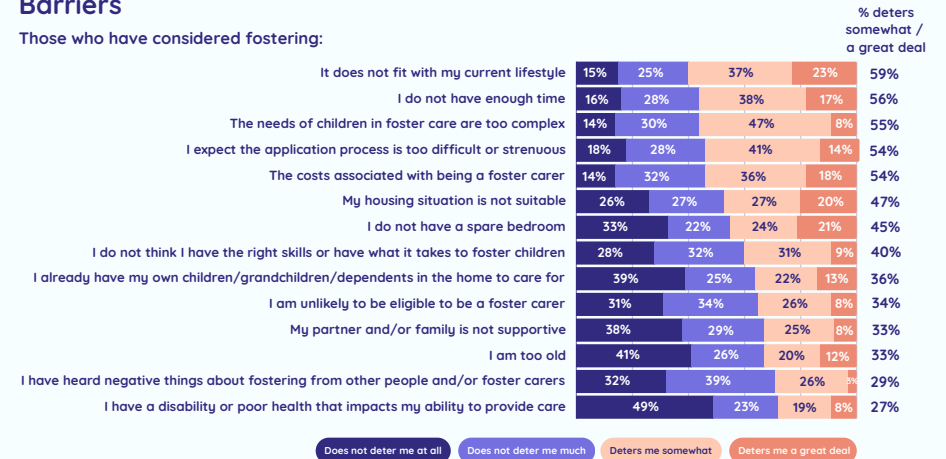
Those who have considered fostering:



Question: Which of these motivations would be / were most important to you in becoming a foster carer? Please rank up to five from the list below.

Barriers

Those who have considered fostering:



Question: To what extent do each of the following deter you from considering becoming a foster carer?

FOSTER CARER AMONG NOMINEES FOR VICTORIA **YOUNG** **AUSTRALIAN OF THE** **YEAR 2023**

Among the nominees for Victoria Young Australian of the Year 2023 was Molly Fergus, a foster carer of six years based in Frankston.

Molly made the choice to sacrifice many of the fun things her peers were doing at the age of 22 to become a foster carer to children with complex needs. Since then, she's fostered 36 children, from newborns to teenagers to infants with high needs.

Molly first became a foster carer while working full-time as an early childhood education and disability carer. She began with kids in respite and hospital-in-the-home programs, providing help at the most challenging times, including palliative care, seizure support and resuscitation.

She resigned from this work in late 2022 to focus her care on a foster child requiring around-the-clock help.

Previously a volunteer for the state's Country Fire Authority, 28-year-old Molly is currently studying nursing and is a volunteer for Victoria's State Emergency Service.





VICTORIA DAY AWARD
Celebrating the 173rd Anniversary
Victoria Day 1851-2024

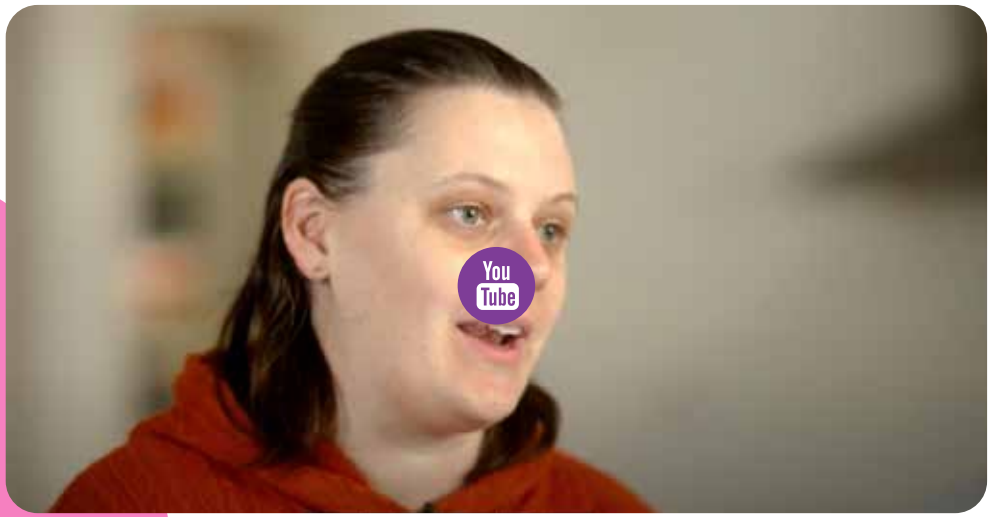


“

Molly's story shows the incredible impact young people can make in the lives of children in Victoria. Foster carers can be of all ages and come from all different backgrounds and walks of life. Congratulations to Molly on this incredible achievement.

- Deb Tsorbaris, CEO of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

”





Cross-sector collaboration building workforce capacity

We are pleased to announce the successful completion of the Tri-Peaks Partnership Project. This significant initiative has been a testament to the hard work, dedication and collaboration of everyone involved. Below are the key highlights and next steps as we close this project.

We have met the primary objectives of the project, which were to facilitate joint capacity and capability-building activities. These activities aimed to improve cross-sector relationships by promoting cross-boundary collaboration, uplifting leadership and workforce governance capabilities and enhancing knowledge sharing and connectivity in working with clients and communities.

[LINK Tri-peaks video](#)

Outcomes and deliverables:

- **Cross-sector learning and development:** Achieved through our webinar program, focusing on key reforms and priorities in child and family services, alcohol and other drugs, mental health and community health.
- **Improved collaborative practice:** Enhanced through our mentoring program, which improved service, sector and system collaborative practices and visibility among member organisations.
- **Governance understanding:** Increased through targeted governance initiatives, enhancing understanding of roles, responsibilities and supports.
- **Cross-sector collaboration:** Promoted through workshops and roundtables, which increased opportunities for collaboration and capability uplift and improved client and family outcomes.
- **Informed enhancements:** Evaluation efforts increased qualitative and quantitative data to refine the partnership model and inform future funding proposals.



[Tri Peaks Mentoring] has enabled me to think through the next steps in my career progression and open myself up to new opportunities.

- Mentor program participant



At a glance

5000+

YouTube views of Tri-Peaks webinars

600+

Organisations represented

43

Webinars delivered

6490

People attending Tri-Peaks webinars over the life of the program

100+

Mentoring program participants

120+

Expressions of interest for future programs



Program evaluation: Impact of cross-sector collaboration

Deloitte was engaged to evaluate the Tri-Peaks Partnership model in early 2024. This evaluation measured the impact and effectiveness of the model and associated activities to support quality improvement and program sustainability.

Key findings include:

- The partnership has delivered activities and outputs to a high standard and made progress toward short-term outcomes;
- Significant changes in the policy, reform, and service delivery context since the partnership's inception have underscored the need for strengthened collaboration and smarter resource use; and
- There is growing recognition of the importance of cross-sectoral work in avoiding service duplication and leveraging resources for complex issues.



[LINK Program evaluation report](#)

The project has provided valuable insights and lessons for future initiatives:

- **Sector capacity building:** Enhance skills, knowledge and capabilities through webinars and continuous learning;
- **Practice development:** Evolve service delivery methods and consider client experiences to improve effectiveness and efficiency;
- **Innovation:** Foster a culture of innovation by creating spaces for brainstorming and implementing new solutions;
- **Cultural Safety:** Promote inclusivity and respect for diverse cultural backgrounds through training and awareness; and
- **Enabling Reform:** Align activities with broader policy objectives and reform processes to contribute to societal needs.

“ I have only attended three webinar sessions so far and they were all fabulous. Keep doing what you're doing. They are great source of sharing what we do best, and this gives other organisations food for thought in funding opportunities and ways to carry on great work done that is much needed in our communities.

- Webinar participant ”

Early Start, Bright Future

Early years are key to improving lives of children



The Centre is funded by the Department of Education (DE) to deliver the Early Start, Bright Future (ESBF) project, which improves participation into universal early years services and optimises the longer-term learning and development outcomes for all children in Victoria experiencing vulnerability.

This project is focused on supporting professionals to connect families with children 0-8 years into appropriate early years services, with a focus on access to two years of kindergarten before school.

The ESBF team is passionate about the importance of quality early education. We are currently working with several stakeholders to develop a resource to support caregivers and professionals in identifying what quality education in the early years looks like, how to find it, and why it matters.

At a glance

2500+

Subscribers to the ESBF newsletter

78

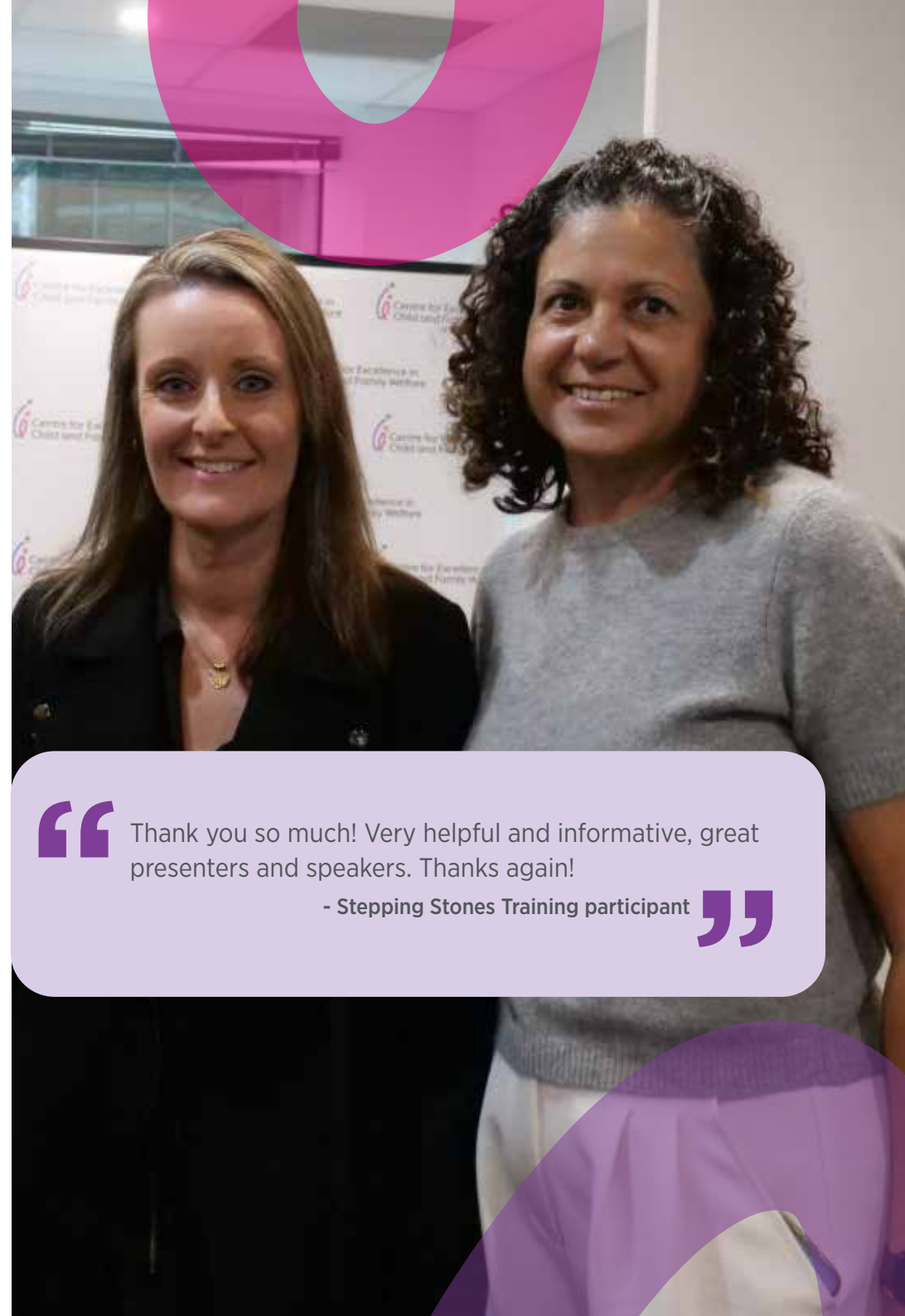
Percent of subscribers read every newsletter

1070

Early years practitioners engaging with ESBF webinars

50,000

Visitors to the Early Years Hub website



“

Thank you so much! Very helpful and informative, great presenters and speakers. Thanks again!

- Stepping Stones Training participant

”

2024 Early Years Forum

The Centre's ESBF team was privileged to bring together strong voices with varied experience and expertise in discussing the intersection between family violence and early development.

Bronwen Fitzgerald, Deputy Secretary of Early Childhood Education, opened the forum by highlighting the Department of Education's commitment to improving the lives of disadvantaged children.

Dr Wendy Bunston has worked with children in recovery from family violence for over 25 years; she offers a transformative perspective on work with infants and young children. Dr Bunston delivered an impassioned and captivating keynote presentation summarising key themes such as recognising children's voices, trauma's impact on learning, the importance of community connection and the role of professionals working with children and families in the early years.

Lived Experience

Tanya, a participant in the Centre's Lived Experience Design Project, recounted her journey and generously shared her experience of engaging her children in early years education in the wake of family violence. Tanya addressed the sensitive and challenging issue of child protection workers visiting children in their safe spaces. Tanya's children experienced this in their kindergarten, a situation encountered by among many children who encounter it in their school setting as well. The recent Commissioner for Children and Young People's [Let Us Learn report](#) provides further insight into this challenge.

Tanya spoke about feeling disempowered by the many systems supporting her and her children. Her key messages were, avoid labelling parents and children. Don't just tick the family violence box and assume children will be troubled – have high expectations. Partner and collaborate with parents and caregivers to understand their situation so both parties can work together to ensure these young people thrive.

The Early Start Bright Future team is passionate about the importance of quality early education. We are currently working with several stakeholders to develop a resource to support caregivers and professionals in identifying what quality education in the early years looks like, how to find it, and why it matters.



[LINK Early Years Forum](#)

Transitioning to a nurturing environment

Jacinta Anderson shared a powerful case study from Moe Heights Preschool, illustrating a transformative journey. The preschool transitioned from a challenging environment marked by children using violence onsite and high staff burnout rates, to a calm, safe and nurturing setting. This shift was achieved through collaboration with Koorie Engagement Support Officers, implementation of trauma-informed practices, advocacy for structural changes and a commitment to creating a supportive environment for both children and educators.

Claire Stanley spoke about the opportunity MARAM provides: *"MARAM represents a way of partnering, changing from doing to, to being with. To be successful in safety and wellbeing, we have got to listen to children, and we must listen to the adults providing care around them."*

Kathy Warwick, Head of Trauma Consulting with the Allanah & Madeline Foundation, reminded us that: *"It's forums like this, it's the professionals that come to these spaces and that work in these spaces – the more we understand, the more we get to reflect and make sense of these different experiences – the more we can share the responsibility."*

The ESBF forum opened a rich conversation around children's rights, trauma and empowerment, and the importance of collaboration.



Early Years Hub

The Early Years Hub is a website that houses multiple different types of resources to inform practitioners in their support of children's access to early childhood education and care supports and services.

The **Early Years Finder** links professionals with detail about the programs, services, subsidies and supports available to enable early years opportunities.

The **Resource Library** houses research and factsheets for professionals, parents and carers to scaffold children's early learning journey.

A **monthly newsletter** offers professional development opportunities, resources for practitioners and relevant sector updates, and spotlights promising practice and innovative programs supporting early childhood development.

The Bi-monthly **Early Years Participation Network** meetings connect family services practitioners with early years stakeholders to promote collaborative practice.

[LINK Early Years Resource Hub](#)



Join the Conversation





Family Preservation and Reunification Response (FPRR)

Evidence-based and integrated support for vulnerable children and families

The Family Preservation and Reunification Response (FPRR) represents a groundbreaking approach to providing evidence-based and integrated support to vulnerable children and families. Its primary goals are to prevent at-risk children from entering or re-entering Care Services and to safely reunify children with their families. The FPRR program emphasizes a collaborative effort among FPRR Response Agencies, the Child Protection System, and professional services to strengthen community connections, ultimately enhancing the safety and stability of children.

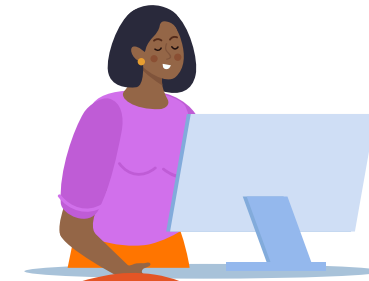
The program has secured funding until 2026. During this period, the Centre will play a crucial role in delivering coaching to team leaders and practitioners within the FPRR. Our coaching initiatives focus on building confidence and competency in evidence-informed practices. A key component of this coaching is to foster practitioner reflection within a supportive environment, encouraging the exploration of new understandings and skills.

The positive feedback from the ACCOs, CSOs we coached to and our partners—DFFH, VACCA, and CEI—highlights the impact of our coaching on practice, which has in turn led to better outcomes for families. We are enthusiastic about continuing our leadership role in driving systemic and cultural change across the child and family services system. Through ongoing coaching, training, and support for the implementation of the FPRR Initiative, we aim to further enhance the effectiveness of our services and the well-being of the families we support.

“ I went to the coaching training and found it useful, especially hearing from others how they are doing their coaching. I liked the practice of staying curious about ‘why’ of behaviours/patterns with families. Often practitioners fall back into ‘doing for’ and ‘righting reflex’ and this helps to keep from doing that as well.

- ACCO Coaching Training Participant ”

At a glance



ISPCAN Conference Presentation: Coaching in a Collaborative Partnership

Viv Interrigi, the Centre's Executive Manager – Learning and Business Development, presented at the ISPCAN conference in 2024 with VACCA on Co Coaching in a Collaborative Partnership.



Children, Young People and Families Philanthropic Funders Network

Innovative solutions for meaningful change

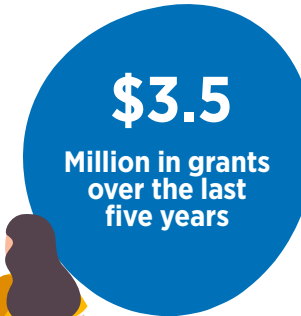
Our bi-monthly Philanthropic Funders Network meetings continue to be a resounding success. These gatherings are a vital platform for funders to come together, share strategies, collaborate on innovation granting and impactful initiatives.

The collective expertise and passion in the room have sparked innovative approaches to addressing pressing social issues. Through open dialogue and partnership, we are driving meaningful change and maximising our impact. We're proud of the strong, supportive community we've built and look forward to continuing this journey of philanthropy and progress together.

The Network provides the necessary infrastructure to facilitate decisions and creates an equal space where all members, regardless of size and influence, have a critical voice and a chance to make an impact.

Members have been able to work together to amplify their voices and achieve greater impact through funding initiatives across the sector.

At a glance



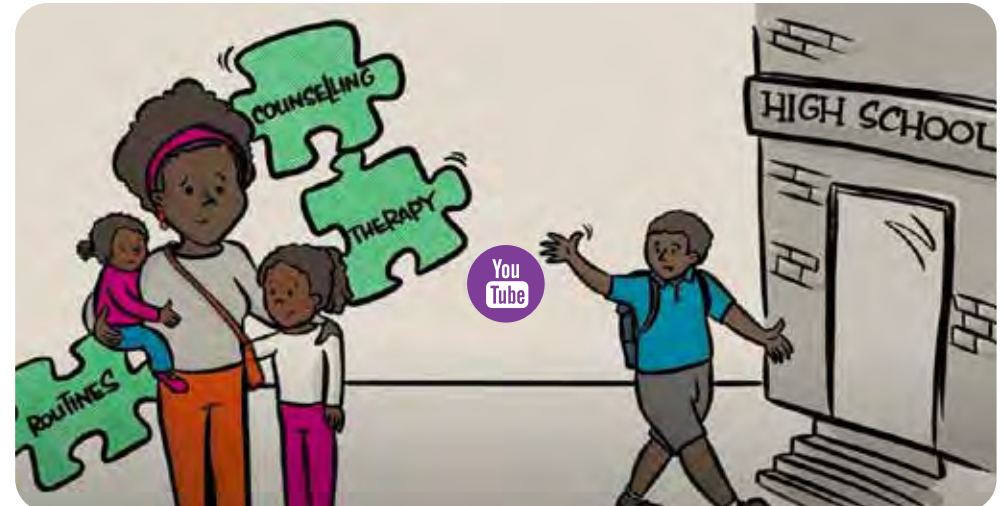
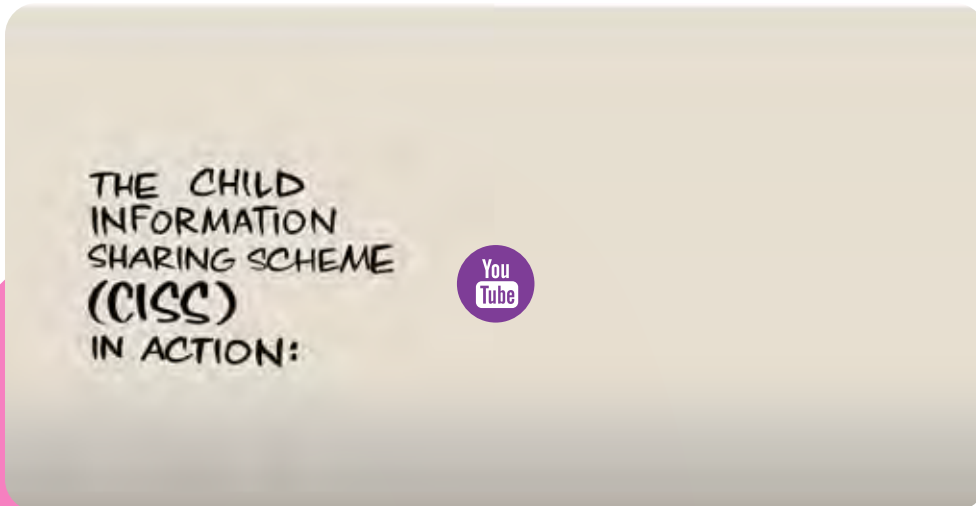
CISS Capacity Building Grants Project

Resources to support information sharing

The two-year Child Information Sharing Capacity Building Grants project finished in 2024. The project developed a range of resources and newsletters to support the sector's continued use of the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS).

CISS in action: Practitioner testimonials

Animated testimonials from three different professionals were created, showcasing how using CISS achieved positive outcomes for children, young people, and their families. We thank the professionals who shared their stories with us.



MARAM and Information Sharing Resource Hub

Hosting on the Centre's website, the Resource Hub includes downloads and links to the current information and resources for practitioners using information sharing.

Resources include:

- The [CISS resource directory](#) with links to government websites
- Using CISS with Child Protection - [information sheet](#)
- Mandatory reporting, CISS & FVISS - [information sheet](#)
- Explaining CISS to children, young people, parents, and carers - [information sheet and visual resources](#)
- CISS and care teams - [information sheet](#)
- [CISS flowcharts](#)

[LINK Information Sharing Resource Hub](#)



Child Information Sharing Policy

A Child Information Sharing Policy was created in partnership with the Department of Education and the [Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited \(VACSAL\)](#).

This document provides an easy-to-use guide that covers all the current information around the CISS. This policy has been developed as a tool or reference for professionals to use in any industry or adapt to create their own organisation's policy. It can be distributed and used by any organisation that engages and works with children.

[LINK Information Sharing Policy booklet](#)



MARAMIS Sector Capacity Building Grants Project

Supporting MARAM alignment across sectors

Supported by Family Safety Victoria, the Sector Capacity Building Grants are designed to support MARAM alignment for peak bodies and leading organisations.

The Centre supports members by working to enhance the child and family services workforce's understanding of how the MARAM and the Information Sharing Schemes can be applied to improve outcomes for children and their families.

Publications

A set of [Information Sharing Schemes Visual Resources](#) were developed in collaboration with No to Violence and Safe & Equal. The resource set is a suite of five documents intended to identify and highlight cross-sector connections through the use of the Information Sharing Schemes.

The team launched the [Snapshot of Good Practice: Putting the MARAM Framework into action](#) case study resource which demonstrates how MARAM can effectively support the wellbeing and safety of children and young people.

Developed eight information sheets and four tip sheets that condense the [Adults Using Family Violence Practice Guides](#) into easily digestible 'at a glance' documents to assist in understanding what the practice guides include, as well as expanding on the topics of narratives and motivations.

At a glance



613

Subscribers to the MARAM Updates newsletter

514

Registrations launch of the 'Snapshot of Good Practice: Putting the MARAM Framework into action' case study resource

2740

Visitors to the MARAM and Information Sharing Resource Hub



Sector capability development: MARAM networks

The Centre facilitates two MARAM networks which support member organisations to build a shared understanding of family violence and facilitates consistent and collaborative practice in the Child and Family Services sectors.

The **MARAM Alignment Working Group** meets bi-monthly and includes 25 Victorian child and family services systems and service design managers who are responsible for implementing activities to progress their organisations alignment and implementation of MARAM and Information Sharing Schemes.

The No to Violence MARAM Practice Development Lead was invited to present to the MARAM Alignment Working Group on clarifying roles and responsibilities under the AUFV Practice Guides. Key discussion points from the presentation included considering how risk is described, conceptualising why and how professionals work with adults using family violence, and risk relevant information.

The **MARAM Community of Practice (CoP)** was established in October 2022 and also meets bi-monthly. This CoP aims to assist the child and family services sector in supporting alignment of practice to MARAM, supporting MARAM and the Information Sharing Schemes training through capability uplift activities and supporting the sharing of good practice and reflective practice. Membership stands at 60 members.

The group engaged with various presentations on the following topics: adolescent violence in the home, engaging with children and young people who have experienced family violence, elder abuse, technology-facilitated abuse in the context of domestic, family and sexual violence

Feedback from members of both networks said meetings helped them to better understand different aspects of MARAM implementation and alignment, as well as highlighted the importance of having a shared understanding of family violence family violence and incorporating MARAM as part of their organisation's core business.



“

There were several presentations and resources shared in the sessions that provided helpful insights how MARAM is used across different agencies and programs. This has helped inform ways that we can not only collaborate with others through MARAM but also improve its implementation.

- MARAM Community of Practice member

”

Workforce Innovation

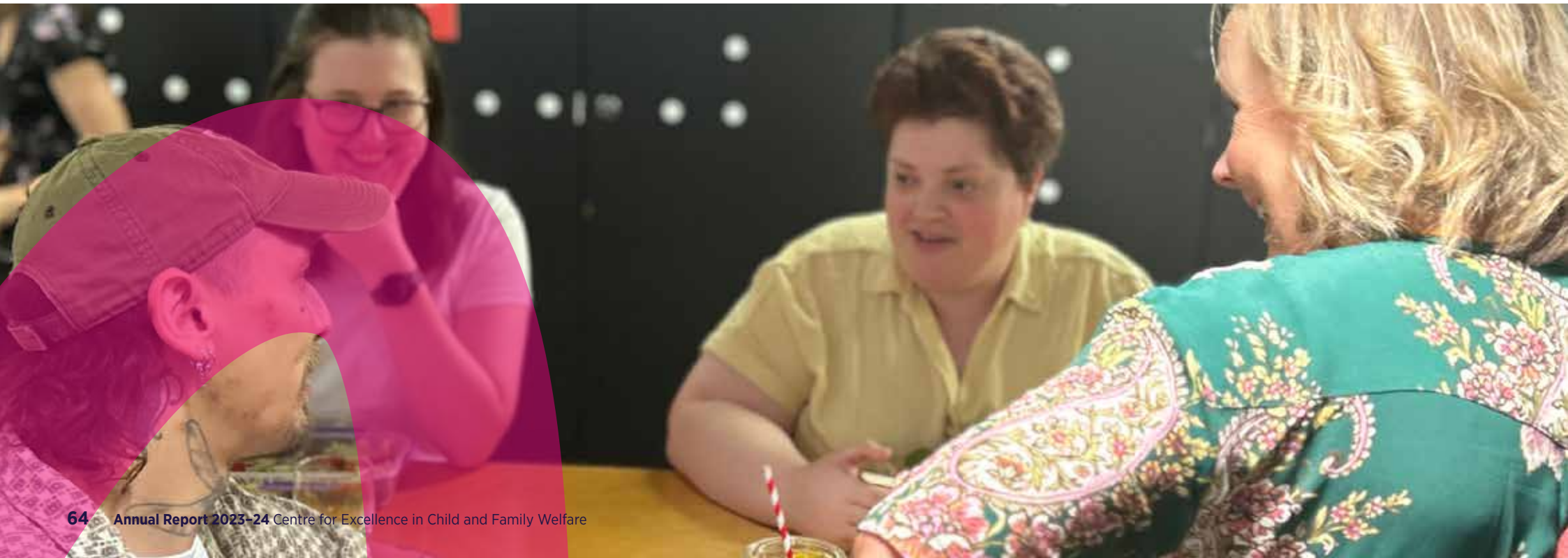
Leading workforce strategy and development

In early 2024 the Centre began the development of a suite of projects to position the Centre as a key voice to inform children and family workforce strategy and development. The workforce innovation deliverables includes surveys on current and emerging issues in workforce capability and development.

Workforce Surveys

A CSO Workforce Survey was distributed to member community service organisations, with responses still being collated. An additional survey to the broader workforce has been drafted and will be release toward the end of 2024.

The information from these surveys will be critical in confirming the current key workforce issues and preferences for activities to support professional development activities to support the sector.





STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:

Promoting and embedding lived experience and the voices and rights of children, young people, carers, and families





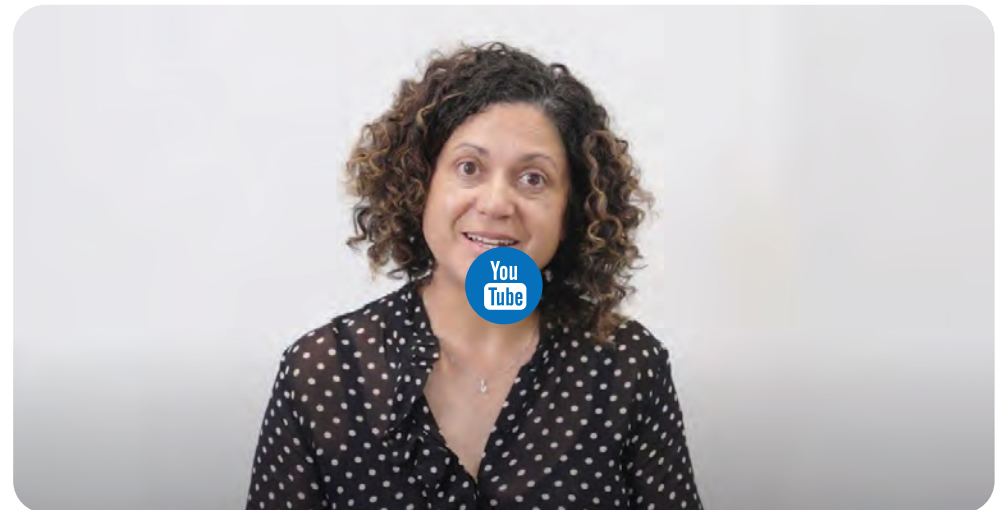
Collaboration and codesign with lived experience

The Lived Experience Design Project is the Centre's unique approach to elevating the voices and lived experiences of birth parents who are or who have experienced vulnerability.

The project is underpinned by deep listening, collaboration and codesign with lived experience groups, which is critical to the success of our work and that of our stakeholders. We believe engaging people with a lived experience will break down the stigma and discrimination often faced by these communities.

Parents Advisory Group training videos

Members of the Parents Advisory Group developed a series of videos for the Child Protection Learning and Development team for use as part of their training for child protection workers. Videos included interviews by the parents on topics related to how best to engage parents at various stages of the child protection process, including at first contact, during an investigation, and during the court process.



ACWA National Conference in Sydney, NSW on Gadigal Land

The Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA) national conference is held every two years and marks a significant coming together of child and family welfare experts, caseworkers, sector leaders and child protection advocates to examine policies and practices that are making a difference in the lives of vulnerable children and families, and to identify ways we can do better. The Centre's Executive Manager - Strategic Innovation Paulleen Markwort and Lived Experience Advisor Lex presented on the Lived Experience Design Project: Effectively engaging birth parent to codesign system and practice solutions.



Pictured: Paulleen Markwort and Lived Experience Advisor Lex



Kinship Care Network

Kinship
Care
Network



Elevating the voices of Kinship Carers

The Kinship Care Network has evolved under the banner of the Lived Experience Design project this year with regular meetings of practitioners from 28 funded providers across Victoria. These meetings provide a dynamic space for professionals to connect, share insights, and collaborate on innovative ideas. The consistent participation and diverse perspectives have fuelled meaningful discussions and fostered strong relationships. Each meeting brings new opportunities for growth, learning, and mutual support, making these sessions an essential part of our ongoing professional development.

[LINK Kinship Care Network](#)

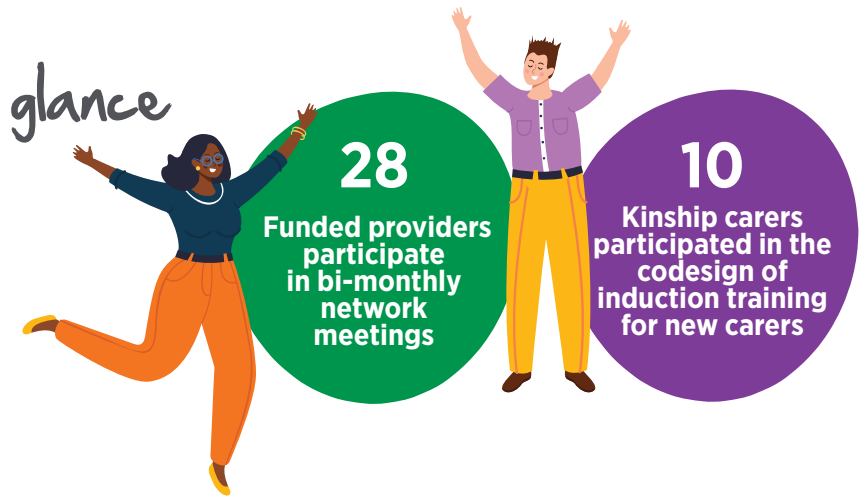
Kinship Care Week 2023

Carers and network members came together to create an advocacy and awareness campaign for Kinship Care during the annual celebration week in September.

Highlights

- A [Giraffe Resilience webinar](#) helping carers build a set of skills and behaviours to help you to build resilience in ways that work for them.
- [Carer Thank You Cards](#)
- [ABC Media Coverage](#) for Kinship Care Week
- Social Media Campaign driving awareness of kinship care, reaching over 15,000 people through the Centre's social media channels.

At a glance



Pictured: Kinship Carer Rebecca and her niece Charleigh hope the system supports them to achieve their dreams. (ABC Central Victoria: Emma D'Agostino)

CELEBRATING KINSHIP CARERS

AT THE END OF 2020,
THERE WERE AN ESTIMATED

4,700

kinship caregivers

CARING FOR

7,450

children in Victoria

FAMILY
CARING
FOR
FAMILY

KINSHIP CARE WEEK

#FamilyCaringForFamily

4-8 SEPTEMBER, 2023

#KinshipCareWeek2023



Kinship Carer Design Project

A group of ten Victorian kinship carers come together to co-design an induction training package for new kinship carers. Thank you to the kinship carers who shared their lived experience with us during this process.



Adolescents using Violence in the Home (AVITH)

Supporting AVITH workforces

The Centre is commissioned by Family Safety Victoria to undergo a range of activities and events to support implementation of a suite of specialist AVITH programs.

AVITH webinars

The AVITH team hosted seven regional online forums over the year, which built workforce engagement and understanding across sectors. A webinar focused on working with children under 12 with challenging and aggressive behaviours and another on working with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) were popular, increasing understanding and attention on the need for neuro-affirmative practices. Further webinars are scheduled through 2024.

The AVITH team presented at the Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Forum, gaining attention from interstate and international practitioners and connecting with practice and policy professionals in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

Our AVITH work contributes to various federal initiatives, including the Federal Government's Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches consultation and the implementation of a new Victim Centred Restorative Justice (VCRJ) model.

At a glance



A PROGRAM BY
The Centre | AVITH Practice Leadership

Reframing young person violence: Neuroaffirmative practice

October 8, 2024
11:00am - 12:30 pm

[REGISTER NOW](#)



Pictured: Sarah Townsend, Principal Advisor to Te Pūkotahitanga, the Tangata Whenua Ministerial Advisory Group for Elimination of Family and Sexual Violence, with Emma Nugent and Karlayn Davis (on screen) from the Centre's AVITH team.

Building AVITH understanding and awareness

Consultations in late 2023 with specialist AVITH program teams revealed a broader challenge of community and sector misunderstandings about what AVITH is.

Practitioners reported having to advise other services about the limitations and advocating for the needs of the young people and families they work with. The Centre's role in place-based implementation support was to manage expectations and workshop ways agencies in that area might work more collaboratively.

In February 2024, we undertook a stakeholder mapping exercise to gain insight into other services that specialist program teams will likely engage with, such as schools, police, CSOs, health, court and disability services, and identified stakeholders were invited to a series of regional forums to:

- Provide foundational knowledge about what constitutes adolescent and young person violence in the home;
- Explain the key practice considerations outlined in the AFVITH model of care (including trauma-informed practice and whole-of-family approaches);
- Provide an overview of AVITH specialist services, including eligibility requirements and scope of services; and
- Engage stakeholders in discussions about how to incorporate more collaborative, interagency and cross-sector collaborations.

These forums were well attended in each region. They highlighted the need for more locally based networking opportunities to support professionals in implementing greater collaborative support for working with families where there is young person violence.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4:

Supporting the sector in drawing on evidence, knowledge and insights to enable innovation in practice and policy





Family Services Symposium

Together with Families 2023

Together with Families 2023 was a landmark event for the Centre, our inaugural Family Services Symposium to celebrate the central role of family services in promoting the well-being of children and families in Victoria. The event was held on 24th November 2023, at Rydges Melbourne.

We welcomed almost 300 family services practitioners, leaders, and partners for a day of networking, celebration and knowledge sharing. The full-day program included keynote speakers, presentations and panellists discussing and exploring effective practice and the impact and reach of this sector.

Keynote Speakers:

- Supporting families under stress with **Dr. Bruce Symth** (ANU)
- Setting the Family Services Agenda with **Connie Salamone** (VACCA)
- Evidence, Culture and Practice in Family Services with **Anita Mobourne** (VACCA)

[LINK Family Service Symposium 2023: Together with families](#)



Mind-blowing. Amazing. I feel much more confident to lead this work in my org. Thank you.

- OPEN Training Participant





OPEN (Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network)

Supporting evidence in practice

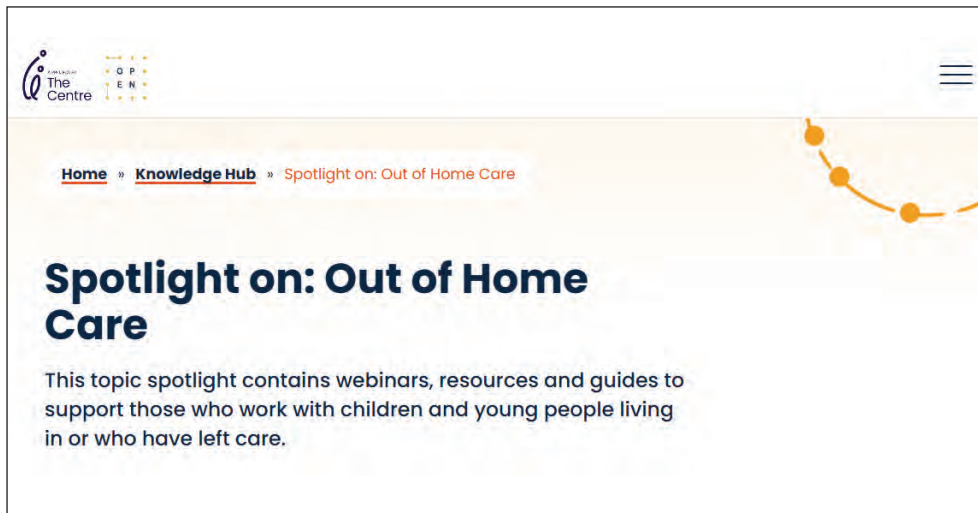
OPEN supports the Victorian child, youth and family services to use, share and build evidence from research, practice and client experience of what works to deliver the best outcomes for children, young people and families. It promotes continuous improvement in practice. OPEN is primarily funded by the DFFH.

Trauma-informed Care and Out-of-Home Care OPEN Spotlight Pages

Key content on specific priority topics to provide a one-stop shop to support the sector's access to key evidence and organisational resources about trauma-informed care and out-of-home care.

[LINK OPEN Spotlight on Out-of-Home Care resource hub](#)

[LINK OPEN Spotlight on Trauma Informed Care resource hub](#)



At a glance



“ The Family Services Symposium was a powerful showcase of the impact of family services in Victoria. The sessions were incredibly insightful and provided practical strategies for advancing our work. It was inspiring to see such a strong turnout and commitment from the sector.

- Attendee

”

OPEN Symposium 2023: Building resilient families and thriving communities

The 2023 Symposium broke all our previous records with 54 expressions of interest to present and 574 ticket registrations, resulting in strong and consistent attendance across all sessions. This is testament to the sector's commitment to improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

Every year, this symposium brings together practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to share and discuss the innovative practices, programs, and knowledge that are positively impacting the lives of children, young people, and families.

In 2023 the theme was 'Building resilient families and thriving communities'. Speakers covered a range of topics, sharing their innovative, evidence-informed work including in out-of-home care, early intervention, family violence, building the evidence base for First Nations Families.

The incredible breadth of speakers over the two days all had one thing in common: they are showing us how we can use the best available evidence to support Victorian families to be connected, strong, and resilient.

[LINK session recordings](#)

OPEN event series

OPEN delivered a series of events spanning many significant topics for the sector, including children's rights in policy and service delivery, innovations in OOHC, embedding evidence, wellbeing strategies for the workforce, and improving children's mental health.

The events program has been well received, with continuous growth in engagement and appetite throughout the series.

Recordings of all OPEN events are available on the outcomes.org.au website to view, along with research downloads and event reflections.

[LINK OPEN event series archive](#)



The Outcomes Journey: Tools and techniques for evidence practice

OPEN delivered its first pilot series of training modules to participants from various organisations in the Victorian child and family service sector. These modules were designed to address sector-identified needs to improve understanding of the importance of using evidence, improve collection of high-quality data, how to measure outcomes effectively, and to develop shared language across organisations.

“

I feel confident to explore existing evidence bases and use findings in a way that will support the on the groundwork we do.

”



Module 1: Getting started on your outcome journey

This introductory module provides an overview of the drivers of evidence reform within child and family services, demystifying evidence in practice by defining key terms such as being “outcomes-focused” and “evidence-informed”. Participants are guided through an outcome journey roadmap, highlighting how evidence adds value at each step.

Module 2: Building everyday evidence

Participants learn how to design and measure outcomes using everyday evaluation tools, ensuring they are “evaluation ready.” The workshop introduces program logic and the theory of change to refine service design, establish key evaluation questions and identify common data sources and collection tools.

Module 3: Leveraging existing knowledge

This workshop explores using the existing evidence base. Participants gain tips and tricks for searching research databases, assessing the quality of evidence and analysing findings. This module emphasises the importance of drawing from practitioner expertise and client insights to inform research questions and validate research findings within the organisation’s context.

Aligned with this work, OPEN developed complimentary technical resources that can support organisations in this work.

[OPEN Quick Guide: Identify](#)

[OPEN Quick Guide: Design Step 1 – Design your program and its outcomes](#)

[OPEN Quick Guide: Design Step 2 – Design your outcome measurement approach](#)

[OPEN Fact Sheet: Design – Data collection](#)

[OPEN Fact Sheet: Design – Steps to plan your outcomes measurement approach](#)

[OPEN Template: Design – Program logic template](#)

[OPEN Quick Guide: Implement](#)

[OPEN Quick Guide: Evaluation – Are you making a difference? How do you know?](#)



“

The training provided a clear way to start the outcome journey, delivered in an accessible way where you don’t need to be an expert to start.

”

Relaunch of a national journal

The Centre refreshed and relaunched Children Australia, a national scholarly journal with a long history (first published in 1976). The journal is published online only and has platinum-standard open access. It adheres to current best practices for scholarly publishing with transparent governance, publishing ethics and editorial standards (following guidelines by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)) and timely, accessible publishing.

The Children Australia journal will:

- Provide a quality evidence base to support better outcomes for children, young people and families;
- Highlight diverse evidence types, including practice evidence, reflections and research;
- Provide the child, young people and family services sector with their own formal knowledge communication vehicle;
- Promote evidence use and creation by the sector;
- Build sector capacity in evidence creation and communication; and
- Foster connections between the sector and academic researchers – breaking down silos in knowledge.

A new journal platform was designed to publish the journal's new iteration and was launched in October 2023 at the OPEN Symposium. The first issue under the Centre's banner was published in September 2024. The Centre negotiated with the previous publisher, Cambridge University Press, to provide the entire published archive of articles (45 volumes, and more than 2300 articles) for free to all readers through our new journal platform. After a national call for expressions of interest, the Centre appointed a national, multidisciplinary editorial board of 28 academic and sector experts across Australia, led by co-Editors-in-Chief Professor Sharon Bessell, Associate Professor Tim Moore and Adjunct Professor Dave Vicary.

The editorial board has established working groups to discuss/decide on journal policies for publishing in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander contexts and for publishing practice articles and articles authored by people with lived experience.

[LINK journal at childreinaustralia.org.au](https://www.childreinaustralia.org.au)

At a glance



... just wanted to say that I am really pleased this journal is being relaunched. It was always a good forum for publishing new research – particularly from PhD and Masters students – that was relevant to policymakers and practitioners.





Family Violence and Sexual Violence Knowledge Hub Project

The Centre, in collaboration with No to Violence, Safe and Equal, and Sexual Assault Services Victoria, began the Family Violence and Sexual Violence Knowledge (FVSV) Hub Project in 2023-2024.

This project will strengthen practice, identify data gaps and build an evidence base across the joint sectors represented by these four peak organisations representing child and family services, family violence services, and sexual violence services.

At the heart of this initiative is the [FVSV Knowledge Hub](#) on the OPEN portal which is a one-stop shop for practitioners, program managers, policymakers and funders to access the latest research, resources, case studies, webinars and training opportunities. This resource strengthens practice responses and improves outcomes for victim-survivors, their families, and the community.

To build interest and engagement in the Knowledge Hub project, the Centre delivered the first online FVSV Knowledge event in June 2024: [Voices for Change: Evidence and Innovation in Supporting Children Experiencing Family Violence](#), was presented by Dr. Georgina Dimopoulos of Southern Cross University and young lived experience advocates.

This event showcased evidence from children and young people with experiences in the family violence service system. It launched the [Snapshot of Good Practice Case Studies](#), which focus on implementing the MARAM framework in supporting families experiencing family violence.

“ The children talking about their own experiences was powerful, and the need to change practice to ensure children’s voices are heard.

- Participant feedback



Learning and Business Development

Strengthening workforce capacity

As the peak body for organisations working with children and families across Victoria and Tasmania, the Centre offers a range of learning and development programs to strengthen our member organisations' capacity to provide services that best suit the needs of vulnerable families and children.

This year saw the LBD team restructure to become an end-to-end service for the Centre. We offer consultations through the Business and Development team, to then offer a rich experience in scheduling to invoicing, then high-quality delivery by our practice leads and training team.

The LBD team supports the Centre in these key areas:

1. Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy (RCLDS)
2. Family Violence training
3. Carer KaFE
4. Shared Lives and Step-by-Step
5. Registered Training Organisation
6. Family Preservation and Reunification Response (FPRR)
7. Customised training
8. Calendar training

The Centre's Coaching Model

Leveraging a combination of both face-to-face and online delivery, the Centre has developed a coaching model to enhance the capacity of the sector to reflect, encourage learning and explore new understandings and skills in a safe space.

Participants have a reflective space with a trusted coach to develop their skills, explore evidence-based practices and discover alternative ways of embedding theories into practice. Participants use the coaching space to understand vicarious trauma, explore self-regulation tools and develop the capacity to be present with the family whilst managing client complexities.

At a glance

\$6M
In revenue

9
Training areas

The Centre of Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

Coaching Model

- Evidence informed
- Core Values
- Philosophy
- Coaching Techniques
- Coaching Nuances



RCLDS

Improving outcomes for kids in residential care

The Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy (RCLDS) improves outcomes for children and young people living in residential care. To achieve this, the Centre provides training, funded by the Victorian government the residential care workforce.

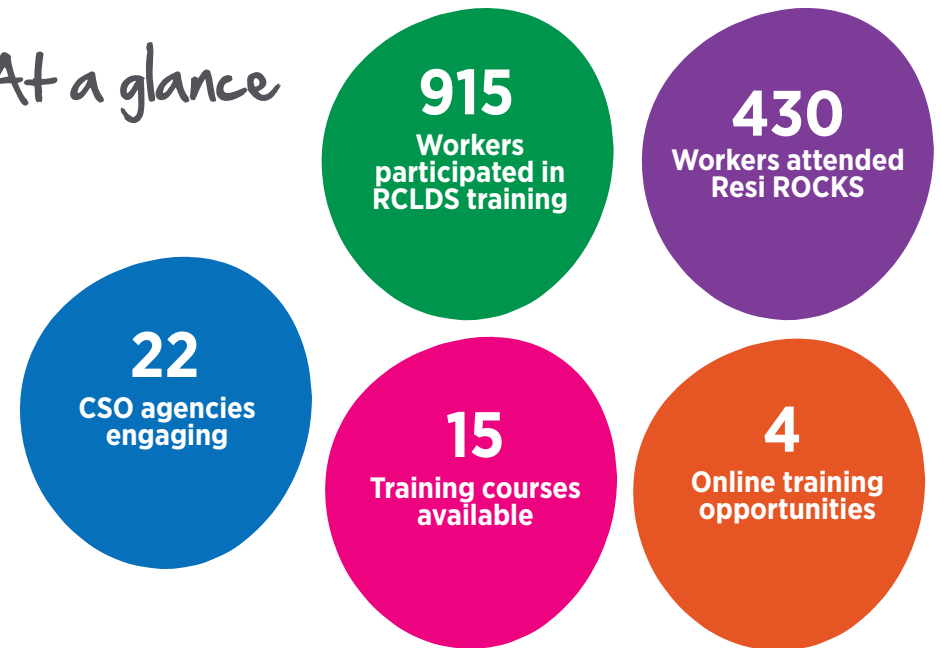
Funding for therapeutic residential care

The 2023–2024 State Budget provided a \$548 million investment in therapeutic residential care for all homes in Victoria. The Centre has advocated for therapeutic support in residential care for many years and welcomed this existing investment, which is already significantly impacting the care available to children and young people.

An additional \$33 million investment is supporting about 225 young people with complex needs as they leave residential care, providing multidisciplinary support and access to housing.

[LINK State Budget Media Release: Investing in better futures for children and families](#)

At a glance



“ All trainers had balanced their years of experience and content in a really engaging way, linking theory to practice. ”

ResiROCKS 2023

Making a house a home

ResiROCKS 2023 was our biggest ever, with 18 agencies from across Victoria represented. It is a full day of celebrations of the incredible work of our residential care workers. This event recognises and celebrates practice excellence and cultivates a culture of learning and innovation and the sharing of knowledge and ideas.

First held in 2006, Resi ROCKS is the annual peak forum/celebration for residential care workers. The acronym stands for 'Recognising our Carers Knowledge and Skills'.

This year's ResiROCKS theme was Making a House a Home. Home is a familiar concept, but it's incredibly complex. Home is an important place and it is much more than a physical dwelling. Home is a place of comfort, security, and belonging. Home is a place where we develop trust in the constancy of people and things. Throughout the day speakers explored and shared the many ways that we can create a sense of home for the children and young people in residential care.

[LINK learn more about Resi ROCKS](#)



What makes a great Residential Carer?

What shines through in the nominations for the RCLDS Residential Carer Awards over the past 10 years is that what makes a house a home for these kids is the relationships they have with their carers.

In 2023 at the Centre reviewed nominations dating back 10 years and found six key themes on the wonderful qualities of our residential care workers.

- Good care workers foster family connections: One nomination talked about a care worker maintaining daily phone contact with the family – arranging visits, setting them up for success on these visits with groceries and planned activities, and meeting the needs of the family and the young person.
- Good care workers create safe spaces: A nomination talked about creating a quiet space to reflect or regulate in a positive way with mindfulness colouring books, reading and writing materials, comfortable seating and a TV.

- Good care workers go to the effort to create a home: One nominee set up bright happy bedrooms for the young people so they feel they have a space that is safe and their own.
- Good care workers strengthen young people's voices: We heard about residential care workers implementing weekly house meetings to allow young people to speak their minds and be heard, and following through to implement their ideas into the daily routine of the house.
- Good care workers teach life skills: One nominee encourages teens with zero interest in food preparation to learn how to cook a complete meal from scratch
- Good care workers offer individualised support: Making time for regular one-on-one time and doing activities that they know that young person will enjoy is an approach that was celebrated in this years nominations.

[LINK 2023 Residential Care Award winners](#)





Objective: Understanding Child Sexual Exploitation



Child Sexual Exploitation forums

The Centre hosted a series of Child Sexual Exploitation Forums to understand and address the issues surrounding child sexual exploitation. These transformative forums raised awareness and enhanced understanding among practitioners, educators, social workers, law enforcement and community members about the realities facing children and young people who are being sexually exploited.

The team travelled from Geelong to Bendigo and Churchill presenting to over 440 attendees. The series culminated in Melbourne in September 2024, with over 300 people attending. The high level of engagement reflects a solid commitment among front-line practitioners to better understand and address the issues surrounding child sexual exploitation.

MARAM Training

Supporting MARAM alignment in family violence practice

MARAM is the evidence-based family violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management framework that almost 400,000 workers in Victoria are aligning with to support their family violence practice.

Delivering MARAM training in schools and early childhood services

The Department of Education funded the Centre to develop and deliver MARAM training to education workforces that will support MARAM-nominated staff in schools and early childhood services in undertaking MARAM responsibilities and identifying and responding to family violence.

[LINK MARAM Education course guide](#)



At a glance

6000+
Educators to be offered this training

94%
Reported a better understanding of the purpose of MARAM and their role

6
Pilot training sessions delivered to educators

86%
Felt more confident using the Family Violence Screening Tool

“ I found it really helpful to know what my role and responsibility is within the school, and how to best support the child too. ”
- Participant

MARAM training delivered to health workforces

The Department of Health funded the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare to make sure health professionals have the right training and support they need to identify and respond to family violence.

MARAM training for health workforces was delivered to alcohol and other drug workers, mental health and wellbeing clinicians, maternal and child health nurses, and Community Health Service staff who are prescribed by regulations to undertake either MARAM identification or MARAM intermediate roles and responsibilities.

Training module for mental health and wellbeing clinicians

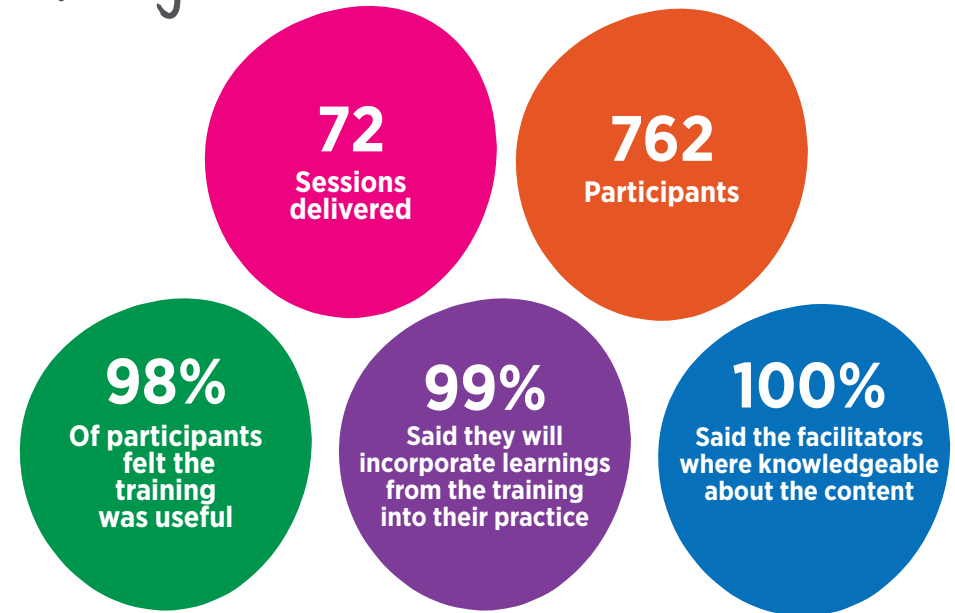
A new MARAM intermediate training module for mental health and wellbeing clinicians was developed during the year with Beth Dunlop from the Centre for Mental Health Learning and Specialist Family Violence Advisors in mental health and wellbeing services. We have partnered with Safer Care Victoria in 2024-25 to deliver this MARAM Intermediate training for mental health and wellbeing clinicians.

The training is designed for all mental health and wellbeing clinicians with intermediate MARAM responsibilities in any role within the mental health and wellbeing sector. Delivered by experienced trainers, including trainers with mental health and wellbeing clinical skills and family violence MARAM expertise, the training strengthens skills in recognising and responding to family violence, supports clinicians to embed skills they already have, increases their understanding of family violence, and builds their confidence in undertaking their MARAM responsibilities. mental health can be used against them as a tactic of family violence.

[LINK MARAM Mental Health course guide](#)

“ Reminding myself the reason a client disengages may not be about something I have or haven't done in my work but more about the client keeping themselves safe. Looking at disengagement from client perspective (was useful). ”

At a glance



“ Provided a strong framework for beginners in MARAM framework especially when you are working in rehabilitation units and mental health. ”

Working with children and their families training for The Orange Door teams

Family Safety Victoria funded the Centre to deliver training to workers from The Orange Door to build foundational knowledge and skills for working with children and their families. The full-day training was delivered twice a month to support workers to understand child wellbeing and development, the impact of trauma (including family violence trauma) and to apply strategies for engaging with children and young people, parents and families. The training supported workers from The Orange Door to assess child wellbeing and undertake home visits.

After attending the training workers said they would be curious and ask questions of children and families to understand what's going on, and they would embed trauma informed practice into their work. They said where possible they would include the voice of the child and the wishes and views of children in their assessments. Some workers said they will take away practical strategies provided by the trainers to support children and young people to express their views, and they have taken away strategies about how to approach conversations with parents.

Staff from The Orange Door provided feedback that role plays in the session were helpful and they had a greater understanding of how to support children and families after attending the training. Some said they learned how to be respectful when engaging with clients and reported a greater awareness of the impact of trauma, child development, and how to capture a child's voice in their work.

At a glance

20

Sessions delivered

255

Participants



“

(I have a) ...better understanding of engaging with children...strategies and opportunities to engage young people's voice.

”



Shared Lives and Step-by-Step

Supporting the foster carer accreditation process

The Step-by-Step program is a mandatory, competency-based assessment tool employed by community services organisations across Victoria to evaluate potential foster carers. It offers a comprehensive framework and a range of tools designed to assess applicants based on clear evidence of their skills and suitability for fostering.

In conjunction with this, the Shared Lives program serves as the training resource for foster care agencies and practitioners. It provides them with the necessary tools and framework to effectively deliver the Step-by-Step assessment package. Through Shared Lives, practitioners acquire the skills needed to train prospective foster carers, ensuring they meet the required standards and are well-prepared for their roles.

Together, these programs establish a unified system for assessing and training foster carers, ensuring a rigorous and evidence-based approach to fostering in Victoria.

Shared Lives roadshow

We resumed face-to-face Shared Lives training in 2023 which received positive feedback from participants. This paved the way for a mini regional roadshow to further promote the program. The overwhelmingly favourable response highlights the effectiveness of in-person training and underscores the value of direct engagement and interactive learning.

Building on this momentum the team will introduce in-person Step-by-Step training sessions as an ongoing option. This gives participants enhanced learning experiences through hands-on guidance and real-time interaction. By offering Step-by-Step training in person we can create a more engaging and collaborative environment and allow attendees to benefit from immediate feedback and dynamic discussions.

The integration of in-person sessions for Step-by-Step, alongside the successful Shared Lives training, demonstrates our commitment to delivering high-quality, impactful education and support for foster care practitioners. This strategic approach will not only advance the proficiency of those involved but also strengthen the broader fostering network by ensuring that practitioners are well-prepared and equipped to provide exceptional care.

At a glance



“

[I liked] the real-life accounts and examples that (the facilitator) used and also, the insight that other participants offered.

”

Registered training organisation

Preparing leaders for a changing world



The Centre offers the Diploma of Leadership and Management to members and non-members. This accredited training includes 16 units, delivered over nine months, allowing participants to develop skills in organisational management, working with teams, and self-care as a manager.

Managers, executives, team leaders and coordinators from a wide range of community service organisations across Victoria participated in two intakes, with one course delivered by remote learning and the other as an in-person course delivered to staff from Windermere, Key Assets and Wayss.

The Centre began offering the Diploma of Leadership and Management in 2016 and is currently in its eighth year. Participants say the training has been invaluable in advancing their management skills. The 12 units that make up the diploma address organisational management, working with teams, and self-care as a manager.

[LINK Diploma of Leadership and Management course guide](#)



At a glance

2

Intakes for
Diploma training

16

Units
delivered

144

Participants

"I loved being able to network with other sector leaders and applying new skills directly to my workplace."

Recent Graduate

You can inspire, engage, and lead the way with the
Diploma of Leadership and Management offered by
the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.



FPRR

Evidence-based integrated support for vulnerable children

The Family Preservation and Reunification Response (FPRR) represents a groundbreaking approach to providing evidence-based and integrated support to vulnerable children and families. Its primary goal is to prevent at-risk children from entering or re-entering care services and to safely reunify children with their families. The program emphasises a collaborative effort among FPRR Agencies, the Child Protection System and professional services to strengthen community connections, ultimately enhancing the safety and stability of children.

The program secured funding for two additional years to 2026 and now plays a crucial role in delivering coaching to team leaders and practitioners. Our coaching initiatives focus on building confidence and competency in evidence-informed practices. A key component of this coaching is to foster practitioner reflection within a supportive environment, encouraging the exploration of new understandings and skills.

The positive feedback from the organisations we coached to and our partners—DFFH, Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA), and the Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI)—highlights the impact of our coaching on practice, which has in turn led to better outcomes for families. We are enthusiastic about continuing our leadership role in driving systemic and cultural change across the child and family services system. Through ongoing coaching, training, and support for the implementation of the FPRR Initiative, we aim to further enhance the effectiveness of our services and the well-being of the families we support.

At a glance

17%

Of our coaching sites are now coaching independently

17%

Are co-coaching with The Centre's Practice Leaders

65%

Are being coached by The Centre



Customised training

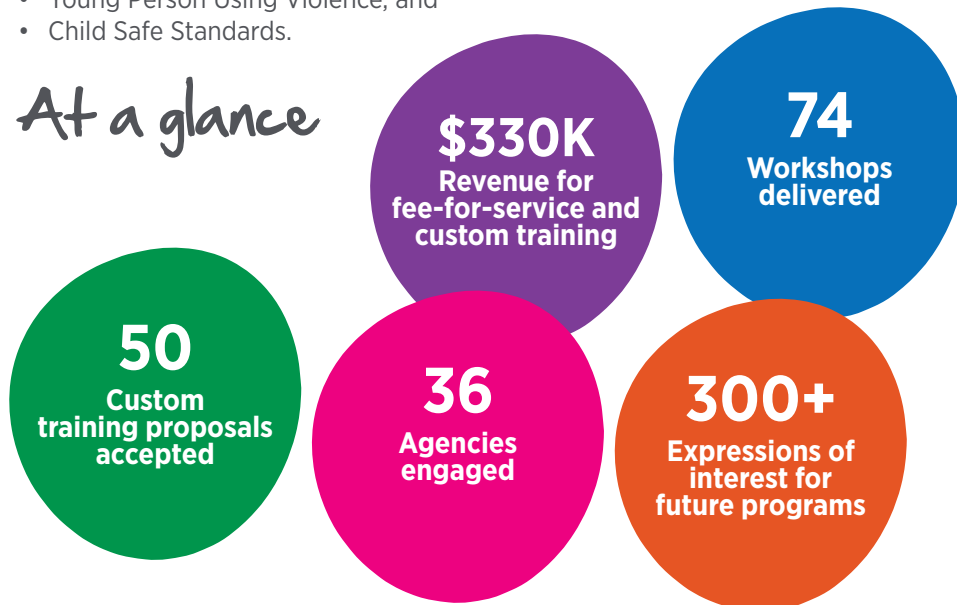
Fee-for-service and custom training solutions

The Centre offers a range of learning and professional development workshops and training programs designed to strengthen the capacity of organisations to provide services that best suit the needs of vulnerable families and children. Designed for practitioners by practitioners the core offering spans a set of essential topics developed using contemporary, evidenced-based and best practice knowledge and material. We engage with individual organisations to customise training to meet specific learning outcomes and achieve maximum impact on their work.

Our custom training service supported sector workforce employees in their growth and development with over 300 hours of training across 13 different learning and coaching curriculums including topics such as:

- Foundation Case Notes Navigating the NDIS
- Best Interest Case Practice Model
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Young Person Using Violence, and
- Child Safe Standards.

At a glance



Training highlights

The [Foundations Case Notes](#) workshop was the most sought-after topic with over 25 workshops delivered over the year. Customised versions of this workshop were developed for a new market of organisations who provide support services to people who are at risk of or experiencing, homelessness.

New essential practice modules

A successful strategic collaboration with Uniting Vic/Tas designed and developed a set of essential practice modules, which are now available to the wider sector. These modules are:

- Legislative Framework;
- Relationship Building and Engagement;
- Consumer Voice in Practice;
- Information Sharing and Gathering, Analysis and Planning, Goals and Outcomes, Risk Assessment and Reviewing;
- Care Team/Professional Collaborative Practice;
- Documentation and Case Noting; and
- Closure and Reviewing Outcomes.

[LINK full course catalogue](#)



The presenters were very knowledgeable and created a safe space for sharing information and learning.

- Foundation case notes training participant



Custom coaching services

An important innovation in our custom training has been the development of a coaching program to embed learning after practitioners have attended the Centre's training workshops. The coaching programs are delivered to cohorts of between three to six practitioners and are designed to enhance practitioners' capacity in a safe environment for reflection, to encourage learning and allows them to explore deeper understanding and skills. Each session is conducted in a reflective space with a trusted Practice Leader to help participants develop skills, explore evidence informed practices and discover alternative ways of embedding theories to practice.



Child Protection leadership training

The Centre was engaged to deliver the DFFH Child Protection Career Advancement Program Mentorship Mastery Workshops which featured six, two-hour workshops between May and June 2024. This strategic engagement demonstrates the strong ongoing relationship and trust that the Centre has with the Department in relation to designing and delivering important sector workforce capability learning and development programs.

The workshops focused on:

- Communications techniques;
- Providing constructive, actionable feedback;
- Leadership development strategies for successful mentoring;
- Needs assessment and tailored approaches to mentoring;
- Conflict resolution;
- Goal setting and tracking;
- Relationship building, cultural competency and inclusivity;
- Self-reflection processes for continuous improvement as a mentee.

Delivered to support the DFFH Career Advancement Program participants to develop future leaders within the child protection workforce, ensuring teams and individuals can effectively and compassionately support Victoria's most vulnerable children and their families.

[LINK Centre delivers DFFH Child Protection leadership training](#)

Calendar training at the Centre

The Centre delivers ongoing calendar training across core modules with in-person and eLearn modules scheduled and delivered monthly.

View the Centre's training calendar for upcoming programs at cfecfw.org.au/calendar/



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5:

Continuing our role as a responsive, proactive and transformative peak for the child and family sector



Members

Engaging and supporting members

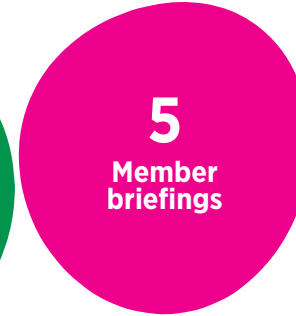
Member Events provide opportunities for networking, learning, and sharing best practices. In 2023 and 2024 the centre have delivered a diverse range of events, such as our Annual General Meetings, listening tours and specialised workshops tailored to the interests and needs of our members. These events served as platforms for members to voice their concerns, share their experiences, and contribute to the organisation's strategic direction.

The 111th AGM in November 2023 highlighted the Centre's ongoing commitment to improving child and family welfare. Detailed reports from the Chairperson and CEO, coupled with the financial overview, give a clear picture of our progress and challenges. The election of new Board members and acknowledgment of past contributions reflect our dynamic and evolving organisation.

Member Breakfast

The Member CEO Breakfast was an excellent opportunity to connect with fellow leaders in the sector and hear from key speakers about pressing issues. Peta McCammon's insights were particularly valuable in setting the tone for our discussions. The informal networking allowed us to exchange ideas and plan collaborative approaches for upcoming Centre initiatives. It was a perfect prelude to the Family Services Symposium.

At a glance



Attending the Member CEO Breakfast was an invaluable experience. The Q&A session addressed crucial issues and offered practical solutions, making it a productive start to our day.

- Attendee, Members CEO Breakfast



Mental Health Member Forum February 2024



Department of Health Deputy Secretary Mental Health and Wellbeing Katherine Whetton briefed members on Victorian Government reforms and their impacts on child and family service providers.

“ I’m eager to engage in discussions and explore how we can better support child and family service providers in this evolving landscape.

- Mental Health Forum participant



2024-25 State Budget Briefing May 2024



DFFH Secretary Peta McCammon provided a member briefing on the 2024-25 State Budget in May. The hybrid event included lived experience insights from Tanya and a panel discussion on the budget’s implications for our membership communities. The event gave our members valuable insights into budget priorities and the future of child and family services.

“ The State Budget Briefing provided essential information on how the new budget will impact our sector. The panel discussion was particularly valuable, offering diverse perspectives on budget priorities and fostering a deeper understanding of the financial landscape affecting child and family services.

- Attendee feedback



Global Workforce Trends May 2024

The Centre welcomed EY's People Advisory Services Partners Sonia Sharp and Georgina Gates for a webinar sharing the latest evidence, patterns, and trends shaping workforces and sectors worldwide. This webinar provided an update on the hugely successful global workforce trends and behaviours webinar delivered by Sonia during Covid lockdowns in August 2020.

[READ the Global Workforce Trends event summer here](#)



CFO/CEO Forum July 2024

This forum addressed critical issues in child welfare and protection services, with presentations from Jonathan Kaplan on social service regulations, John Cowan on data transformation projects, and updates on workforce legislation, Lindy Richardson from Maddocks Lawyers, and Rachael Green, executive director at the Centre for Workforce Excellence. The event provided valuable insights into regulatory updates and workforce initiatives, enhancing practices within the sector.



Welcome new members

The Centre is delighted to welcome 12 new members to our community across Victoria and Tasmania. On behalf of everyone at the Centre, we extend our heartfelt thanks and excitement for your involvement. Our new members represent a diverse and dedicated group of organisations.

Your commitment to child and family welfare is invaluable, and we look forward to collaborating with you to make a lasting impact. Together, we will work towards a brighter future for children and families across Tasmania.



“ The Community Service Forum was an excellent platform for discussing critical issues and updates in the sector. The hybrid format allowed for broader participation, and the presentations on social service regulations and workforce legislation were particularly relevant and timely. It was a well-organised event that provided valuable insights into the future of child welfare.

- Attendee, CFO/CEO Forum



Community Services Mentoring Program

In February 2024 we launched the Community Service Mentoring Program to member organisations following the success of the Tri-Peaks Mentoring Program in 2023.

As leaders in the sector, we understand the profound impact that mentorship can have on personal and professional growth. Mentoring will build the leadership capacity of current and next-generation leaders in child and family services.

The program currently supports 32 mentoring pairs, comprising 14 pairs in the Tri-Peaks Mentoring stream and 18 pairs in the Member-Based Mentoring stream.

To date, participants have reported finding the program both enjoyable and of great developmental value, forming mentoring relationships that will most likely continue past the completion of this program.

The program has opened new ways of thinking, new perspectives and different ways of approaching challenges. Many came into the program with an idea of what they were going to receive and were challenged by new points of view. This is a very positive and encouraging outcome of the mentoring program.

“ I have appreciated the wisdom and suggested from my mentor. it is a great space to discuss challenges or situations I have at work and how I might be able to approach them using a different mindset than previous.

- Mentee

”

“ This program has assisted me in becoming clearer about the leadership skills I have to offer and the ways in which I can successfully and clearly communicate them.

- Mentee

”



Network forums

Professional connections and collaboration

The Centre's Network Forums provide a space for members to explore critical ideas for a dynamic and resilient child and family services sector. They create a platform for members to raise, discuss, and advance strategic, long-term issues crucial for fostering a resilient and sustainable child and family services sector. Our Network Forums cover a range of topics tailored to a diverse range of professionals across the sector, focusing on specialised areas of expertise to drive meaningful progress and transformative changes.

Networks include:

- The Quality Learning Circle Network
- The Rainbow Tick Network
- The Foster Care Network
- The Leaving Care and Post Care Network
- The Integrated Family Services, Child First and Orange Door Network
- The Early Years Participation Network
- The Kinship Care Network
- The Placement Prevention and Reunification Network
- Therapeutic Residential Care (TRC) Collective



Campaigns

Supporting advocacy across the sector

Vote YES

The Centre supports the Voice to Parliament because it will be of benefit to all Australians, but it will especially benefit our First People's children and future generations.

[READ our blog in support of Voting YES for future generations](#)



Calls to fully fund family calls from prison

The Centre has joined a group of community, legal, and social services calling on the state government to fully fund the cost of making phone calls from prison.

[READ our media release](#)

Ending Child Poverty

The Centre has joined organisations across Australia in support of the End Child Poverty campaign launched this week, calling on all Governments, state and federal, to legislate an end to child poverty.

[READ about the national campaign to end child poverty](#)

Getting youth justice right: supporting our children to thrive

The Centre joined organisations across Victoria in a campaign to ensure the Youth Justice Bill 2024 respected the rights of children and created safer communities. We celebrated raising the age of criminal responsibility to 12, but continue to advocate for intervention supports for youth offenders, their families and communities.

[READ our statement on raising the age of criminal responsibility](#)

The Unsaid Says a Lot

The Unsaid Says a Lot campaign launched by the Victorian government to raise awareness and cultivate understanding of the challenges faced by trans and gender-diverse.

[READ our statement of support for the Unsaid campaign](#)

ACT extends out-of-home-care support to 21

The Centre joined The Home Stretch campaign team in congratulating the ACT Government on being the first jurisdiction to #makeit21 and legislate extended support for young people in state care to age 21.

[READ more about this Home Stretch campaign win](#)

One Talk At A Time

The Centre supported the National Office for Child Safety (the National Office) One Talk At A Time campaign to prevent child sexual abuse, sharing and promoting a suite of online tools to support adults to have these conversations.

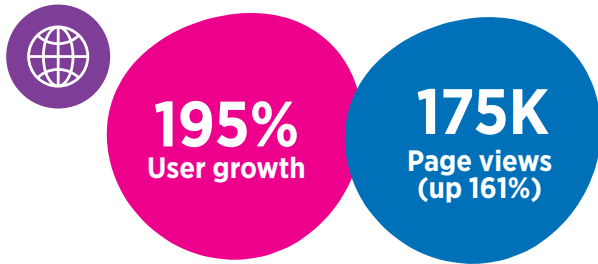
[LEARN more about the One Talk campaign](#)

Communications

Informing and engaging stakeholders

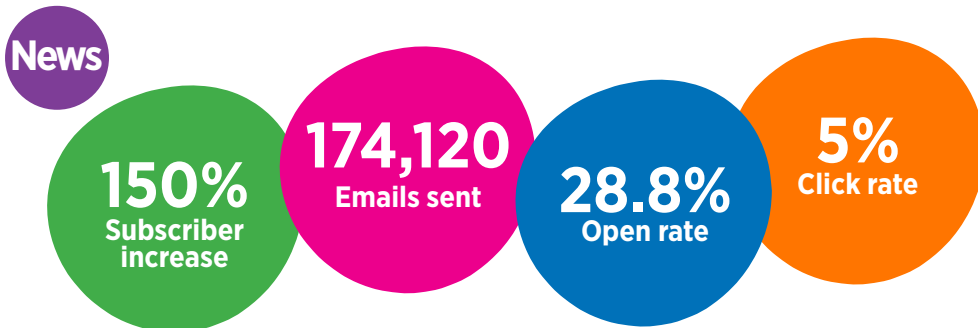
Our website - cfecfw.org.au

The design and development of a new website for the Centre has been a major focus this year, with a new site due for launch in November 2024. Over the past year we have increased publishing of news, media releases, program updates and calendar training and events through the Centre's existing site, resulting in huge increases in visitors to the site and page views.



Core Newsletters

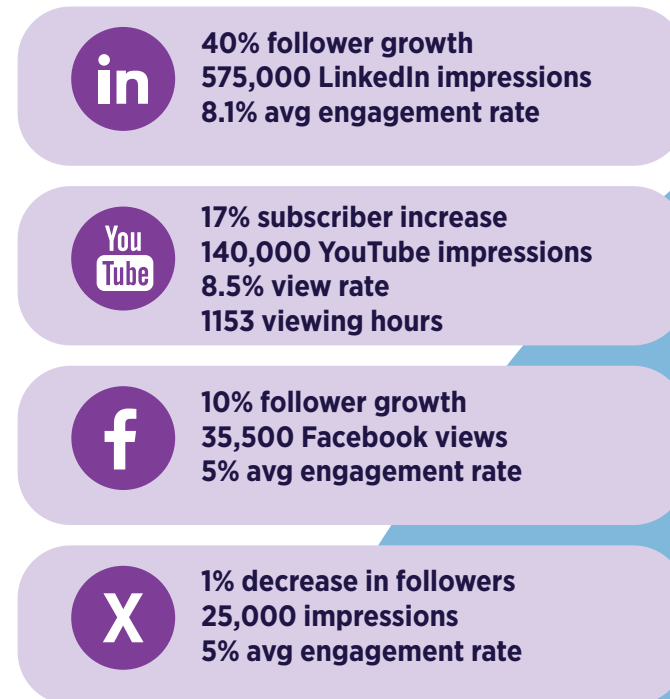
The Centre continued to publish the fortnightly Sector Buzz newsletter throughout the year, adding a monthly Tasmanian version in 2024. Our newsletter subscriber based has grown over the year, with a 150 percent increase in subscribers.



Social media channels

We use our social media channels to showcase Centre news and program updates, to recognise days of significance and advocacy campaigns throughout the year, and to engage with members and other Centre stakeholders.

LinkedIn continues to be a strong channel for growth and engagement and while Facebook has been relatively stagnant in follow growth, there is a strong base of sector workers still active on this platform. We took a break from Twitter/X during the year, but returned following the release of our first issue of Children Australia Journal as this continues to be an important platform for academic communities.



In the news

Thought leadership for children, youth and families

Recommendations for government on how to be kind


Robodebt highlighted the punitive approach toward welfare recipients from governments, ministers, and bureaucrats to date which led to a set of Royal Commission recommendations that include instructions on how to be kind.

[READ the CEO Blog here](#)

Focus on children to improve national wellbeing

In July, the Government introduced a national wellbeing framework with the goal of aligning economic and social objectives to improve the wellbeing of our nation. However, a critical aspect is missing – the perspective of children and young people.

[READ our blog on the National Wellbeing Framework](#)



"This is not how we should treat people, especially our most vulnerable."

Deb Tsorbaris, CEO
Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare



6 steps toward ending child poverty

The Government has many levers that could eradicate child poverty. We've seen solutions implemented before, and we know the profound impacts lifting families out of poverty will have on the lives and wellbeing of children who are living below the poverty line. Here are six tangible steps to end child poverty.

[READ our blog on ending child poverty](#)

Children come first as we tackle a family violence crisis

A dogged, unrelenting focus on the rights and needs of children and young people is the only way to keep them safe. Everything we do in responding to and preventing Family Violence must prioritise the welfare, rights and voices of children first.

[READ more about ending family violence](#)

Counting in the carer economy

Increasing frustration at the lack of progress for gender equality is moving International Women's Day away from cupcakes and morning teas and into a strong feminist movement demanding recognition and system change. For the Centre and our sector, International Women's Day messages highlight the ongoing undervaluing of the care economy in Australia.

[READ our blog for International Women's Day](#)

Media mentions

July 2023

Calls for a National Taskforce to end child maltreatment as study shows depth of issue

[READ MORE HERE](#)

September 2023

Earn and learn on the job when you Switch to Social Work

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Indexing announcement adds security to CSO service delivery an

[READ MORE HERE](#)

October 2023

Children Australia journal relaunches, continuing 45-year legacy of learning

[READ MORE HERE](#)

November 2023

Opportunity for schools to be safe and positive places for kids in care

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Carer model “rethink” needed to address foster care crisis says demographer

[READ MORE HERE](#)

December 2023

Victorian Government facing pressure from mental health coalition to roll out key recommendations

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Deb Tsorbaris appointed chair of Families Australia

[READ MORE HERE](#)

February 2024

Connection and respite for carers

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Dedicated Commissioner will have “significant and positive impact” on children and young people

[READ MORE HERE](#)

March 2024

Albanese talks big on equality, leaves women trapped in poverty

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Mildura locals switch up their careers with study , News, La Trobe University

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Poverty inquiry short on hope

[READ MORE HERE](#)



Foster Care Week 2023 media coverage

Australia faces a shortage of foster carers

[READ MORE HERE](#)

More support sought for kinship carers as cost of living hits strained budgets

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Urgent Need for Foster Carers across Victoria

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Fostering the future

[READ MORE HERE](#)

JOYFM: Foster Care Week: Oliver Woolett, Christopher Ward

[READ MORE HERE](#)

PODCAST - On Fostering Children with Down syndrome

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Need for foster carers continues

[READ MORE HERE](#)



Media Awards 2023

The impact of media coverage

The Centre's Media Awards 2023 were presented during our Annual General Meeting, with nominees and winners joining online and in person to recognise journalists reporting on issues that affect children, young people and families and the inclusion of their voices in media stories.

These awards recognise journalists who have sought to elevate the voices of children and families in a respectful and material way across four categories.

Best Story about Young People

Recognising the tenacity of young people, presents young people as people in their own right, and gives voice to the issues impacting young people.

WINNERS:

Grace Tobin and Patrick Begley, ABC Four Corners

[Locking Up Kids: Australia's failure to protect children in detention](#)

"A standout piece, visually it is highly impactful, with gripping and extensive interviews looking at many sides of a story that has relevance across all states and territories."

HIGHLY COMMENDED:

Conor Duffy, ABC

[Rory's using music to take on a 'toxic mindset', and 100 boys' voices have joined in](#)

"Not enough can be said about the struggles faced by young men and Conor's article gives insights into the changing narratives for young people in regional Australia."

Best Story about Children

Presents children as people in their own right, demonstrates the ability to speak to or about children in a respectful and considerate manner and puts forward a unique narrative about children.

WINNER:

Melanie Vujkovic, ABC Queensland

[Sexual assaults are at an all-time high. Why talking to your child about abuse is so important](#)

"A strong article that discusses an incredibly important topic from a personal perspective. It brings in expert opinions and provides practical information on how to have conversations with children."

HIGHLY COMMENDED:

Georgia Lenton-Williams, ABC Gippsland

[As Victoria's incarceration rate rises, children of jailed parents are 'invisible victims', report says](#)

"Georgia's story presents a unique narrative. It's not often we hear about children of incarcerated parents. It respectfully includes lived experience and considers recommendations for support for children and young people."

Best Story about Families

Celebrates the diversity of families, presents a narrative that captures the changing nature of families, and reports about families in a respectful and balanced manner.

WINNER:

Sophie Black, The Guardian

[Families can fall apart over this stuff': the children refusing to go to school](#)

"A winning article in a very strong category. Sophie's story shares the perspective of families struggling with school refusal who find themselves with nowhere to turn."

Best Story about Out-of-Home Care

Presents a holistic narrative about OOHC, is balanced and fair, and considers the unique experiences of children and young people in OOHC.

JOINT WINNER:

Katri Uibu, ABC

[All care, no responsibility](#)

Judges comments: This story brings forward the voices of young people with care experience, giving them a chance to share their experiences. There are often few avenues for us to hear the voices of children and this story is a reminder of how important the lived experience of children and young people is.

JOINT WINNER:

Nino Bucci, The Guardian

Children in out-of-home care are less likely to finish school. Victoria is launching an inquiry to understand why

Judges comments: This month we saw the release of the CCYP Report into education outcomes for and this story explores the issue at the beginning of this journey. Nino's story gives us some understanding of the aspirations and challenges children and young people in out-of-home care face in education.



Nino Bucci from The Guardian, accepts his award as Joint Winner of the Best story about children or young people in out of home care at the Centre's AGM. His story explored the aspirations and challenges faced by children and young people in out-of-home care in education.

Special Award – Voice of Lived Experience

This year the judging panel has awarded a special award for the Voice of Lived Experience. The Yoorrook Justice Commission's truth-telling process has given Victorians an incredible insight into the lived experience of First Nation's people in our state. Truth telling allows us to hear and record evidence about past actions, and build respect, trust and understanding.

WINNERS:

Mikaila Frost

Katrina Harrison

Jack Latimore, The Age

This award is presented to Mikaila Frost, Katrina Harrison, and The Age's Indigenous Affairs journalist Jack Latimore who supported the women to share their lived experience and tell their truth. [Children in out-of-home care are less likely to finish school. Victoria is launching an inquiry to understand why](#)

Mikaila's story talks of her experience of being removed from her Aboriginal family and then having her own children removed from her.

[I was kept from my Indigenous family as a child. Then my own kids were taken from me](#)

Katrina shares a story of injustice, neglect and violence and grief. She shares her story of rebuilding a life to help other Aboriginal women and children.

[Family violence is not part of Aboriginal culture', but Katrina knows it too well](#)

“ Too often children, young people, and families are not represented in the media. In fact, these voices don't always get a seat at any of the tables where decisions are being made about or for them.

- Deb Tsorbaris, CEO

”

Victorian Protecting Children Awards 2023

Leaving a Legacy Award presented to Connie Salamone

The 2023 Leaving A Legacy Award was presented to Connie Salamone from VACCA at the Victorian Protecting Children Awards in September 2023. This annual award celebrates the achievements and impact of community service organisations and individuals across the child and family services sector.

Connie's life has been devoted to working in the child and family sector. In 2002, she commenced with VACCA and went on to hold responsibility for its front-line services. She was instrumental in VACCA being authorised in the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program.

Connie is an exceptional leader who advocates for the rights and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, young people, and families, and communities. She has a strong sense of the importance of culture, system reform and addressing the distinct needs of Aboriginal people. She has been a strong advocate of the need to invest in Aboriginal children and young people as 'just and right thing to do'.

[READ more about Connie's work](#)



Residential Care Awards 2023

Excellence in residential care

The Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy (RCLDS) Residential Care Awards are presented at ResiROCKS in October each year, recognising the exceptional work carried out in the field by residential carers.

The awards celebrate and encourage work of the highest standard in the provision of residential care in Victoria contributing to positive outcomes for children and young people living in residential care.

Minister for Children, the Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn, and Deb Tsorbaris presented seven awards this year and two further education scholarships.

[LEARN more about the 2023 winners](#)



The Residential Care Awards 2023 were presented by the Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn MP and Centre CEO Deb Tsorbaris.

Further Education Scholarship

The RCLDS Further Education Scholarship offers financial support for the ongoing higher education of people working in the residential care sector.

In 2023 scholarships were awarded to:

Jessie Kooper, Masp
Lisa Gaul, VACCA

Lifetime Achievement Award

The Lifetime Achievement Award celebrates a journey of dedication and impact in the Residential Care sector and honours over 7 years of service and unwavering commitment

JOINT WINNERS:

Frances Schembri, Anglicare
Jack Chirgwin, MASP

RCLDS Learning Award

This award celebrates true dedication to learning and development and recognises someone who has demonstrated commitment through regular attendance at training including but not limited to RCLDS.

WINNER:

Nick Price, Anglicare

Leadership Award

The Leadership Award goes to a person who has demonstrated outstanding achievement and innovation in their leadership role which has had a significant impact on residential care systems and outcomes for children and young people.

WINNER:

Dani Jeffery, Anglicare

HONOURABLE MENTION:

Gabrielle Thompson, Berry Street

Residential Carer Award

The Residential Carer Award recognizes a person who has achieved significant, positive outcomes for children and young people living in residential care and demonstrated a commitment to learning and development.

WINNER:

Brady Stone, Anglicare

HONOURABLE MENTION:

Anne Ikkersheim, Berry Street

Judges Award for Initiative and Innovation

A special award to recognise Elannah Lino from MacKillop Family Service for her direct contribution to maintaining a safe, support and nurturing living environment in her residential care home.

WINNER:

Elannah Lino, MacKillop Family Services

Judges Award for Outstanding Work in the Community

A special award to recognise Lisa Gaul from VACCA, who is a fierce ally of the Aboriginal Community and goes above and beyond to care for the families of our young people and Elders within the broader community.

WINNER:

Lisa Gaul, VACCA

Residential Care Team Award

This award recognizes a team within a residential house who have worked collaboratively to achieve significant, positive outcomes for children and young people living in residential care.

WINNER:

The Berwick Residential Care Team, Anglicare

HONOURABLE MENTION:

Comans Home, Berry Street

2023-24 Milestones

JUL 23

AUG 23

SEPT 23

OCT 23

NOV 23

DEC 23



Play A Part Market Research

National Wellbeing Framework released



Children's Rights Seminar: Amplifying the voices and rights of our children



ABC coverage for Kinship Care Week

Foster Care Week

Where we start matters – podcast for Child Protection Week
[Listen to podcast](#)



Vote YES for children

OPEN Symposium 2023: Building resilient families and thriving communities

Minister for Children announced

Anti-Poverty Week: Why does Australia still accept child poverty, and what are we going to do about it?

ResiROCKS 2023



Together With Families 2023

CCYP Let Us Learn report released

AVITH Panel presentation at NTV 2024



CEO to chair Families Australia

Preventing child sexual abuse campaign
[Watch here](#)

NDIS Review release

Leading Change in Family Violence



JAN/FEB 24



Raising Expectations shares the transformative power of peer mentoring

Parliamentary apology to care leavers

[Watch here](#)

Switch to Social Work first day

Midsumma Pride March



MAR24



International Women's Day - Counting carers in

OPEN Forum: Evidence everywhere, everyday, everyone

Poverty inquiry short on hope



"The fight to end child poverty is every day, not just one week."

David Tr...

APR24



Foster Care recruitment and retention report

Foster Care recruitment and retention report

A contemporary vision for Foster Care

Early Years Forum

[Watch here](#)



MAY24



Let Us Learn event

[Watch here](#)

2024-25 Victorian Budget Briefing

EY Global Workforce trends

[Watch here](#)

OPEN Forum: Trauma - informed insights Strategies for wellbeing

JUN 24



CISS Practitioner Testimonials

2023-24 Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

Financial statements overview
for the Year Ended 30 June 2024





The financial information presented in this Annual Report has been derived from the Centres' audited Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2024.

A copy of the full financial and auditor's report is available at www.acnc.gov.au

TREASURER'S REPORT

It has been a privilege to work with the Centre's Board and finance team during my first year as the Treasurer.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the prior Treasurer, Teresa Jayet, for her invaluable contribution and guidance. The Board is pleased to announce that the financial year ended 30 June 2024 had an operating surplus of \$1,671,095. Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to members of the Association was \$1,983,514. The total revenue for the year was \$14,753,785 and the total expenditure was \$13,082,690.

The following movements are shown in the financial report.

Revenue

The revenue for the year amounts to \$14,194,370, representing an increase of \$4.9m (50%) attributed to the funding of new programs.

- Government funding grew to \$12.4m representation an increase of \$4.3m (54%).
- Revenue from Business undertakings increased to \$876k due to increased number of projects over the year.
- Affiliation Fees from members amounted to \$590k and is based on 0.14% of declared Child Youth and Family Services Revenue from the prior financial year.
- Charitable contributions amounted to \$283k.
- Investment income increased to \$559k.

Expenditure

The expenditure has moved in line with revenue and has increased to \$13m (50%).

- Employee benefits expenses increased by \$1.7m (32%) due to increased staffing for the new funded programs.
- Operating expenses have increased by \$2.3m (85%) as a result planned expenses on funded projects.
- Overhead expenses amounted to \$5m

Statement of financial position

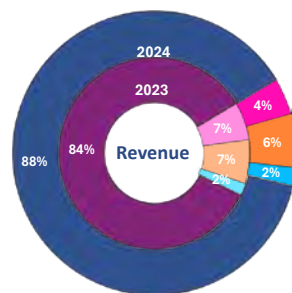
- Assets have experienced an increase of \$3.8m million (22%) due to growth in investments.
- Liabilities have also increased by \$718k (13%), this is primarily related to an increase in deferred grants for activities that have started but are not yet complete.

The Centre holds sufficient reserves to continue supporting our members and member organisations in their invaluable work with vulnerable children, young people, and their families.

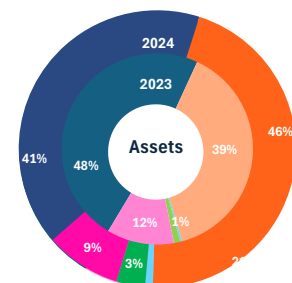
I would like to thank the members of the Finance, Audit & Risk Management Committee during the 2023-2024 financial year: Lisa Griffiths, Graham Boal, Justin Flynn and Heidi Tucker. I would also like to acknowledge the Centre's finance team for their professional work during the year.

The following financial statements overview has been extracted from the Centre's Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2024. These general-purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ('AASB') and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. The Association is a not-for-profit entity for financial reporting purposes under Australian Accounting Standards by Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd. The full financial statements can be obtained from the Centre's website.

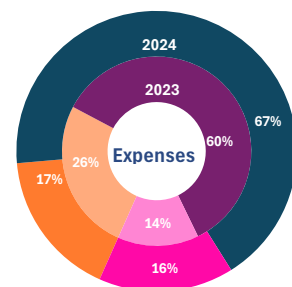
Year ended 30 June 2024	
Revenue by source	(\$000's)
State government contributions	12,444
Affiliation fees	591
Business Undertakings	877
Philanthropic and donations	283
Total Revenue	14,194



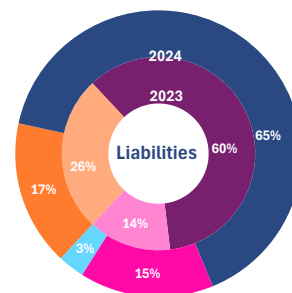
Year ended 30 June 2024	
Assets	(\$000's)
Cash	8,765
Other financial assets	9,679
Property, Plant & Equipment	1,871
Trade & other receivables	715
Other Assets	191
Total Assets	21,221



Year ended 30 June 2024	
Expenses	(\$000's)
Employee benefits	7,062
Operating expenses	5,021
Overhead expenses	999
Total Expenditure	13,083



Year ended 30 June 2024	
Liabilities	(\$000's)
Deferred revenue	3,960
Trade and other payables	996
Employee Benefits	915
Other liabilities	181
Total Liabilities	6,052



Andrew Bruun
Treasurer

Statement of Surplus of Deficit and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Revenue	14,194,370	9,618,302
Investment income	559,415	220,504
Depreciation expense	(187,280)	(70,588)
Employee benefits expense	(7,062,087)	(5,361,002)
Operations expense	(5,021,406)	(2,709,119)
Office expense	(700,972)	(426,672)
Occupancy expense	(96,942)	(164,683)
Motor vehicle expense	(14,003)	(13,128)
Surplus for the year	1,671,095	1,093,614
Other comprehensive income		
<i>Items that may not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss</i>		
Changes in fair value of assets classified as fair value through other comprehensive income	312,419	222,791
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to members of the Association	1,983,514	1,316,405

Statement of financial position

For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Assets		
<i>Current Assets</i>		
Cash and cash on hand	8,764,909	8,381,446
Other financial assets	9,679,285	6,698,591
Trade and other receivables	715,137	193,944
Other assets	190,606	51,402
Total current assets	19,349,937	15,325,383
<i>Non-current assets</i>		
Property, plant and equipment	1,871,386	2,040,767
Total non-current assets	1,871,386	2,040,767
Total assets	21,221,323	17,366,150
Liabilities		
<i>Current liabilities</i>		
Trade and other payables	995,804	1,323,953
Deferred revenue	3,960,247	3,049,264
Provisions	885,875	683,886
Other liabilities	180,732	257,000
Total current liabilities	6,022,658	5,314,103
<i>Non-current liabilities</i>		
Provisions	29,378	19,742
Total non-current liabilities	29,378	19,742
Total liabilities	6,052,036	5,333,845
Net Assets	15,169,287	12,032,305
Equity		
Accumulated surplus	10,722,669	9,223,425
Reserves	3,803,737	2,478,418
Revaluation reserve	642,881	330,462
Total Equity	15,169,287	12,032,305

Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare Inc.
Statement of changes in equity
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	Accumulated Surplus \$	Reserves \$	Revaluation Reserve \$	Total \$
Balance at 1 July 2022	8,367,877	2,240,352	107,671	10,715,900
Surplus for the year	1,093,614	-	-	1,093,614
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-	222,791	222,791
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to the members of the association	1,093,614	-	222,791	1,316,405
Transfer to reserves	(238,066)	238,066	-	-
Balance at 30 June 2023	9,223,425	2,478,418	330,462	12,032,305
Surplus for the year	1,671,095	-	-	1,671,095
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-	312,419	312,419
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to the members of the association	1,671,095	-	312,419	1,983,514
Transfer to reserves	(171,851)	1,325,319	-	1,153,468
Balance at 30 June 2024	10,722,669	3,803,737	642,881	15,169,287

Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare Inc.
Statement of cash flows
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Cash flows from operating activities		
Receipts from customers	15,738,904	11,511,717
Payments to suppliers and employees	(13,338,188)	(9,503,255)
Net cash inflows from operating activities	2,400,716	2,008,462
Cash flows from investing activities		
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(17,899)	(1,250,695)
Net payments for financial assets	(2,558,769)	(57,113)
Interest received	559,415	220,504
Net cash inflows / (outflow) from investing activities	(2,017,253)	(1,087,304)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Net cash outflows from financing activities	-	-
Net increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	383,463	921,158
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	8,381,446	7,460,288
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	8,764,909	8,381,446

BOARD MEMBERS



Dr Lisa Griffiths,
OzChild,
Board Chair



Teresa Jayet,
Mallee Family Care,
Deputy Chair



Andrew Bruun,
Youth Support and
Advocacy Service,
Treasurer



Graham Boal,
MacKillop Family
Services



Justin Flynn,
Uniting



Sue Sealey,
Anglicare Victoria



Heidi Tucker,
Anchor Community
Care Ltd.



Allison Wainwright,
Family Life



Sue White,
QEC

Centre organisational members

Access Health and Community

Act for Kids

Allambi Care Ltd

Anchor Community Care Ltd.

Anglicare Victoria

Aruma (formerly E. W. Tipping Foundation/
House with No Steps)

Australian Childhood Foundation

Australian Childhood Trauma Group

Baptcare

Benalla Rural City Council

Bendigo Community Health Services

Berry Street

Brophy Family & Youth Services Inc

Brotherhood of St Laurence

Bubup Wilam

CareChoice (Aust) Pty Ltd

Caroline Chisholm Society

CatholicCare Victoria

Child and Family Services Ballarat

Christian Brethren Community Care Ltd T/A
Temcare

City of Darebin

City of Melbourne

City of Port Phillip

City of Yarra

Colac Area Health

Community Living and Respite Services
(CLRS)

Concern Australia Welfare Inc

Doncare

Drummond Street Services

EACH Social and Community Health

Family Access Network Inc

Family Life

FamilyCare

FVREE Free From Family Violence

Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal
Cooperative

Gippsland Lakes Complete Health

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

IPC Health

Jesuit Social Services

Jewish Care

Junction Support Services Inc.

Kara House

Key Assets

Kids First

Kyabram Community & Learning Centre

K.Y.M. (Victoria) Inc

Launch Housing

Life Without Barriers

Lighthouse Foundation

MacKillop Family Services

Make A Difference Dingley Village Inc.

Mallee Accommodation and Support Program

Mallee Family Care

Melbourne City Mission

Meli Community

Melton City Council

Mirabel Foundation Inc

Moira Inc

Moonee Valley City Council

Multicultural Community Services Geelong Inc

No to Violence

Centre organisational members (continued)

Northern District Community Health

Odyssey House Victoria

Olivia's Place

ONCALL Group Australia

Oz Child

Permanent Care and Adoptive Families

QEC

Quantum Support Services Inc

Refuge Victoria Inc

Relationship Matters

Relationships Australia

Rumbalara Family Services

Safe Steps

54 reasons (Save the Children)

Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation

The Bridge Youth Service

The Reach Foundation

The Salvation Army

Thorne Harbour Health

Tweddle Child and Family Health Service

Uniting

Upper Murray Family Care

VANISH Inc.

VICSEG New Futures

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc. (VACCHO)

Vacro

Windermere Child & Family Services Inc.

Yarra Ranges Kinders

Yooralla

Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS) - Fitzroy

Zoe Support Australia

Ability Assist

Allah Muhammad Ali Fatima Hassan Hussain Federation

Association for Children with a Disability

Catholic Social Services

Council of Single Mothers and their Children

Federation of Community Legal Centres (FCLC)

HenderCare Foundation

Kids Under Cover

Mansfield Shire Council

Playgroup Victoria

Settlement Services International

Siblings Australia Inc

St Kilda Mums Inc.

The Pyjama Foundation

YMCA Victoria

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic)

54 Reasons Tas (Save the Children)

Anglicare Tasmania

Subscriber members

Association of Children with a Disability
Australian Childhood Foundation
Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)
Baptcare Tasmania - Southern Region Office
Care2Serve
CatholicCare
Colony 47
Families Australia
Family Planning Tasmania
Fostering Hope
Key Assets Australia
Life Without Barriers
Migrant Resource Centre
Migrant Resource Centre (North)
Mission Australia
Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania
Positive Solutions
Possibility Group

Tasmanian organisational members

Relationships Australia
Rural Alive and Well
Sexual Assault Support Service
Tasmanian Council of Social Service
Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations
Teen Challenge Tasmania
The Link Youth Health Service
The Smith Family
Wyndarra Centre Inc
Youth, Family and Community Connections Inc
Kennerley Children's Homes Inc
Uniting Vic/Tas

Tasmanian subscriber members

YNOT

Our staff

Executive

Deb Tsorbaris
Chief Executive Officer

Michele Lonsdale
Deputy CEO, Director Policy,
Research and Advocacy

Sue Maddison
Executive Assistant

Imogen Gerraty
Executive Advisor

Operations and Finance

Padraic Keyes
Executive Manager - Operations and Finance

Sheena Lestock-Kay
Office Coordinator

Lakmini Kulathunga
Senior Financial Accountant

Grace Kasper
Bookkeeper

Justine Koutsoupas
Finance Business Partner

Thi Ngoc Ha Bui
Revenue Accounting Officer

Matthew Edwards
Reception - Administration Officer

Oliver Tsorbaris
Project Officer - Tri-Peaks

Projects

Paulleen Markwort
Director - Strategic Innovation: Tri-Peaks, VoP

Philippa McLean
Senior Project Officer - Tri-Peaks Project

Liz Stafford
Executive Advisor - Workforce Innovation

Jason Crockett
Manager - Switch To Social

Charles Ellingham
Communications, Engagement and Reporting
Lead

Meena Amiry
Project Officer - Switch To Social

Kate Hoops
Senior Project Officer - Switch To Social

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Project Manager MCRI - Child Healthcare,
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Strategic Communications, Engagement and
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Ioanna Lyssiotis
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Sarah Keegan
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Practice Lead - Family Preservation and Reunification

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Sarah Ryan

Senior Project Officer (OPEN)

Melissa Storey

Senior Editor: Children Australia Journal (OPEN)

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Project Support Officer (OPEN)

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Project Support Officer (OPEN)

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Project Lead - OPEN Expansion (OPEN)

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Nathaniel Slater

Senior Project Officer - Education

Michelle Cameron

Senior Project Officer - Early Years

Johanna Croke

Project Officer - Early Years

Emma Nugent

Project Officer - Information Sharing

Bea Wood

Senior Project Officer - Child Information Sharing

Kelly Farrell

Senior Project Officer

Kate McLaughlin

Project Officer - Child Information Sharing

Alyese Arnold

Senior Project Officer - Child Wellbeing

Pearl Goodwin-Burns

Senior Manager - Education

Tarni Santos

Enggement and Communications Officer - Raising Expectations

Jasmine Issacs

Senior Project Officer - Raising Expectations

Lani Evalu

Project Officer (Peer Mentoring) - Raising Expectations

Caitlyn Robertson

Senior Policy and Research Officer

Fostering Connections

Madeleine Dowling

Senior Manager, Strategic and Innovative Projects

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Bronwen Maher

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Interns

Kriti Rajbar

Raising Expectations (Intern)

