



Foster & Kinship Carers
ASSOCIATION NT Incorporated

Supporting carers for over 10 years

ANNUAL REPORT

2024–2025



There are no unwanted children,
just unfound families.



FUNDING BODY

DEPARTMENT
OF CHILDREN
& FAMILIES



REGISTERED



Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT Inc proudly acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Northern Territory, and recognises their continuing connection to their lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.





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OUR VISION

A thriving, resilient carer community

To continue to build a thriving, resilient carer community where foster and kinship carers are connected, equipped, empowered, and valued for their support of children and young people in their care.

OUR MISSION

Advocate, Collaborate , Educate

To foster a resilient and strong carer-based community through representation, advocacy, collaborative relationships and the provision of support services and training to its members.



WHO WE ARE

Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT (FKCANT) is the peak body for foster and kinship carers in the Northern Territory. For nearly 15 years, we have proudly served as a strong, consistent voice for our carers, advocating at both individual and systemic levels to government agencies and decision makers. Our aim is to strengthen and grow a carer-centered organisation grounded in resilience, inclusivity and community.

We are committed to empowering those who take on one of the most vital and challenging roles in our community. Through advocacy, collaboration, and education, we aim to build a connected, informed, and valued carer community, where every carer feels supported and equipped to provide safe, stable care for children and young people.

At FKCANT, we are more than advocates, we are trusted partners in the caring journey. We walk alongside carers, offering practical training, timely information on rights and services, and a shared commitment to making positive, lasting change for children, families, and the care system as a whole.

Based in Darwin, our team regularly travels across the Northern Territory to engage directly with carers, sector partners, government, stakeholders, and other community agencies.





CHAIRMAN & CEO MESSAGE

Steve Downie & Amanda Thompson

On behalf of the Foster & Kinship Carers Association NT (FKCANT) and our Board, we are proud to present our 2024–25 Annual Report.

This year has been one of growth, consolidation, and renewed purpose for our organisation. As we reflect on our achievements, we do so with gratitude for the commitment of our carers, staff, partners, and supporters who continue to strengthen the voice of foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory. Together, we have built upon the solid foundations of previous years to deliver new programs, strengthen advocacy, and expand our reach into communities across the Territory.

Following the success of our pilot program in 2023–24, we are pleased to report that the Carer Recruitment and Assessment Program has been extended as part of FKCANT's service delivery. In 2024–25, this initiative has transformed the way we support both prospective and existing carers.

Through collaborative work with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), we have strengthened assessment processes, reduced reauthorisation delays, and improved communication pathways that ultimately ensure safer and more stable placements for children and young people.

Our growing team of dedicated assessors and support staff have worked tirelessly to ensure carers are well-prepared, supported, and valued. The program's expansion to manage all *Expressions of Interest* across the Territory is a significant milestone that positions FKCANT as a central hub for carer recruitment, assessment, and ongoing support. It is an achievement that reflects our continued drive for innovation and excellence.

Advocacy remains at the heart of our mission. Throughout the year, FKCANT continued to champion systemic improvements for carers and children within the out-of-home care system. Our involvement with the National Foster and Kinship Care Collective (NFKCC) has amplified the Northern Territory's voice on issues of national importance, from carer recognition and financial sustainability to wellbeing, training, and legal access.

Locally, our Carer Advocacy and Support Officers have continued their vital work supporting carers through individual advocacy, case management, and wellbeing initiatives. Our events calendar, including training workshops, carer connection dinners, and community celebrations, continues to foster strong peer networks and a sense of belonging across our diverse care community.

We are deeply proud of the culture of respect, inclusion, and collaboration that continues to define FKCANT. Whether in Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs, or remote communities, we remain committed to walking alongside carers and amplifying their voices at every level of decision-making.

This year, we farewell three valued Board members, Bailey Tambling, Meg Baker, and Stephanie Ransome. We extend our heartfelt thanks for their service, wisdom, and commitment to our mission. A special mention and deep gratitude go to Stephanie Ransome, who served as our Treasurer with integrity and diligence, strengthening the governance and financial stewardship of the organisation. We thank each of these members for their dedication and the unique contributions they have made to FKCANT's growth and stability.

We also acknowledge our continuing Board members, whose collective leadership ensures FKCANT remains focused, transparent, and future-oriented. Their guidance enables us to adapt to new challenges while maintaining our steadfast commitment to carers and the children they support.

To our remarkable carers, the heart of everything we do, thank you for your unwavering commitment, compassion, and resilience. The role you play in nurturing and supporting vulnerable children and young people is profound, and we remain in awe of your strength and generosity.

To our staff and volunteers, your professionalism and dedication are the backbone of FKCANT. Each of you contributes to a culture of care, advocacy, and empowerment that makes a real difference every day.

As we look ahead to 2025–26, our focus will remain on strengthening carer recruitment and retention, enhancing systemic advocacy, and ensuring that carers across the Northern Territory feel heard, supported, and valued. Through collaboration, innovation, and determination, we will continue to build a thriving, resilient carer community.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our shared purpose this year, together, we are changing lives and creating brighter futures.



Steve Donnie



Ananda Thompson

OUR CARER COMMUNITY

At the centre of everything we do at FKCANT is a community bound not by circumstance, but by heart. Our carer community is made up of people, individuals, families, and extended networks, who open their homes and hearts to children in need of care. They come from all walks of life, each bringing their own lived experience, culture, and strengths, but are united by a shared commitment: to show up for children and young people when it matters most.

Our foster and kinship carers are volunteers in the truest sense. Many balance careers, parenting, cultural obligations, and personal challenges, yet they continue to step forward with compassion, courage, and deep love. They provide more than just shelter, they offer safety, connection, stability, and the chance for children to be seen, heard, and valued. Some carers are grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, or close family friends who quietly rise to the occasion, often without recognition, but always with grace. Others are families who work together to create nurturing homes, where children are held by generations of care and wisdom.

The strength of this community doesn't rest solely with carers. Around them stands a circle of support, professionals, service providers, educators, businesses, and everyday people, who offer their time, skills, and resources to walk alongside carers and the children they care for. Whether delivering trauma-informed training, donating services, sponsoring events, or lending a listening ear, these partners extend the care network in meaningful ways. Their generosity makes a real and lasting difference.

What truly sets this community apart is its heart. In every story, every challenge, and every quiet victory, there is a deep well of empathy and humanity. Despite the diversity of backgrounds, cultures, and life paths, one thing is constant: a shared belief that all children deserve love, safety, and a chance to thrive.



Thank you to our supporters



- Area 9 IT Solutions
- Centrelink - Services Australia
- Charles Darwin University
- Department of Children & Families
- Drew the Handyman
- Dingo Cockatoo Aboriginal Culture
- Dobby's Butcher Nightcliff
- Glow Bears - Darwin Science Teacher, Adam Turley and his mum Tanja.
- HPA
- Hyper the Clown
- Katherine Country Club
- Madz Flower House
- Rosella Hair Boutique Darwin
- Sammy's Family Pizza Restaurant
- Teresa Schwellnus
- The Midway Berrimah

BOARD MEMBERS



Chairperson
Steve Downie



Vice Chairperson
Denise Jenkins



Treasurer/Secretary
Stephanie Ransome



Member
Jackie Williams



Member
Meg Baker



Member
Dawn McQuilkin



Member
AnneLouise
Cooper

Our Board of Management is a diverse group comprising dedicated volunteers, experienced foster and kinship carers, and professionals from various backgrounds across the Northern Territory. Each member brings a unique perspective and a wealth of experience to our organisation, strengthening our ability to serve the foster and kinship care community.

The primary objective of the Board is to oversee the strategic direction of the organisation, ensuring that every action we take is in alignment with our mission and serves the best interests of foster and kinship carers, the children in their care, and the broader out-of-home care sector.

In addition to setting long-term goals and providing financial oversight, the Board ensures legal and ethical compliance, actively supports fundraising and connection efforts, and advocates for the organisation within the community. Their role in managing risks and guiding resource allocation is essential to ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of our work.

During the 2024-2025 period, Board meetings were convened in July, February, May, with the Annual General Meeting held in November 2024.

FKCANT TEAM MEMBERS

Carers are assisted daily by a committed group of staff members who strive to support and advocate for improved care and wellbeing. This year, we bid a fond farewell to Pravash Rai, Rebecca Webber and Meghan Hanley. Their contributions have been invaluable, and we wish them all the best in their future endeavours.



Chief Executive Officer
Amanda Thompson



Senior Advocate and Business Development Officer
Jarrad Elvish



Finance/ HR Manager
Louise Lasker



Carer Services and Practice Manager
Denise Higginson



Care Advocacy and Support Officer
Jayne Rachor



**Carer Advocacy & Support Officer/
Carer Services Assessor**
Johnnie Mugabe



Care Advocacy and Support Officer
Rachita Shrestha



Carer Services Assessor
Vineetha Edathil

Farewell Staff



Rebecca Webber



Meghan Hanley



Pravash Rai

CARER MEMBERS DATA

Carer Demographics

As of 30 June 2025, the Foster & Kinship Carers Association NT (FKCANT) proudly supported a total of 715 members. Our carer community remains diverse, dedicated, and reflective of the Northern Territory's cultural landscape.

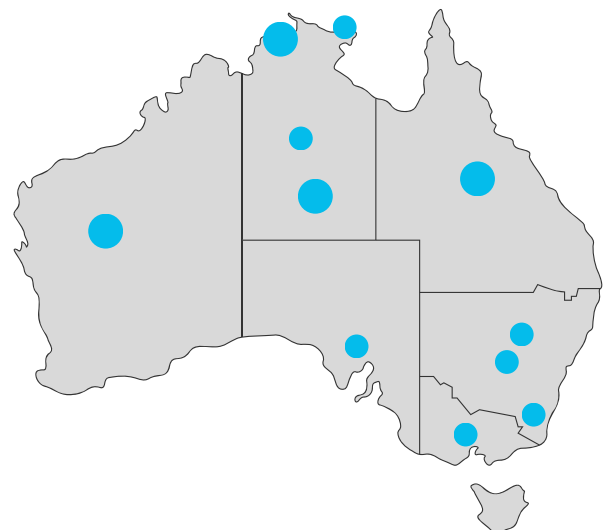
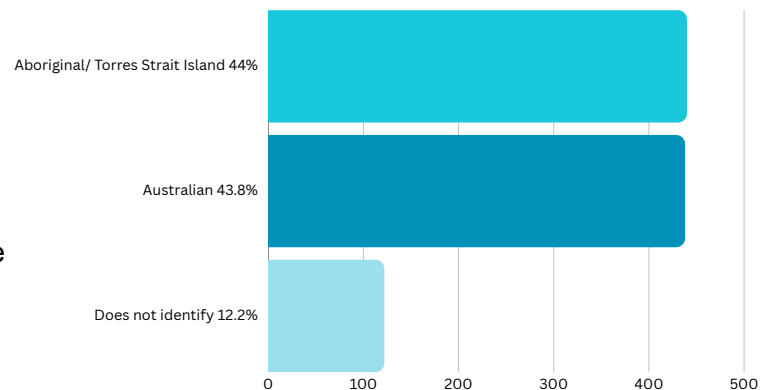
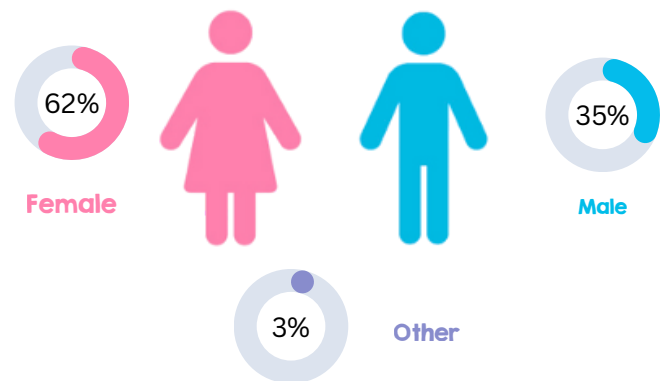
The gender balance within our membership shows that the majority of carers continue to be women, representing approximately 62% of the membership, while men comprise 35%, with a small proportion of carers identifying outside the binary. This breakdown highlights the ongoing importance of recognising and supporting both male and female carers in their unique roles within the out-of-home care system.

Significantly, 44% of our carers identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, which demonstrates the vital role that First Nations families play in providing safe and nurturing homes for children and young people. This figure marks a slight increase compared to the previous year, reflecting the strengthening trust and engagement FKCANT continues to build within Indigenous communities.

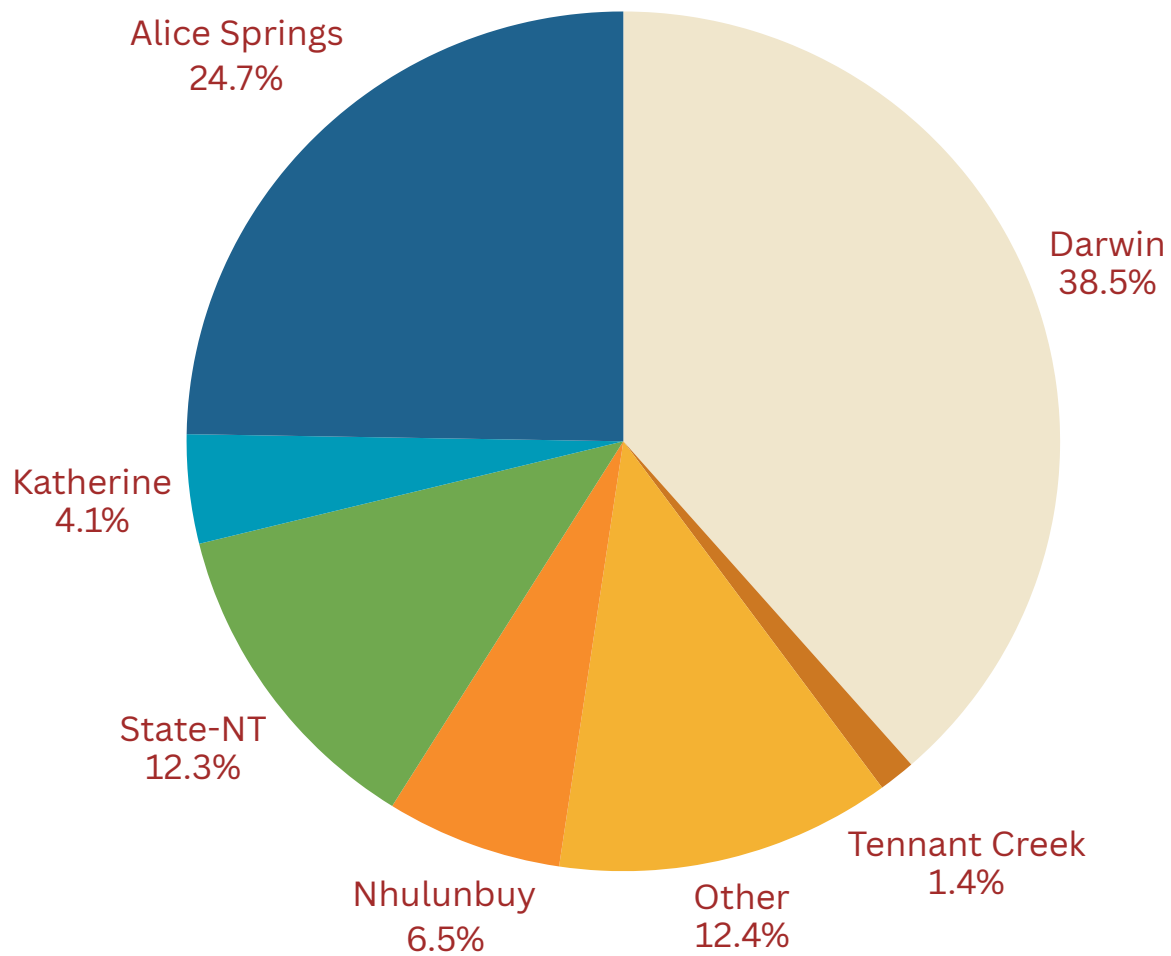
Our carers are spread widely across the Northern Territory, from urban centres such as Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs, through to remote communities. In addition, a small but important number of members reside interstate, ensuring children and young people with connections to the NT can continue to be supported beyond our borders.

715

Foster & Kinship Carers



MEMBERS BREAKDOWN



CARER RECRUITMENT & PROMOTIONS

Throughout 2024–2025, FKCANT continued to prioritise raising awareness of the need for foster and kinship carers across the Territory. Our recruitment and promotional activities were designed to reach a broad audience using both traditional community engagement methods and modern digital platforms.

Key initiatives included:

- In-person promotional events at community gatherings, and local expos.
- Targeted social media campaigns across Facebook, Instagram, and our website, designed to share real stories and encourage community members to consider becoming carers.
- Eight carer recruitment booths across Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs, providing direct opportunities for conversations and information sharing.

Through these collective efforts, FKCANT received a total of 49 expressions of interest from individuals considering becoming foster or kinship carers.

While this number represents a slight decrease compared to 2023–2024, it reflects wider systemic challenges in carer recruitment both locally and nationally. Feedback from current and prospective carers highlighted concerns including:

- Lengthy assessment and approval timeframes, which can discourage applicants.
- A perceived preference for paid care providers over volunteer foster and kinship carers, impacting community confidence in the system.
- Increasing financial and social pressures on families, influencing their capacity to commit to long-term volunteer caring.

Despite these challenges, the quality of enquiries FKCANT received demonstrated that many individuals remain deeply motivated by a desire to make a positive difference in the lives of children and young people. Going forward, FKCANT will continue to adapt its recruitment strategies, advocate for streamlined assessment processes, and provide robust pre- and post-approval support to ensure that prospective carers feel encouraged and valued throughout their journey.



Vineetha running the ring toss with a guest at an EOI stall



Jayne ensuring merchandise is ready for the taking!

49

Total of EOIs to become a carer

20

EOIs progressing to submission

CARER & CASE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Our Carer Advocacy and Support Officers (CASOs) are at the heart of FKCANT's work, providing direct, personalised support to foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory. Through regular contact, including in-person home visits, phone check-ins, and virtual meetings, CASOs ensure carers feel heard, equipped, and empowered to meet the demands of home-based care. This ongoing connection plays a critical role in promoting carer wellbeing and maintaining high-quality, stable placements for children and young people.



2024–2025, our team conducted 152 home visits across the Greater Darwin Region, alongside a range of in-office and remote consultations. These visits offer a safe space for carers to share their experiences, raise concerns, and celebrate successes, while also allowing our team to assess support needs, assist with departmental requirements, and recommend relevant training or referrals.

Over the same period, we provided case management support to 155 carer households, participated in 140 care team meetings, and attended 183 case management meetings, demonstrating our strong commitment to walking alongside carers every step of the way.

As an organisation, FKCANT remains committed to enhancing and evolving our support services. Our ongoing goal is to strengthen carer retention and build a resilient, well-supported community of foster and kinship carers, ensuring the highest quality of care for the children and young people they nurture.



152

Face-to-face/
Home Visits

140

Care Team
Meeting

183

Case
Management
Meeting

ADVOCACY

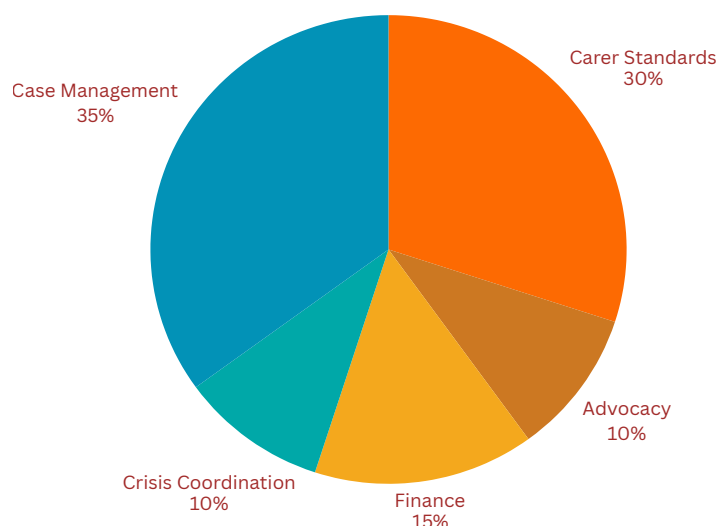
During the reporting period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, the Carer Advocacy and Support team managed **50 advocacy cases** and responded to **735 support matters**. This work addressed systemic challenges such as placement transitions, delays in travel approvals, access to carer reimbursements, and inconsistencies in care planning and policy application. By actively representing carers and escalating issues to decision-makers, the team contributed to greater accountability across the care system and supported carers to provide safe, stable, and nurturing homes for children and young people. This reflects a consistent demand for advocacy services and highlights the critical role of FKCANT in addressing systemic and operational barriers faced by carers.

Outcomes and Impact

The data confirms a sustained requirement for structured advocacy to ensure carers can provide stable placements and meet the needs of children in care. By escalating issues, the Advocacy and Support team continues to inform government stakeholders of operational inefficiencies and policy gaps.

- **50 advocacy cases** were formally undertaken, each requiring active representation with the Department.
- **735 support matters** were addressed, providing information, guidance, and case-specific assistance to carers.

This work ensures carers are supported to navigate administrative requirements and reinforces accountability within the care system, contributing to more stable and consistent care environments for children and young people.



735
Support
Matter Cases

50
Advocacy
Cases



SYSTEMATIC POLICY & ADVOCACY

As part of FKCANT's commitment to its Peak Body Advocacy remit, the CEO, together with foster, kinship and permanent carers, contributed to the national review of carer payments conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS). This involved preparing a comprehensive written submission and participating in online consultation sessions, ensuring that the voices and lived experiences of Northern Territory carers were represented. The review, commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Social Services under the Safe and Supported: First Action Plan 2023–2026, aims to inform recommendations to improve the adequacy, consistency and accessibility of payments for home-based carers across Australia. By engaging in this process, FKCANT reinforced its advocacy role, influencing national policy discussions to better support those providing care to children and young people in out-of-home care.

FKCANT partnered with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in the Foster and Kinship Carer Engagement Project to ensure carers' voices were central to shaping future support and service delivery. This collaborative initiative included an online survey and a series of regional workshops, providing current and former carers with safe and confidential opportunities to share their experiences, challenges, and ideas for improvement. FKCANT worked alongside DCF and Aboriginal Carer Services to encourage participation, promote open dialogue, and ensure the perspectives gathered reflected the diversity of the Northern Territory's carer community.

The engagement process confirmed what national research has long highlighted — that effective communication, practical support, and quality training are vital to attracting and retaining carers. By partnering with FKCANT, DCF gained direct insights from those with lived experience, recognising carers as valued partners in achieving stability and better outcomes for children in out-of-home care. The findings from this project will inform a jointly developed action plan, with a continued focus on collaboration, respect, and building stronger relationships between carers, FKCANT, and DCF.

Over the past year, FKCANT has continued to strengthen its role as a leading advocate for foster and kinship carers and the children in their care. Our work at both the Territory and federal levels has focused on identifying and addressing systemic challenges within the out-of-home care system. Through ongoing engagement with government agencies, policymakers, and key stakeholders, we seek to influence policies and decisions that have a direct and lasting impact on carer families and the out-of-home care sector. A summary of our advocacy activities is outlined below:

NT Homestretch Committee Reforms

In April 2025, the NT Homestretch Committee reconvened under the leadership of Sally Weir from Anglicare NT and Paul McDonald, Chair of the National Homestretch Committee. The committee brings together key stakeholders and sector representatives from across the Northern Territory to strengthen outcomes for young people transitioning from care. FKCANT is proud to have our CEO join this important committee, ensuring the voices of carers and the unique challenges of the NT are represented in discussions shaping policy and practice.

The focus of the NT Homestretch Committee is to drive meaningful change by addressing gaps in support services and advocating for better implementation of extended care initiatives. While legislative changes in some jurisdictions have extended financial and practical support for young people beyond 18, the NT faces critical work to ensure these changes are fully implemented and accessible.

With alarming statistics showing that 30% of young people leaving care enter homelessness and 50% enter the justice system within 12 months, the committee is prioritising strategies that include stable housing, education, and employment pathways. This collaboration signals a renewed commitment to improving outcomes for care leavers and ensuring every young person has the opportunity to thrive.



National Foster and Kinship Care Collective - National Advocacy and Reform

As part of FKCANT's strategic priority to influence policy and drive systemic reform, our CEO actively represents the Northern Territory as a member of the National Foster & Kinship Care Collective (the Collective). This voluntary alliance comprises CEOs from state and territory peak bodies, working collaboratively to strengthen recognition, support, and sustainability for foster and kinship carers across Australia.

During the 2024–2025 reporting period, on behalf of the Collective, CEO Adopt Change, Renee Leigh, submitted a Federal Pre-Budget Submission to the Australian Government, advocating for urgent national system reform in out-of-home care. The submission addressed four critical priorities:

- Elevating the status of foster and kinship carers
- Ensuring appropriate and consistent compensation
- Improving carer wellbeing through systemic supports
- Delivering consistent, high-quality, trauma-informed training for all child protection stakeholders

A key recommendation included a request for \$380,000 in federal funding to establish a national taskforce to progress reform priorities and provide a final report and recommendations to government. In addition, the Collective contributed a national summary to the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) research on carer payments and launched a dedicated website to enhance national communication and advocacy. Through active participation in the Collective, FKCANT ensures the perspectives and needs of Northern Territory carers are represented in national reform discussions and decision-making.



Advocating for Trauma-informed Practice in the NT Out of Home Care System

In 2024–25, FKCANT continued its strong advocacy for a care system grounded in trauma-informed principles. FKCANT CEO Amanda Thompson presented Minister Robyn Cahill OAM with a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at improving the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) approach to trauma-informed practice.

Key recommendations included:

- Specialised Training & Reflective Supervision for all staff to support trauma-responsive decision-making.
- Collaborative Use of Best Interest Mapping (BIMs) to ensure transparency and shared accountability.
- Recognition of Carers as Therapeutic Partners, with timely access to behavioural and therapeutic supports.
- Centering the Voice of the Child, challenging systemic practices that often dismiss children's wishes.
- Feedback Loops and Accountability Measures, including mandatory case reviews when departmental decisions lead to placement breakdowns or failed reunifications.

Further advocacy called for an Independent Case Review Panel for high-impact decisions and the implementation of capped caseloads to reduce worker overload and prevent avoidable harm.

These recommendations reflect FKCANT's commitment to building an out of home care sector that prioritises safety, healing, and transparency, while ensuring carers, children, and young people are respected as central voices in decision-making.



LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Supporting carers through education is a core part of FKCANT's work, ensuring they feel informed, capable, and confident in their caregiving journey. We recognise that foster and kinship carers face complex and evolving challenges, and our training program is designed to strengthen their capacity to support the young people in their care.

In 2024/2025, we delivered and promoted over 40 training sessions, both in-person and online, as part of a comprehensive calendar. This blended approach ensured accessibility for carers across both urban centres and remote regions of the Northern Territory. Training topics ranged from trauma-informed care and child development to cultural competency and cultural safety, empowering carers to build meaningful, respectful relationships with children from diverse backgrounds.

We also responded to specific needs as they arose, offering tailored training to support carers through complex circumstances and to help maintain placement stability. Our focus remains on providing relevant, responsive learning opportunities that support carers in fostering safe, secure, and nurturing environments where children and young people can reach their full potential.

Topics covered throughout the year included:

- First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
- Caring for Children and Young People with FASD
- Resilience and Self-Care Forum
- Phoenix Cups: You Can't Pour from an Empty Cup
- SafeTALK Suicide Awareness Workshop
- Grandparent, Foster and Kinship Carer Adviser Information Session
- Daniel Morcombe Foundation: Parent and Carer Workshops/Webinars
- Positive Partnerships: Parent and Carer Workshops
- Emerging Minds Workshops
- Responding to Harmful Behaviours – Australian Childhood Foundation
- IFCO (International Foster Care Organisation) Webinar Series

In addition to our structured calendar, we remained responsive to specific and emerging needs, delivering tailored training to support carers in real-time challenges and to help maintain placement stability. These opportunities continue to build capacity, foster cultural understanding, and promote safe, supportive environments for children and young people to thrive.

40

Training sessions

143

Total combined
registrants

FASD Workshop with Prue Walker

For FASD Awareness Month, we hosted an informative session titled "Caring for Children and Young People Living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder" with FASD consultant Prue Walker.

A key insight from Prue was understanding FASD behaviours as a skills deficit rather than willful actions. These behaviours stem from brain injury caused by prenatal alcohol exposure. We encourage anyone affected by FASD to reach out to us for support.



Phoenix Cups Workshops

In 2024, carers attended a powerful workshop led by Sandi Phoenix, creator of the Phoenix Cups framework, a unique approach that uses the metaphor of "cups" to represent core human needs and how they influence behaviour, motivation, and wellbeing.

Throughout the session, carers explored practical strategies to support themselves and the children

in their care by learning how to identify when a "cup" is empty, the importance of self-refilling, and ways to support others in doing the same. The training offered an insightful toolkit for translating challenging behaviours into meaningful, needs-based actions, emphasising that you can't pour from an empty cup. Carers walked away with new perspectives and practical steps to strengthen relationships and build emotionally responsive care environments.

Cross Cultural Competency

In late 2024, carers and FKCANT staff took part in a half-day workshop titled 'Working with Cultural Differences', delivered by Jason Elsegood, Owner and Director of Cross Cultural Consultants. Hosted at our Winnellie office, the session offered valuable insights into building culturally responsive relationships within the foster and kinship care context. Participants explored key concepts such as the iceberg model of culture, communication styles, invisible cultural rules, and the role of individualist and collectivist values in shaping care dynamics. Jason's deep community knowledge and practical approach provided strategies that could be directly applied to everyday interactions.

One example of this was seen when CASO Johnnie drew on the training during a community visit. With the support of a liaison officer and DCF staff, Johnnie was able to engage respectfully with local cultural protocols, strengthening connections and reinforcing the value of culturally informed practice. FKCANT extends our thanks to Jason for sharing his expertise and enhancing our collective understanding.

Welcoming Parentline to the FKCANT Community

FKCANT was delighted to welcome Zoe and Kim from Parentline to deliver an information session for staff and carers. This collaborative session provided an important opportunity to learn more about the vital support services Parentline offers to foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory. Attendees gained valuable insights into the counselling, education, and guidance available to them, as well as practical strategies for supporting children and families through



the challenges of caregiving. Through this partnership, carers were able to deepen their understanding of how Parentline can assist them in navigating complex family dynamics and strengthening their capacity to provide safe and nurturing environments for children in care. The session concluded with a light morning tea, which gave carers and staff the chance to connect personally with Zoe and Kim and discuss how Parentline can continue to support their caregiving journeys.

Morning Tea with Early Childhood Australia

Early Childhood Australia NT delivered a valuable session focused on supporting children's access to the NDIS. They outlined clear referral pathways for carers to initiate support, emphasising the importance of early identification and collaborative planning. The discussion highlighted carers' responsibilities in facilitating access, including maintaining open communication with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and ensuring DCF is included in all NDIS-related discussions and decisions. The session reinforced the importance of a team approach to achieving the best outcomes for children with developmental concerns or disability.

Block Training with Child Australia

Child Australia Professional Development Program

In 2024–25, FKCANT partnered with Child Australia, a nationally recognised not-for-profit with more than 30 years' experience in early and middle childhood development, advocacy, and sector leadership. Together we delivered two intensive training blocks for carers across the NT, equipping them with evidence-based strategies in trauma and brain development, self-regulation, social and emotional development, and child development. These sessions provided practical tools to strengthen carers' confidence and their ability to nurture safe, supportive environments for children and young people. The program has been designed in staged blocks to maximise learning and sustainability. Blocks 3 and 4, scheduled for 2025–26, will extend this foundation through training on guiding children's behaviour, positive interactions, rituals and rhythms, and child protection. By partnering with Child Australia, FKCANT ensures carers have access to high-quality, research-driven training that aligns with the National Quality Standard, builds collaboration and teamwork, and contributes to long-term improvements in outcomes for children in care.

FKCANT EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

In fostering a stronger sense of community, FKCANT hosted and participated in several key events. These events were opportunities to acknowledge our incredibly dedicated carers and for carers to connect, share experiences, and find support in their peers. View the albums below.

For the latest training calendar of carer connection events, please visit our website at www.fkca.org.au.

413
Total
Registrants

Carer Connections



Our Carer Connections are well attended and continue to be our most popular activity, providing our carers an opportunity to connect, build support networks and friendships. These informal events provide a valuable opportunity for carers to step out of their everyday routines, connect with fellow carers, and share their experiences in a relaxed environment. Between 2024-2025, we hosted 40 carer connection events featuring morning teas and dinners in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs, ensuring that there's something for everyone.



We wrapped up 2024 on a high note with our final Carer Connection Dinners held across our vibrant regions of Darwin, Katherine, and Alice Springs! It was a wonderful occasion that brought together carers and the FKCANT team, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere where stories were shared and connections deepened.

413

Total
Registrants

24.3

Average no.
registrants per CC

57

Maximum
registrants

Pyjama Day Fundraiser - July '24

On National Pyjama Day 2024, our team didn't just roll out of bed, we proudly showed up to work in our comfiest PJs to raise vital funds for children in foster care. With a lucky raffle draw adding extra buzz (and a few friendly competitions!), donations rolled in from our generous supporters. A special shout-out to Area9 for their wonderful contribution, helping us smash our \$500 goal and reach an incredible \$956.80. A fantastic reminder of what we can achieve together, all in the spirit of a good cause and a great pair of pyjamas!



National Kinship, Permanent and Foster Care Conference - August '24

In August 2024, Jarrad represented FKCANT at the National Kinship, Permanent and Foster Care Conference in Melbourne, one of the sector's leading national events. The conference provided valuable insights into emerging trends, research, and policy developments in out-of-home care. Jarrad also sourced a range of practical resources designed to support both carers and staff, strengthening our ongoing commitment to informed, responsive care.

Father's Day Golf - August '24

We celebrated Father's Day with a swing (literally!) at X-Golf Palmerston Gateway, where carer dads and the kids in their care took to the simulators for an afternoon of fun, laughter, and light competition. There were cheers, a few "dad jokes," and even prizes, two lucky carers walked away with a Bunnings voucher and a family pass to the speedway. With food, drinks, and good vibes provided by the generous team at X-Golf and our wider supporter network, it was a fantastic way to say thank you to the father figures who show up every day with patience, strength, and heart.



Children and Carers Recognition Event - September '24

The Children and Carers Celebration brought together carers, children, families, and sector partners for a day of recognition and appreciation at the George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens. Hosted by the DCF Greater Darwin Region team in collaboration with the Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT and CREATE Foundation, the event was a vibrant tribute to the dedication of our foster and kinship carers and the achievements of the children in their care. With entertainment from Fairy Jill's Enchanted Entertainment, cultural activities by Dingo Cockatoo Aboriginal Culture, sports fun with Hoops 4 Health, and games from the Darwin Toy Library, the day offered something for everyone and reflected the strong spirit of care and celebration that defines our community.



Annual General Meeting - November '24

In November 2024, FKCANT held its Annual General Meeting, bringing together members of the care community, stakeholders, and supporters to reflect on the year's progress and future priorities. A key moment of the evening was the attendance of the Hon. Robyn Cahill OAM, CLP Member for Port Darwin and Minister for Children and Families, Child Protection, and the Prevention of Domestic Violence. The Minister addressed attendees and shared her commitment to supporting foster and kinship carers, outlining a number of planned initiatives for 2025.

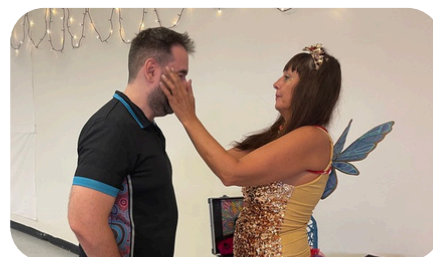
The AGM also saw changes to the Executive Leadership Board. Jackie Williams was re-elected for another two-year term, continuing her valued contribution to the organisation. We also welcomed Anne-Louise Cooper to the Board, bringing with her more than 37 years of experience across health, education, and community sectors in both the NT and the UK. Anne-Louise brings a deep passion for carer and child wellbeing. The evening offered a meaningful opportunity for connection and reflection, reinforcing our shared commitment to strengthening the foster and kinship care community across the Territory.



CREATE Christmas Party - December '24

The 2024 CREATE Foundation Christmas Party was a vibrant celebration to close out the year, bringing together carers, children, and sector supporters for an afternoon of festive fun. Held in Darwin, the event featured music, laughter, and meaningful connection. FKCANT team members Jarrad, Meg, Jayne, and Rachita generously volunteered their time to greet carers at the door and join in the holiday cheer.

Kids hit the dance floor with DJ Charly spinning tunes, while the photo booth was a favourite for capturing silly, spirited moments. FKCANT proudly donated a Christmas hamper for the lucky door prize, which was won by one of our wonderful, dedicated carers, Jackie Williams. With music, movement, and plenty of smiles, the event was a terrific reminder of the power of community and celebration.



CREATE Barramundi Fishing Trip - April '25

In April, FKCANT joined the CREATE Foundation for a day of fishing and fun at Barramundi Adventures Darwin and what a day it was! Kids in care were all smiles as they cast their lines, many trying fishing for the very first time. With rods in hand and plenty of sunshine, the excitement was contagious. Some impressive catches were made, with fish measuring between 40 cm and 80 cm, all proudly recorded using our FKCANT measuring tapes.

Johnnie and Pravash from the FKCANT team were on hand to cheer the kids on, help reel in the big ones, and snap some great photos along the way. CREATE's Tenniel brought fantastic energy, supporting the girls with baiting hooks and celebrating every catch. The day wrapped up with a relaxed lunch at Palmerston Golf & Country Club plenty of food, laughter, and full hearts all around. It was a wonderful reminder of the simple power of showing up, getting involved, and creating memories that matter.



Coach Surfing - April '25

Foster & Kinship Carers Association NT (FKCANT) was delighted to be part of Anglicare's Couch Surfing event on Youth Homelessness Matters Day. It was a fantastic day filled with energy, creativity, and community spirit, and our team thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many people throughout the event. From our booth, we had the opportunity to connect with young people, families, and service providers, while also promoting the important work FKCANT does to support foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory. It was inspiring to stand alongside other organisations sharing the same message, that every young person deserves a safe place to call home and we are grateful to have been part of such a meaningful and vibrant day.



Mother's Day Luncheon at The Midway Berrimah - May '25

On Mother's Day, we brought the celebration to The Midway in Berrimah, filling the room with carer mums, their families, and plenty of heartfelt moments. There were laughs, shared stories, and a delicious three-course meal, all served with a side of appreciation for the incredible role our carer mums play every day. Thanks to the beautiful hospitality of The Midway team and the generous support of Madz Flower House and HPA Australia, every guest was treated to a rose, chocolates, and a chance to win a lucky door prize. A lovely afternoon that reminded us just how much care goes into caring and how important it is to give some of that care back.



2025 Queensland Foster and Kinship Care Conference - May '25

FKCANT CEO Amanda, CASO/CA Johnnie, and two Northern Territory carers attended the Queensland Foster and Kinship Carers Conference, an event that brought together carers, advocates, and sector professionals from across Australia. The conference provided a valuable opportunity to engage with current issues in out-of-home care, strengthen peer networks, and explore innovative approaches to supporting foster and kinship families.

Keynote presentations from Dr Justin Coulson (Happy Families) and Scott Dutton (Fighting Fair) offered powerful insights into parenting, conflict resolution, and relationship building within care environments. The event left attendees feeling inspired and equipped with practical ideas to bring back to the Territory.





ANNUAL REPORT CARER RECRUITMENT & ASSESSMENT JULY 2024– 2025

Chief Executive Officer's Introduction

This year has been transformative for the Foster & Kinship Carers Association NT (FKCANT). We strengthened and embedded the carer assessment program, overcame early implementation challenges, and expanded our capacity to better support carers and children across the Northern Territory. Our strong collaboration with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and our commitment to innovation and continuous improvement have resulted in a more reliable, timely, and responsive assessment service. The following report presents the journey of July 2024 to June 2025 achievements, challenges, and the strategies we put in place to improve the carer assessment pathway and outcomes for children and young people.

Program Implementation

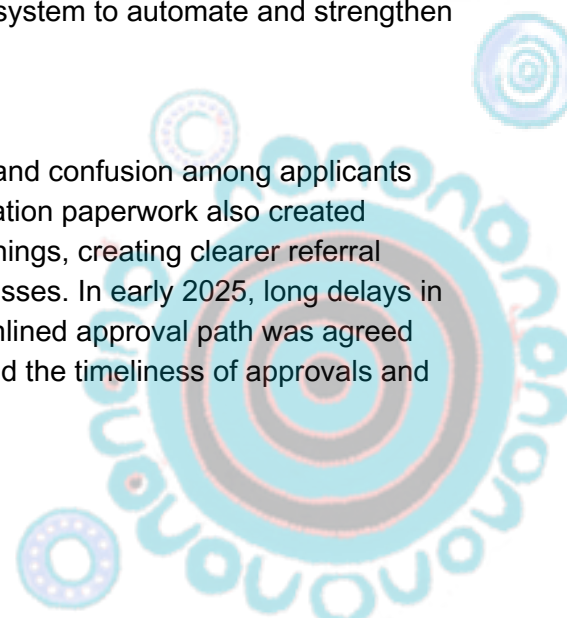
The Foster and Kinship Carer Assessment Program commenced under FKCANT in July 2024. Despite initial staffing and system delays, the team quickly adapted. Recruitment of carer assessors occurred through August and September. Two existing FKCANT staff stepped into assessment roles to keep momentum while longer-term recruitment was finalised. By December, a full team was in place, supported by practical training from the CEO and strengthened internal procedures for referral acceptance, probity checks, data management, and reporting. A dedicated program email and regular structured meetings with DCF Greater Darwin Region Carer Services created efficient channels of communication and program refinement.

Service Journey and Achievements

By the start of 2025, the program had stabilised and matured. Communication with DCF was constructive and solutions-focused, with fortnightly meetings ensuring obstacles were addressed promptly. The program consistently delivered timely carer reauthorisation and new applicant assessments. This responsiveness reduced the number of unauthorised carers and increased the pool of new carers available for placement, key improvements for children needing safe homes. We also introduced a standardised referral form and checklist to reduce delays caused by incomplete documentation, and we began transitioning from the outdated Nemos platform to a new CRM system to automate and strengthen reporting.

Challenges and Solutions

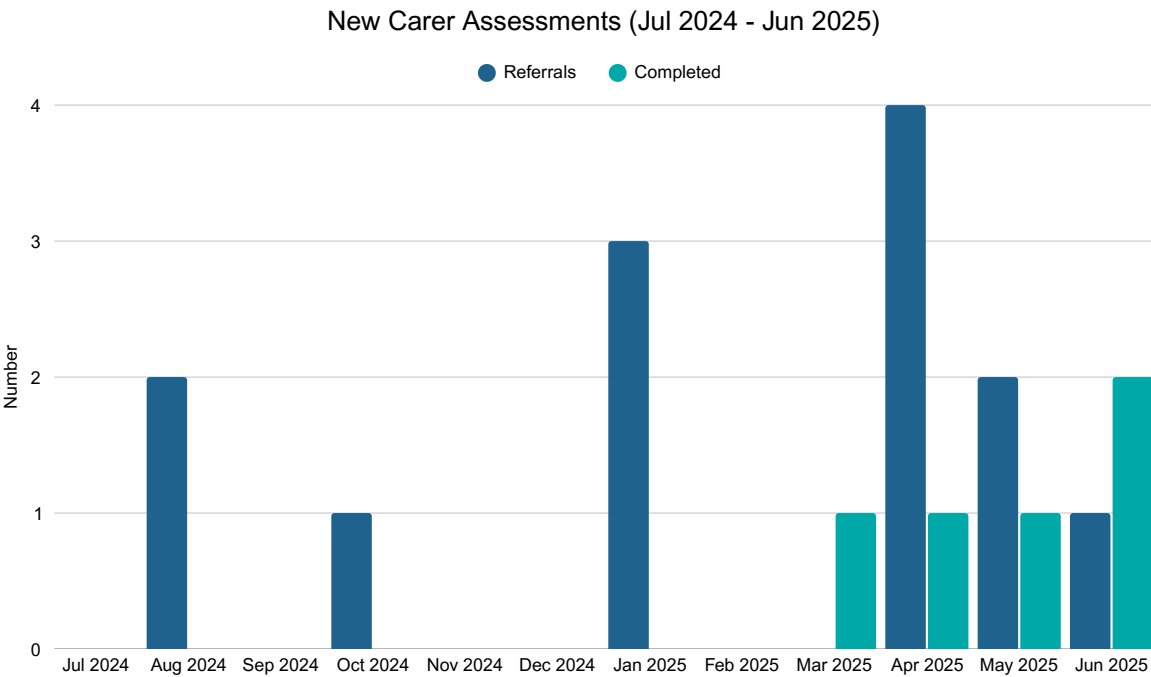
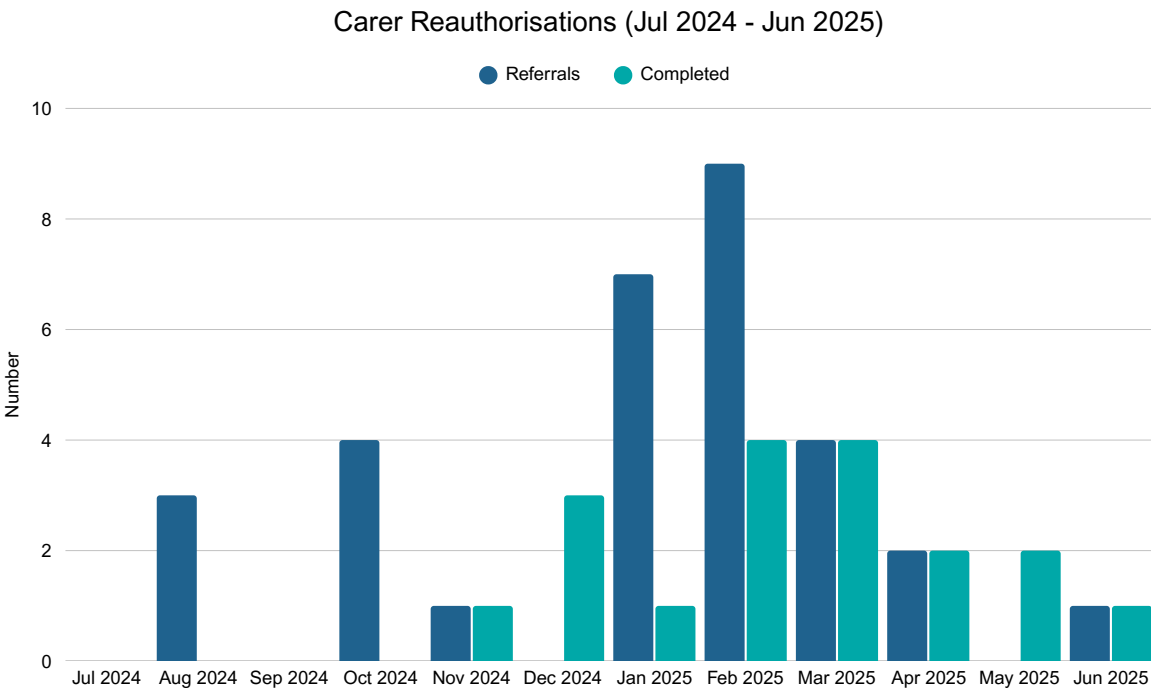
We experienced persistent delays in receiving probity documentation and confusion among applicants asked to resubmit information. Ambiguity about who finalises authorisation paperwork also created inefficiencies. FKCANT responded by extending meeting times to evenings, creating clearer referral templates for DCF, and advocating strongly for quicker approval processes. In early 2025, long delays in sign-off were escalated to DCF Executives; as a result, a faster streamlined approval path was agreed with clear turnaround expectations. These steps have already improved the timeliness of approvals and carer confidence.



Staffing and Capacity Building

Our carer assessment team evolved over the year. We started with two assessors and one administrative support role. By June 2025, the team grew to three qualified assessors supported by business administration staff while we recruit a dedicated assessment and recruitment officer. This growth reflects our expanding remit, including taking on the Territory-wide ‘Become A Carer’ service and responsibility for Expressions of Interest across the NT.

Program Data Visualisation



These charts illustrate referral and completion trends. By early 2025, process improvements and stronger collaboration with DCF contributed to an uplift in completed reauthorisations and new assessments, demonstrating program momentum and efficiency gains.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The 2024–25 year marked the transition from establishment to consolidation for the carer assessment program. We overcame early operational challenges, built strong working relationships with DCF, and invested in tools and processes to improve speed and quality. The expansion of our role to manage all Expressions of Interest across the Territory positions us to deliver a fully integrated recruitment and assessment service.

Looking ahead to 2025–26, we will not only fully embed our new client record management (CRM) system and strengthen regional workforce capacity but also intensify our efforts to recruit and retain more foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory. This will include expanding our community engagement strategies, increasing outreach events in urban, regional, and remote areas, and using targeted advertising and partnerships with local organisations to raise awareness about the need for carers. By strengthening early support for prospective applicants and streamlining the pathway from enquiry to assessment, we aim to grow and sustain the pool of safe, stable, and nurturing homes for children and young people. We will continue to advocate for system improvements that better support carers and children, while leading a coordinated, Territory-wide approach to carer recruitment and assessment.

**EOI Booth at ADF
Members & Families
event:
DMFS Darwin's
Welcome to the Top
End 2025**





LOOKING AHEAD: PRIORITIES FOR 25'–26'

The year ahead represents an exciting period of growth and transformation for FKCANT, as we strengthen our position as the peak body for foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory.

In June 2025, FKCANT signed a new funding agreement with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), enabling a significant expansion of our Carer Assessment Service Program. Previously delivered primarily in Darwin, this service will now extend to Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, and Katherine, ensuring that prospective carers across the Territory have access to timely, high-quality assessment and support regardless of their location.

This expansion is more than a logistical change, it represents a strategic shift towards greater territory-wide equity of access, recognising the unique needs of both urban and remote communities. By bringing assessment services closer to where carers live, we aim to reduce barriers, shorten approval timeframes, and enhance carer confidence in the system.

A further milestone achieved through this agreement is the transfer of the “Become a Carer” recruitment service from DCF to FKCANT. This transition reflects a significant development in our role, positioning FKCANT to deliver a more integrated, community-focused model of carer recruitment, assessment, and ongoing support. Importantly, it also aligns with our strategic objective of growing a strong, diverse, and sustainable carer community across the Northern Territory.

The new arrangement will operate as a trial period through to 31 October 2026, during which FKCANT will work collaboratively with DCF to:

- Monitor and evaluate recruitment and assessment outcomes.
- Gather and respond to feedback from prospective and current carers.
- Refine processes to ensure efficiency, transparency, and cultural safety.
- Measure the impact of this integrated model on both carer retention and placement stability for children.

By embedding these services within FKCANT, carers will experience a single, consistent point of contact for their recruitment, assessment, and support needs. This unified approach will not only reduce duplication but also strengthen relationships, build trust, and foster a stronger sense of community among carers.

Looking to 2025–2026, FKCANT will prioritise:

- Delivering the expanded assessment service across the NT.
- Driving targeted recruitment campaigns with an emphasis on Indigenous and remote community engagement.
- Advocating for policy and system changes that streamline carer approvals.
- Enhancing training and peer support opportunities for both new and experienced carers.
- Evaluating the outcomes of the integrated service model to inform long-term planning.

This new chapter marks a defining opportunity for FKCANT. By combining recruitment, assessment, and support under one roof, we are well-placed to not only grow the carer community but to strengthen its resilience and sustainability for the years ahead.



HELPLINE & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Emergency Services: Police, Fire and Ambulance

For emergencies please call 000

For non-emergencies please call 131 444

Child Protection Hotline

You can report suspected child abuse to the Child

Protection Hotline on 1800 700 250

Office of the Children's Commissioner - 1800 259 256

An independent office that is responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable children
1800 259 256

Grandparent, Foster and Kinship Carer Adviser Line - 1800 245 965

Advisers who help grandparents and non-parent carers providing ongoing care for children

Territory FACES - 1800 999 900

Territory FACES connect Territorians with services or resources that support parents and families in your area

NTCOSS service directory

A directory to access up to date listing of community sector social services available in the Northern Territory

CREATE Foundation - (08) 8945 9993

The peak body for young people in care

Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800

Australia's only free (even from a mobile), confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25

Beyond Blue - 1300 224 636

provides a free online and telephone helpline for people with depression, anxiety or other mental health issues

Darwin Head to Health

Mental health and wellbeing support
08 8914 6600

Headspace - 1800 650 890

Supports mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 12 – 25 providing evidence-based mental health treatments via our online and telephone services

Parent Line - 1300 301 300

Free counselling and support for parents and carers in Queensland and in Northern Territory

MensLine Australia - 1300 78 99 78

Offers free professional 24/7 telephone counselling support for men with concerns about mental health, anger management, family violence (using and experiencing), addiction, relationship, stress and wellbeing.

Lifeline - 13 11 14

Provides all Australians experiencing emotional distress with access to 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services

Suicide Call Back Service - 1300 659 467

Free nationwide service providing 24/7 phone and online counselling to people affected by suicide.

ReachOut

Confidential online peer support for young people and online resources for wellbeing
au.reachout.com

13YARN Crisis Support - 13 92 76

13Yarn provide crisis support 24/7 without judgement and they provide a confidential, culturally safe space to yarn about needs, worries or concerns.

The Butterfly Foundation

National helpline for eating disorders and body image issues. 8am – midnight (AEST/AEDT), 7 days a week.
1800 ED HOPE (1800 33 4673)



STAY CONNECTED

Here at the Foster and Kinship Carers Association, we recognise the vital importance of staying connected with our carers. By providing the latest updates and information, we ensure carers are well-informed and supported in their crucial role. Moreover, our online platforms allows us to foster a sense of community and solidarity among our carers, providing them with a space to share experiences, seek advice, and offer mutual support.

Visit our website fkca.org.au and our social media pages below.



[@FosterandKinshipCarersNT](https://www.facebook.com/FosterandKinshipCarersNT)



[Foster and kinship Carers Association NT Inc.](https://www.linkedin.com/company/foster-and-kinship-carers-association-nt-inc/)



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Foster & Kinship Carers
ASSOCIATION NT Incorporated
Supporting carers for over 10 years

