Foster & Kinship Carers
ASSOCIATION NT Incorporated

Supporting carers for over 10 years







ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

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.



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We're committed to reducing our impact on the environment so we're not printing this report.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

On behalf of Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT (FKCANT) and our board, we present the 2021-22 FKCANT Annual Report.

Our organisation has gone through a period of strong growth over the last 12 months. We moved our team from our very cramped premises at Lyons to a more suitable commercial lease in Winnellie. This move has allowed us to grow our team to meet the needs of our carers including offering a dedicated training space in a more central location. We also have more space for our team to meet with our carers and discuss confidential matters in private.

This has been an important step for us to professionalise and expand our service footprint.

We've also taken on the role of carer services for the Greater Darwin region from Territory Families, Housing and Communities. This expansion means that FKCANT can now support foster and kinship carers throughout their care journey from recruitment through to placement and beyond. This gives us a unique perspective of the challenges our carers face and helps us to support and advocate for them faster and more effectively.

We have continued to advocate for the best interests of carers and the children placed with them through our work on Territory and national bodies including NTCOSS, CAFWAA and the National Foster Care Collective. We continue to put pressure on government to reform the out-of-home-care system and recognise the vital contribution carers make.

Our board, staff and key stakeholders have invested significant time and energy in putting together our strategic plan for 2022-2025. This planning process has cemented our goals for the next 3 years and reminded us all of our main purpose: to care for carers. As we grow, we renew our commitment to the grassroots members of our organisation.

With our 10-year anniversary being celebrated this year, we have had the chance to reflect on the incredible achievements of our humble little association. We celebrate everything we have achieved as a team and thank all our current and past staff and board members for their dedication and commitment to making things better for our members.

We thank you all for your support and look forward to serving you into the future.

Steve Downie

Steve Downie
Chair

C. Schmidt

Cheryl Schmidt
CEO





WHO WE ARE

Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT (FKCANT) is the peak body for foster and kinship carers in the Northern Territory, providing support, training and advocacy services.

As the peak body for more than 10 years, we represent the voices of foster and kinship carers. We ensure those voices are heard by government and other decision-makers so that carers are supported as they take on one of the most challenging and rewarding roles in our community. Our carers have a range of experiences and it is our role to make sure the out-of-home care sector supports carers and children through their journey together.

We assist foster and kinship carers to transform children's lives, and we work with the wider sector

to develop and share best practice. We advocate on behalf of carers, provide information on carers' rights and services, offer training and education on key issues affecting caring families, and advise and support our carers during their care experience.

Recently, we have expanded our footprint into service delivery, taking on the role of carer services – formerly sitting with Territory Families, Housing and Communities. This service means we don't just solve problems, we can identify potential issues early and help to address issues before they arise.

To support our incredible team and our expanded service footprint, we moved to our new commercial premises in Winnellie in 2021. This new home for FKCANT gives us space to step up and step down our staffing numbers as needed and provide confidential meeting space for our staff and carers.

We have turned the conference room into a training centre which allows us to host bigger and better meetings, provide training to our carers on-site and rent out the space to other organisations as an income stream. The technology in the training centre was purchased with the help of a Community Benefit Fund grant from the Northern Territory Government.

Supported by our highly experienced and skilled board, we want to keep delivering great services, reach more carers and make a bigger impact.



WHAT WE DO

FKCANT provides services to more than 950 members covering every corner of the Territory as well as carers located interstate.

Our services include:

- Being a voice for foster and kinship carers through positive advocacy and lobbying
- Raising issues on behalf of individual or all carers to improve policy, standards of care and the needs of carers
- Empowering carers to raise concerns and be a proactive as a vital care team member
- Providing carer-specific advice to Territory Families, Housing and Communities and other agencies making policy and guidelines that directly impact and affect carers and their families
- Providing confidential advice and support
- Contributing to national and international policy and research to improve the sector
- Providing information on carers' rights
- Sharing tips and knowledge to help carers throughout their care experience
- Facilitating networking and peer support groups
- Offering training and professional development on key issues affecting carers and the children and young people they care for
- Mentoring and carer support
- Providing essential information to people thinking about becoming a foster or kinship carer
- Recognising and celebrating volunteer carers
- Conflict resolution

As we continue to expand our operational footprint, we will endeavour to be taking a more active role in carer support services in our ever-changing sector.

950
members


Events


Support


Training


Mentoring


Celebrating


Advocacy

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

The board, staff, carer representatives and stakeholders has recently been through a planning phase, looking to consolidate our recent gains and establish new goals for the future.

As part of this process, the Strategic Plan for 2022-25 has been created.

As an organisation, we have focused our goals on three key areas: our carer community, our sector and our association (organisation).

Key areas of focus	Strategic Goals	Objectives
Our Carer Community	To continue to strengthen and grow a carer-centred organisation focused on resilience and diversity.	+ Champion advocacy and be recognised as a persuasive, credible and collaborative voice as the peak body representing foster and kinship carers. + Assist and support carers to build their capacity so they can provide a high level of support to children and young people in the care sector. + Actively promote our range of support services to our members and the community. + Maintain and support existing members while maintaining a commitment to the recruitment of new carers. + Identify issues impacting carers to develop training, support services, advocacy and systemic lobbying strategies. + Empower carers through advocacy, training, skill development and case management. + Develop new, innovative, and responsive training, support networks and events to fill gaps in skill and/or knowledge.
Our Sector	To influence and maintain collaborative partnerships throughout the Northern Territory.	+ Influence policy and the legislative frameworks that impact foster and kinship carers to improve their role and care experience. + Engage with government, the sector, the community and the media to encourage policy change and generate greater awareness of the importance and value of volunteer carers. + Forge strategic partnerships and networks to increase the impact of our work as a united sector for change. + Partner with local organisations, with a focus on Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. + Identify issues affecting carers to champion and lead our sector through collective and systemic lobbying. + Advance our work as the peak body to connect new and emerging organisations within our sector and build capability in evidence-based programs, practice and decisions.
Our Association (Organisation)	To continually improve our organisation through adaptability and innovation.	+ Strengthen sector relevance, enhancing our reputation and position within the out-of-home care sector. + Focus on growth, ensuring the organisation is structurally supported to capitalise on new opportunities to grow and expand. + Ensure effective governance with training and mentoring of board members. + Maintain and improve best-practice governance processes that are understood, implemented and effective across the organisation. + Deliver on effective and strategic risk management and identification. + Foster a culture of continuous improvement. + Develop innovation solutions and opportunities to expand service delivery and operational capacity.

CARER SUPPORT SERVICES

In 2021, FKCANT and Territory Families, Housing and Communities, Housing and Communities (TFHC) worked together to transition the support of carers over to our organisation. We now provide vital case management to more than 200 carers in the Greater Darwin Region with regular contact with one of our dedicated Carer Support Practitioners.

We are very proud of our new service and support model. Our Carer Support Practitioners connect with our carers every 6 – 8 weeks with a home visit once a quarter, giving carers the opportunity to talk frankly with an independent practitioner about their care experience. While our new support service for the Greater Darwin Region has only been operating for several months our data shows our dedication with more than 640 contacts with our carers. We have also achieved over 300 home visits during this time.

At these visits our team check how carers are going and make sure they have all the essential departmental documents needed to support the children in their care, and identify any training or supports to assist carers in their caring experience.

Offering more flexible visit times, our team are able to fit in around carer's work or after school activities. This new support service is already showing a reduction in advocacy cases for this region, and with a greater connection with carers, we are able to identify and raise issues with TFHC faster and get issues resolved quicker.

Our organisation continues to look for opportunities to develop, and deliver more effective support services for our carers, improving carer retention numbers and building an even more resilient carer community.

200
carers supported through case management





640
contacts made

300
quarterly home visits





SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

One of our key roles is supporting and advocating for our carers. This can be as simple as being a shoulder to lean on for a carer going through challenging times right through to taking a carers case in meetings with Territory Families, Housing and Communities management.

With our new carer service model, we have changed our data reporting to reflect this evolution of our practice. The data reflects a significant reduction in advocacy cases for the Greater Darwin Region and an increase in other regions. This is the shift of our team's resources.

Key trends for both individual carer and systemic advocacy issues identified during this period included:

- Transitioning children from placements
- Concerns about care plans and essential documentation
- Communication with Territory Families, Housing and Communities
- Permanent Care Orders.
- Breach of Signs of Safety Practice Framework

Our team of Carer Support Practitioners have worked hard to make sure our carers have a voice and feel empowered to advocate for themselves. We regularly contact carers to check in and see if there's anything we can do to support them.

Our CSPs also make regular contact with all new Territory Families, Housing and Communities foster and kinship carers to ensure they are fully aware of the range of services and supports available to them. In

2021-22, we connected with over 126 new carers throughout the NT. We believe that investing in establishing and continuing a connection with new carers is critical in the satisfaction and retention of these vital volunteers.





OUR EVENTS










of caring for Carers

CARER CONNECTION & TRAINING

One of the most important aspects of what we do is upskilling and connecting our carers. Being a carer can be challenging so we want our carers to have the skills and information they need, as well as support from other carers, during more challenging times.

We do this from the moment a potential carer first registers their interest. We also assist carers to gain confidence in their new roles through mentoring and training.

This year, more than 18 in-person and online training sessions were held with a focus on key issues affecting carers including parenting skills, mental health, behaviour management, child development, and First Aid.

Carer Advisory Group & CAG Connect Group

Our Carer Advisory Group (CAG) meets regularly and provides carers the opportunity to influence policy and inform our approach to lobbying for systemic and policy change. They also give carers the chance to comment on Territory Families, Housing and Communities and NT Government programs and initiatives in a safe and confidential environment.

The groups have been well attended by carers of all experience levels and have provided us with invaluable information about the issues affecting everyday carers.

Carer Parent Groups

Our most popular events are our regular Carer Parent Groups. These events are informal and a great way for carers to get out of the house and connect with other carers. In 2021-2022, we hosted 35 carer connection group sessions. Our groups meet in family-friendly spaces in Darwin, the Northern Suburbs and Palmerston so the kids have somewhere to play while the adults enjoy a cup of coffee and a chat. Our Facebook page has all the details of upcoming events.

18
training sessions





10
Carer Advisory Group meetings

35
Carer Parent Groups held





SYSTEMIC POLICY & ADVOCACY

Home Stretch campaign

We are pleased to report that after last year's Home Stretch campaign – to provide support for young people 18 – 21 who are transitioning out of care – we received agreement from the Northern Territory Government that this will become law with amendments to the current *Care and Protection of Children Act*.

Territory Families, Housing and Communities have also committed to have departmental policy drafted to ensure this highly vulnerable group of people exiting the care system have continued support thereby reducing homelessness, engagement with the judicial system or increased poor mental health outcomes.

With our CEO being the co-chair of this group, FKCANT has ensured the voice of carers is well placed in these important changes.

Data shows that 50% of young people are unemployed, homeless, in jail or a new parent – or a combination of those – within one year of leaving care. With this additional support in place, transitioning out of care for these young people can be better for them now and in the future.

National Foster and Kinship Care Collective

We've continued our participation in the National Foster and Kinship Care Collective with other foster and kinship care peak bodies from across Australia.

Using the strength of its member organisations, the collective lobbies for change in the out-of-home-care sector on a national level, including pursuing better support for foster and kinship carers physically, emotionally and financially.

This year, the collective has worked with Senator Penny Wong to raise the issue of volunteer foster and kin carers being financially disadvantaged by not accruing superannuation. The collective also collaborated on submissions to the federal government to review the *Dental Benefits Act 2008* to request all children in care be automatically eligible for the Child Dental Benefits Schedule—and that their volunteer carer's income and assets should be irrelevant when determining eligibility.

Child and Family Wellbeing Association of Australia (CAFWAA)

The national peak body for child, youth and family wellbeing in Australia with the aim to promote the wellbeing of children and young people in out-of-home care and those at risk of placement, together with their families. Our CEO, Cheryl Schmidt, along with other representatives of child and family peak bodies, continues to shine a light on issues affecting Northern Territory carers.

NTCOSS Board

At a local level, Foster and Kinship Carers NT hold a position on the Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS) board through CEO Cheryl Schmidt.

This means that foster and kinship carers are part of the conversation when NTCOSS lobbies all levels of government in key issues affecting the Northern Territory including law reform, justice, housing and homelessness, employment and health.



LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR CONFERENCE

In September 2022, Darwin will host the International Foster Care Conference for the first time and the National Foster Care Conference for only the second time. Already we have more than 600 delegates registered with an exciting adult, youth and children's program planned along with a gala dinner to celebrate carers across the world. We look forward to reporting on this incredible event next year.

As an organisation we have set bold goals as part of our Strategic Plan 2022-25 (outlined on page 7.)

Artwork meaning: This painting is about foster carers supporting children and young people and their families, and people coming together to support one and another through adversity and change. Foster and Kinship Carers play a pivotal role in working with families, government and organisations in keeping children safe, happy and healthy.





About the Artist

Bianka Carson

My Aboriginal ancestral roots originated from Ceduna and North, and I was born in Boandik country. Ceduna tribes include Wirangu, Mirning, Kokatha and Pitjantjatjara tribes. My language group is Wirangu. I am very passionate about my cultural heritage. I grew up with many stories around using natural resources and remedies where possible. Some stories were around plants such as Calendula, Wattle, Old Man's Weed, Kangaroo Apple, Tea Tree, Kurrajong Tree's, Acacia Tree's, Eucalyptus Tree's using roots, leaves, blossoms, bark and sap and other stories were around animals like emu's for emu oil and even different kinds of berries in the bush amongst other stories relating to the land, animals and spirits. When I paint medicine and bush leaves, it is encompassing all the plants that have been used by my ancestors for centuries for medicinal purposes and benefits and honouring this knowledge and power. I love painting medicine leaves the most because of the almost abstract type of wavy and circular designs and the fond memories of collecting different kinds of plants as a child. I love painting with bright colours and blending colours together to create different kinds of shades, gradients and patterns within a painting, but it depends on what I feel like painting at the time.

The 2022 international conference logo was inspired by a young Aboriginal boy named Lethan and stories, colours and symbols from other young children who are currently in the Child Protection, Out of Home Care system. Lethan's art was made from stones gathered with his Foster Mum and painted words that represented all that is important in his life. Other children and young who participated and shared their stories also felt the tree was a symbol which showed their growth and strength.

The tree represented (me) and who I am. I grow tall and strong because I am supported by all the people around me and who are important to me – my foster mum and dad, aunties, grandmothers, friends, family, culture, community.

Other children also spoke of a strong connection to the earth where the tree comes from and how it is connected to country. Many children ended their stories saying, "Sometimes trees aren't always ok and start off really small or broken but they grow up big and strong when they get lots of love".

Many also drew paintings with lots of bright colours and the sun representing a bright future they all believed they had when supported with love.





The International and National Foster Care Conference 2022 is a particularly special one as our co-host the International Foster Care Organisation (IFCO) celebrate the 40th Anniversary and the 10th Anniversary for FKCANT. IFCO is an international organisation with a sole aim to support family-based foster and kinship care for out-of-home children and young people. IFCO is committed to improving the lives of children in foster and kinship care by supporting the children, their carers, the professionals who work with them and the policymakers.

The aim of the conference is, therefore, to create a platform for all stakeholders to share and understand their role and responsibilities in supporting children in care and care leavers.



INTERNATIONAL & NATIONAL FOSTER CARE CONFERENCE 2022

IFCO International Foster Care Organisation

Foster & Kinship Carers ASSOCIATION NT Incorporated

Supporting carers for over 10 years

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FINANCIAL STATEMENT

As at June 2022

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT Incorporated
Statement of cash flows
For the year ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022 $	2021 $
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from Grants & Other Income		1,046,129	1,048,908
Payments to Suppliers & Employees		(799,698)	(822,642)
		246,431	226,266
Interest Received		498	809
Interest Paid		(9,937)	(3,305)
Net Cash flows from Operating activities	10	236,992	223,770
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Payments for property, plant and equipment	5	(16,150)	(19,928)
Payments for Term Deposit		(141,762)	(393)
Net cash flows used in investing activities		(157,912)	(20,321)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Leasing Principal Payments		(57,564)	(46,585)
Net cash flows used in financing activities		(57,564)	(46,585)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		21,516	156,864
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		295,159	138,295
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	2	**316,675**	**295,159**

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the members of Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT Incorporated

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT Incorporated (the Association), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial report, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and Committee Members' Declaration.

In our opinion the accompanying financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Association as at 30 June 2022 and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the basis of accounting described in note 1.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Income and Expenditure Statement Name* section of our report. We are independent of MACC in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code)* that are relevant to our audit of the Schedule in Australia, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with that Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of matter - Basis of accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist the Association to meet the requirements of the *Associations Act 2003 (NT)* and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (the Acts). As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of management and Committee Members for the Financial Report

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report, and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 is appropriate to meet the requirements of the Acts and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Committee Members are responsible for overseeing the Association's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website (http://www.auasb.gov.au/Home.aspx) at: http://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf

This description forms part of our auditor's report.

BDO Audit (NT)

C Taziwa
Audit Partner

Darwin, 14 September 2022

Foster & Kinship Carers
ASSOCIATION NT Incorporated

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