Foster & Kinship Carers
ASSOCIATION NT Incorporated

Supporting carers for over 10 years

ANNUAL REPORT

CARER ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

2025–2026

Supporting carers. Strengthening voices.



Behind every child who thrives is someone who chose to care.



FUNDING BODY

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES | NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

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REGISTERED CHARITY · acnc.gov.au/charityregister

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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VISION & MISSION

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 16 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.





STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our strategy for the next three years focuses on **growth, influence and sustainability,** ensuring foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory are well supported and empowered while strengthening the care system as a whole. The following priorities will guide our work:

Empower and Support Carers

- Expand access to **specialised advocacy, case management and training**, ensuring carers are equipped to meet the increasing complexity of children's needs.
- Deliver consistent and **culturally safe support** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and communities, recognising their pivotal role in the care system.
- Strengthen carer connection and peer networks through initiatives such as **Carer Connect**, mentoring and online support platforms.

Grow and Sustain the Carer Community

- Lead a **territory-wide recruitment and assessment service**, removing barriers for prospective carers and reducing approval timeframes.
- Target recruitment efforts to engage **diverse and remote communities**, building a broad and inclusive carer base that reflects the NT's cultural and geographic landscape.
- Provide robust **pre- and post-approval support** to enhance retention, placement stability and carer confidence.

Influence System Reform and Drive Innovation

- Advocate for **transparent, responsive and efficient processes** in the out-of-home care system, ensuring clarity, consistency and accountability in processes and decision-making.
- Partner with government and stakeholders to ensure **policy and practice** are informed by the lived experience of carers and the needs of children and young people.
- Use data and sector intelligence to identify gaps, inform decision-making and measure the impact of system change on carers and children.



Strengthen Organisational Capacity and Reach

- Invest in our **people, systems and technology** to deliver high-quality, responsive and accessible services across the Territory.
- Maintain **strong governance and accountability**, ensuring transparency, cultural safety and continuous improvement in our work.
- Build sustainable funding and partnerships to support long-term growth and innovation.

Our Commitment

Through these priorities, FKCANT will lead with integrity and purpose, supporting carers to thrive and ensuring every child and young person in out-of-home care has the opportunity to experience stability, healing and connection within a loving family environment.

Respect and Inclusion

CHAIRMAN & CEO MESSAGE

STEVE DOWNIE, CHAIR & AMANDA THOMPSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

On behalf of the Board and team of Foster & Kinship Carers Association NT, we are pleased to present our 2025–2026 Annual Report.

This year has been one of progress, stronger partnerships and an increasingly influential voice for foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory. It has also reinforced something we have always known: meaningful change happens when the people with lived experience of the care system are genuinely included in shaping it.

At the centre of everything FKCANT has achieved this year are our carers. Their knowledge, resilience and commitment continue to guide our work and remind us why strong advocacy, practical support and systemic reform matter. Every policy we challenge, partnership we build and service we deliver ultimately has the same purpose, to strengthen the people who provide children and young people with safety, stability, connection and belonging.

Growing the Carer Community

One of the most encouraging developments this year has been renewed community interest in becoming a foster or kinship carer.

FKCANT received 81 Expressions of Interest, compared with 49 in the previous year, an increase of approximately 65 per cent. Through expanded community engagement, digital promotion and television advertising, we have worked to reach Territorians who may never previously have considered becoming carers.

Importantly, FKCANT's role in undertaking carer assessments has enabled us to create a more responsive pathway from initial enquiry through assessment and approval. Reducing unnecessary waiting periods and supporting prospective carers throughout this process means that community goodwill has a greater opportunity to translate into something tangible: more carers available to provide safe and nurturing homes for children who need them.

Turning Carer Voice into Action

Advocacy has remained a defining part of FKCANT's work throughout 2025–26.

Our Carer Advocacy and Support team managed 40 formal advocacy cases and 750 support matters, alongside case management, home visits and representation for carers. Despite operating without one Carer Advocacy and Support Officer for approximately six months, our team remained committed to ensuring carers could access independent advice, support and advocacy when they needed it.

Just as importantly, we have continued working to ensure the experiences of individual carers contribute to broader systemic change.

Following the Foster and Kinship Carer Engagement Project, the Department of Children and Families identified 14 recommendations arising from feedback provided through regional workshops and surveys. The establishment of a 14-member Carer Reference Group, co-chaired by DCF Executive Director Peter Fletcher and FKCANT CEO Amanda Thompson, has created an ongoing pathway for carers to work directly with departmental leadership on those recommendations.

This represents an important evolution in the relationship between carers and the system. Carers should not simply be consulted after decisions have been made. Their lived experience and intimate knowledge of the children they care for should help inform policy, practice and decisions from the outset.

Advocating for a Better Care System

Throughout the year, we have continued to advocate strongly with the Minister and DCF for a care system grounded in trauma-informed practice.

We welcomed progress through the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026, particularly the greater recognition of children's voices and the important knowledge carers hold about the children in their care. These principles reflect issues FKCANT has advocated for consistently.

Legislation, however, is only the foundation. The real measure of reform will be how those principles are translated into everyday practice. We will continue advocating for trauma-informed decision-making, meaningful participation by children and young people, recognition of carers as essential partners, appropriate therapeutic support, reflective supervision, transparency and accountability.

Our systemic advocacy has also extended beyond the Territory. Through the National Foster & Kinship Care Collective, FKCANT continues to ensure NT carers have a voice in national conversations about the financial sustainability of caring, including carer payments, means testing, superannuation and Commonwealth supports.

National evidence increasingly demonstrates what carers have been telling us for years, that caring can have profound consequences for employment, household finances and long-term financial security. We will continue working alongside our national colleagues to advocate for reforms that properly recognise the contribution carers make.

Looking Beyond Care

We are equally proud to continue contributing to the NT Home Stretch Committee, working alongside sector partners and young people with lived experience to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from care.

During 2025–26, this work progressed substantially, with priorities including earlier transition planning, stable housing, practical independent living support, stronger after-care services and increased access to extended support.

Importantly, young people's lived experience is becoming increasingly embedded in this work. The Committee's approach recognises that young people should not simply be asked for their views, they should have genuine opportunities to influence the policies and systems that shape their futures.

For young people leaving care, turning 18 should never mean suddenly facing adulthood without the relationships, security and support most families continue to provide well beyond that age.

Stronger Through Partnership

None of this work happens in isolation.

We would particularly like to acknowledge Minister for Child Protection Robyn Cahill OAM for her continued support of foster and kinship carers and FKCANT. We have valued the Minister's willingness to engage with our organisation, listen to the experiences and concerns of carers, and recognise the important contribution foster and kinship families make to the lives of children and young people across the Northern Territory. Having opportunities for open and constructive conversations with the Minister has been important in ensuring the voices of carers are heard at the highest levels of government.

We acknowledge our relationship with the Department of Children and Families and the opportunities created this year for more constructive engagement between carers, FKCANT and departmental leadership. There will always be areas where we challenge the system, that is an essential part of being an independent peak body, but we believe challenge and collaboration can coexist when the shared objective is better outcomes for children and young people.

As an independent peak body, there will always be areas where FKCANT challenges government and the Department and advocates strongly for change. We believe, however, that constructive relationships and robust advocacy are not mutually exclusive. Strong partnerships create opportunities for honest conversations, shared problem-solving and meaningful reform, while our independence ensures we can continue to speak openly when carers and the children and young people they support need change.

We also thank our sector partners, community organisations, businesses and supporters who contribute their expertise, resources and time to our carer community.

To our Board, thank you for your governance, guidance and commitment. The contribution of volunteer Board members is often unseen, but their stewardship provides the foundation from which FKCANT can continue to grow, challenge, innovate and advocate.

And to our staff, we extend our sincere appreciation. This year required flexibility and resilience, particularly during periods of reduced staffing. Through it all, the team continued to show up for carers with professionalism, compassion and determination.

To Our Carers

Most importantly, to our carer members, thank you.

Behind every statistic in this report is a person or family who has opened their life to a child. You advocate at meetings, navigate complex systems, maintain family and cultural connections, celebrate milestones, manage difficult days and provide the everyday moments of consistency and care from which children can begin to feel safe and belong.

We know caring can ask an enormous amount of you. Our responsibility is to ensure you do not have to navigate that journey alone.

As we look to 2026–27, we do so with optimism and determination. There is considerable work still ahead, but there is also genuine momentum. More people are expressing interest in becoming carers, carers have stronger pathways to contribute to reform, young people's voices are increasingly influencing decisions, and important conversations about the value and sustainability of foster and kinship care are taking place locally and nationally.

We will continue to listen. We will continue to collaborate. We will continue to challenge where change is needed. And above all, we will continue to stand alongside foster and kinship carers and ensure their voices and the voices of the children and young people they care for are heard.

Thank you for being part of the FKCANT community and for everything you contribute to children, families and communities across the Northern Territory.



Steve Donnie



Amanda Thompson

OUR CARER COMMUNITY

Our carer community is the heart of Foster & Kinship Carers Association NT. Every day, foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory provide children and young people with the safety, stability and belonging they need to heal, grow and thrive. Their commitment extends far beyond opening their homes; they create lasting relationships built on trust, love and hope.

Our community reflects the diversity of the Territory itself. It includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, extended family members, Aboriginal kinship carers, foster families, and individuals who have answered the call to care. Each brings unique experiences, cultures and strengths, yet they are united by a shared commitment to putting children first. Their resilience, patience and advocacy continue to inspire us every day.

Caring is not without its challenges. Many carers balance employment, family responsibilities, cultural commitments and the complexities of supporting children who have experienced trauma. Despite these demands, they continue to provide unwavering care, often going above and beyond to ensure children feel valued, connected to culture and community, and supported to reach their full potential.

Behind every carer is a wider community that helps make this work possible. Our members, volunteers, Elders, partner organisations, supporters, educators, businesses and service providers all play an important role in strengthening the care community. Whether through practical assistance, professional expertise, sponsorship, advocacy or simply taking the time to listen, these contributions help create a stronger network of support for carers and the children and young people in their care.

Throughout the year, we have continued to see the power of connection. Through training, support groups, community events, peer networks and shared experiences, carers have supported one another with generosity, encouragement and understanding. These connections reduce isolation, build confidence and remind carers that they are never alone in their journey.

To every foster and kinship carer, volunteer, member, supporter and partner, thank you. Your compassion, generosity and belief in every child's potential continue to shape stronger families, stronger communities and brighter futures across the Northern Territory. Together, we are building a community where children and young people are surrounded by people who care deeply and are committed to helping them belong, heal and thrive.

Celebrating Amy Banson – 2026 Chief Minister's Volunteer of the Year

We were incredibly proud to see FKCANT carer Amy Banson recognised as the 2026 Top End Chief Minister's Volunteer of the Year.

For 18 years, Amy has opened her home and heart to children who need safety, stability and a sense of belonging. Her commitment extends well beyond providing a home. Amy is a strong advocate for the children in her care, supporting their health, education and wellbeing while working to maintain the family and cultural connections that are so important to identity and belonging.



Amy's recognition is a wonderful acknowledgement of her extraordinary contribution and also shines a light on the generosity, resilience and commitment demonstrated by foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory every day.

Congratulations, Amy, and thank you for 18 remarkable years of caring, advocating and making a difference in the lives of children and young people.

THANK YOU, SUPPORTERS

Your generosity helps carers feel connected, informed and heard.

Proudly sponsored by NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Foster & Kinship Carers ASSOCIATION NT Incorporated WWW.FKCA.ORG.AU

National Foster and Kinship Care Collective

AnglicareNT

- Area 9 IT Solutions
- Carers NT
- Catholic Care
- Cazalys Palmerston Club
- Centrelink - Services Australia
- Channel 7 Darwin
- Department of Children & Families
- Drew the Handyman
- Dingo Cockatoo Aboriginal Culture
- Dobby's Butcher Nightcliff
- Grill'd Casaurina
- HPA
- Katherine Country Club
- Madz Flower House
- Minister Robyn Cahill OAM MLA
- Sammy's Family Pizza Restaurant
- Teresa Schwellnus
- The Midway Berrimah
- Win Television



OUR BOARD MEMBERS

Strong governance is fundamental to the continued success of Foster & Kinship Carers Association NT. Our Board of Management provides the leadership, oversight and strategic direction that enables the organisation to deliver on its purpose while remaining accountable to our members, stakeholders and the communities we serve.

The Board is comprised of dedicated volunteers who bring a diverse range of professional expertise, lived experience and knowledge of the Northern Territory. Together, they contribute skills across governance, finance, community services, advocacy, business and foster and kinship care, ensuring decisions are informed by both strategic thinking and a genuine understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing carers and children.

Throughout the year, the Board has remained focused on strengthening organisational sustainability, supporting effective governance, monitoring financial performance and guiding the delivery of our strategic priorities. Working closely with the Chief Executive Officer, Board members have provided stewardship across risk management, compliance, policy development and organisational growth, while championing advocacy that promotes better outcomes for foster and kinship carers and the children and young people they support.

The Board also plays an important role in fostering strong relationships with members, government, partner organisations and the wider community. Through their leadership and commitment, they help ensure that FKCANT continues to be a trusted voice for carers and a respected contributor to the out-of-home care sector in the Northern Territory.



Chairperson
Steve Downie



Vice Chairperson
Denise Jenkins



Treasurer
Karen Major

OUR BOARD MEMBERS

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, the Board met regularly to fulfil its governance responsibilities, with meetings held in September 2025, February 2026 and May 2026.

The Association's Annual General Meeting was held in November 2025, providing members with the opportunity to reflect on the year's achievements, acknowledge the contribution of outgoing Board members and welcome those elected to guide the organisation into the future.

During the year, we also farewelled our outgoing Treasurer, Stephanie Ransome. We extend our sincere thanks to Stephanie for her dedicated service, professionalism and valued contribution to FKCANT. Her commitment to strong financial governance and careful stewardship has supported the organisation's continued growth and sustainability. We are grateful for the time, expertise and guidance Stephanie generously contributed during her tenure and wish her every success for the future.

We sincerely thank each Board member for their time, expertise and unwavering commitment. Their volunteer leadership, thoughtful stewardship and shared vision continue to strengthen our organisation and support better outcomes for foster and kinship carers, children and young people across the Northern Territory.



Member
Jackie Williams



Member
Kay Thomson



Member
Dawn McQuilkin



Member
AnneLouise Cooper



Member
Sandra Potter



Member
Steve Atherton

OUR PEOPLE

FKCANT TEAM MEMBERS

Behind every program, conversation and advocacy effort is a dedicated team committed to supporting foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory. Each day, our staff work alongside carers, children, young people and stakeholders to provide practical support, trusted information and strong advocacy, helping to improve outcomes for families and strengthen the out-of-home care sector.

During the year, we said farewell to several valued team members. We extend our sincere thanks to Rachita Shrestha, Vineetha Edathil, Kathy McMorrow and Tess McDonagh for their dedication, professionalism and the positive contributions they made to FKCANT. We wish each of them every success in the next chapter of their careers.

We were also delighted to welcome Menglu Zhang, Chris Murphy, Anjelica Marganis, Angela Sy, Anna Macarounas and Gill Wintersgill to the FKCANT team. Their skills, experience and enthusiasm have strengthened our organisation, and we look forward to the valuable contributions they will continue to make as we work together to support carers and advocate for children and young people across the Northern Territory.



Chief Executive Officer
Amanda Thompson



Senior Advocate and Business Development Officer
Jarrad Elvish



Finance/ HR Manager
Louise Lasker

FKCANT TEAM MEMBERS



Carer Services and Practice Manager

Denise Higginson



Carer Advocate and Support Officer

Jayne Rachor



Carer Services Assessor

Johnnie Mugabe



Carer Services Team Leader/Assessor

Gill Wintergill



Carer Services Assessor

Menglu Zhang



Carer Advocate and Support Officer

Chris Murphy



Carer Recruitment Coordinator

Anna Macarounas



Media & Communications Officer

Angela Sy



Carer Advocate and Support Officer

Anjelica Marganis

Farewell Staff



Kathy McMorrow



Rachita Shrestha



Vineetha Edathil



Tess McDonagh

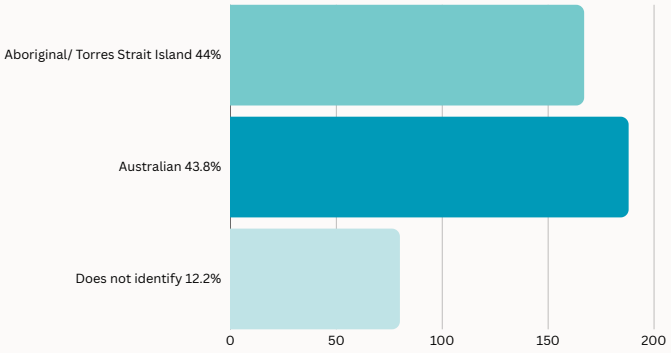
CARER MEMBERS DATA

At 30 June 2026, 642 carers were members of Foster & Kinship Carers Association NT, representing a strong and diverse community committed to improving the lives of children and young people across the Northern Territory. Our members reflect the unique cultural, geographic and family diversity of the Territory, bringing a wealth of experience, resilience and compassion to their caring roles.

At a Glance

Gender Breakdown

Women continue to make up the majority of our membership, representing 62% of carers. Men account for 35%, while a small number of members identify outside the gender binary. This diversity highlights the important role carers of all genders play in providing safe, nurturing and stable homes.

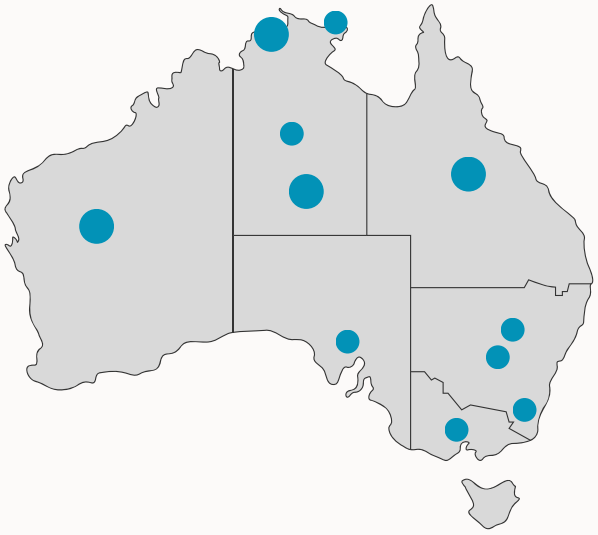


Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Carers

44% of FKCANT members identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, reflecting the critical contribution First Nations carers make in maintaining children's connections to family, culture, Country and community. This represents a continued increase in Indigenous membership and demonstrates the importance of culturally responsive engagement and support.

Where Our Carers Live

Our members live in every corner of the Northern Territory. From Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs to regional and remote communities, carers provide vital support wherever children need them. A small number of members also reside interstate, ensuring children with Northern Territory connections continue to receive support while maintaining important family and cultural ties.



A Community That Reflects the Territory

The diversity of our membership is one of FKCANT's greatest strengths. Our carers come from a broad range of cultural backgrounds, life experiences and family structures, yet they share a common purpose: providing children and young people with safe, stable and nurturing environments where they can feel valued, connected and supported to thrive.
As our membership continues to grow and evolve, so too does our commitment to ensuring every carer has access to the advocacy, resources and community they need to succeed.

MEMBERS BREAKDOWN

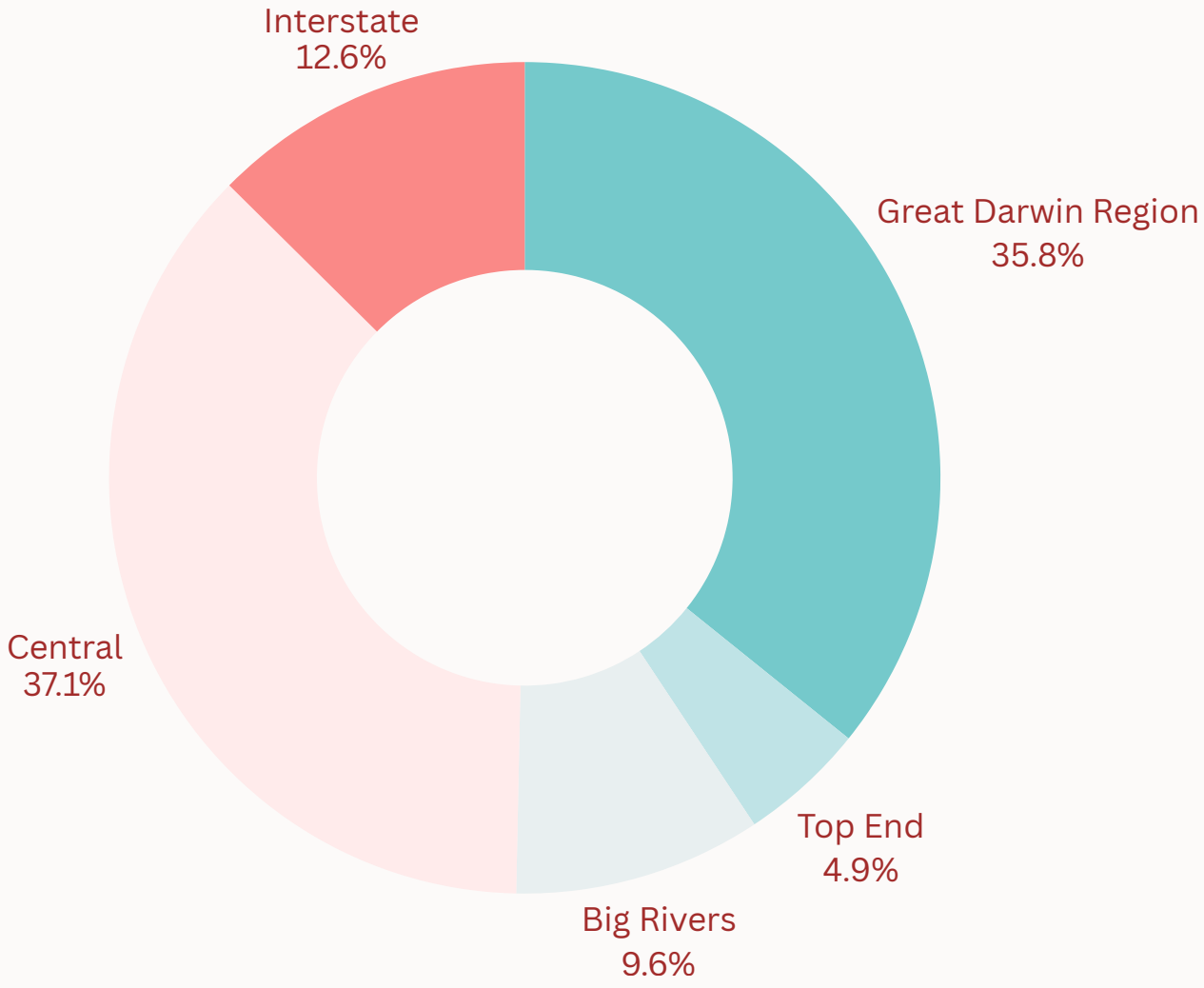
642 FOSTER & KINSHIP CARERS

62% FEMALE MEMBERS

35% MALE MEMBERS

3% OTHER MEMBERS

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR MEMBERSHIP



CARER & CASE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Our Carer Advocacy and Support Officers (CASOs) remain at the heart of FKCANT's work, providing trusted, individualised support and advocacy to foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory and interstate. Whether through home visits, phone and virtual contact, office-based appointments or representation at meetings, our team works alongside carers to ensure they feel heard, informed and supported throughout their caring journey.



During 2025–2026, our team conducted 120 face-to-face home visits across the Northern Territory, compared with 152 visits in the previous year. While this represents a reduction in face-to-face visits, it reflects a period of reduced staffing capacity, with FKCANT operating without one Carer Advocacy and Support Officer for approximately six months of the reporting period. Throughout this time, the team prioritised continuity of support, maintaining contact with carers through telephone, email, virtual meetings and office-based consultations alongside home visits.

Home visits continue to be an important part of our support model. They provide carers with an opportunity to discuss challenges in a familiar and confidential environment, seek advice and advocacy, identify additional support or training needs, and importantly, share the successes and milestones that are part of their caring journey.

Supporting Carers at the Table

FKCANT also continued to advocate alongside carers within the broader care system. During the reporting period, our team participated in 52 care team meetings, compared with 140 in the previous year, and attended 74 case management meetings, compared with 183 in 2024–2025.

The reduction in meeting attendance primarily reflects a decrease in the frequency with which these meetings were convened by the Department, rather than a reduction in FKCANT's commitment or availability to participate. Where meetings were held and FKCANT's involvement was requested, our CASOs continued to support carers to understand processes, raise concerns, contribute to decision-making and ensure their knowledge and experience of the children in their care was represented.

Across the year, FKCANT provided case management support to 120 carer households, demonstrating the continued need for independent, carer-focused support and advocacy.

Maintaining Connection Through Change

The year highlighted the importance of having a responsive and adequately resourced advocacy and support service for carers. Despite reduced staffing capacity for part of the year and fewer departmental meetings being convened, our team remained focused on maintaining meaningful connections with carers and responding to issues as they arose.

As we move forward, FKCANT remains committed to strengthening our Carer Advocacy and Support service, increasing opportunities for direct engagement and ensuring carers have a strong and independent voice within the care system. By supporting carers to feel valued, informed and confident in their roles, we contribute to stronger and more sustainable caring families and ultimately, greater stability and better outcomes for the children and young people they nurture.







FACE-TO-FACE/ HOME VISIT	CARER TEAM MEETINGS	CASE MANAGEMENT MEETINGS
120	52	74

GROWING OUR CARER COMMUNITY

Throughout 2025–2026, FKCANT continued to strengthen its efforts to attract and support new foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory. With the ongoing need for safe, stable and nurturing homes for vulnerable children and young people, increasing community awareness and creating a more accessible pathway to becoming a carer remained a key priority.

This year saw a significant and encouraging increase in community interest, with FKCANT receiving 81 Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from prospective foster and kinship carers, compared with 49 in the previous financial year. This represents an increase of approximately 65% and demonstrates a growing willingness within the community to consider opening their homes and becoming part of the Territory's carer community.

Reaching More Territorians



Our recruitment activities continued to combine face-to-face community engagement with digital and broader public awareness campaigns. Throughout the year, FKCANT promoted foster and kinship caring through community events and expos, recruitment booths across the Territory, social media, our website and targeted promotional activities.

Importantly, FKCANT also expanded its reach through television advertising, with carer recruitment commercials encouraging Territorians to consider whether fostering or kinship care could be right for them. Television provided an opportunity to take the message beyond our existing networks and reach people in their homes and communities who may not previously have considered becoming a carer.

From Interest to Assessment

A significant development during 2025–2026 was FKCANT expanding carer assessment services, creating a more direct pathway from initial enquiry through to assessment and approval.



This change has generated renewed interest in becoming a foster or kinship carer and is helping to address one of the key concerns previously raised by prospective carers, the length of time involved in progressing through the assessment process. By reducing wait times and providing prospective carers with clearer guidance and support throughout their journey, we are working to ensure that enthusiasm to care can be translated into action.

Most importantly, a more responsive recruitment and assessment pathway means more approved carers can become available to provide safe and nurturing homes for vulnerable children and young people when they are needed.

Building Momentum

The growth in Expressions of Interest this year is an encouraging sign, but recruitment is only the beginning. Our focus is on supporting prospective carers from their first enquiry, through assessment and approval, and throughout their caring journey.



Every new carer brings greater choice and capacity to the care system. A larger and more diverse pool of carers creates greater opportunity to find the right home for a child, maintain important family, cultural and community connections, and provide the stability children and young people need to thrive.

The momentum achieved in 2025–2026 provides a strong foundation for the year ahead. FKCANT will continue to build community awareness, strengthen recruitment pathways, deliver timely and supportive assessments, and encourage more Territorians to discover the difference they can make in the life of a child.





ADVOCACY

Independent advocacy remains one of FKCANT's most important functions. Foster and kinship carers regularly navigate complex systems, policies and administrative processes while simultaneously focusing on the day-to-day needs of the children and young people in their care. When challenges arise, having access to an independent organisation that can provide advice, representation and a strong voice can make a significant difference.

During 2025–2026, FKCANT's Carer Advocacy and Support team formally managed 40 advocacy cases and responded to 750 individual support matters.

These matters ranged from providing information and guidance through to complex cases requiring direct representation and escalation with the Department. Key issues raised by carers during the year included delayed communication, placement transitions, delays in travel approvals, access to carer reimbursements, care planning, and inconsistencies in the interpretation and application of policy and departmental processes.

A Strong Voice for Carers

Our advocacy extends beyond resolving individual matters. The experiences shared with FKCANT provide valuable insight into recurring challenges and systemic barriers affecting foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory.

Where patterns or broader concerns are identified, FKCANT raises these issues with relevant decision-makers and government stakeholders. This provides an important feedback mechanism between carers and the broader care system, highlighting areas where processes, communication, policy or practice could be strengthened.

Importantly, advocacy also ensures the knowledge and experience of carers is recognised. Carers often have an unparalleled understanding of the day-to-day needs of the children and young people in their homes, and their perspectives should form an important part of decisions that affect those children.

Advocacy in Action

40 formal advocacy cases
Cases requiring active representation, engagement and, where necessary, escalation with the Department on behalf of carers.

750 support matters
Individual matters where carers received information, guidance, practical assistance or case-specific support from the FKCANT team.

Together, these figures demonstrate the continued demand for accessible, independent and carer-focused support across the Northern Territory.

Creating Change Beyond the Individual Case

Every advocacy matter presents an opportunity not only to support an individual carer, but also to identify where the care system can work better.

By raising concerns, challenging inconsistencies and bringing the experiences of carers to the attention of decision-makers, FKCANT continues to advocate for greater transparency, consistency and accountability across the out-of-home care system.

Ultimately, effective advocacy is about creating the conditions that allow carers to focus on what matters most: providing children and young people with safe, stable, nurturing homes and the opportunity to thrive.

750
Support Matter Cases

40
Advocacy Cases

SYSTEMIC POLICY & ADVOCACY

From Carer Voice to System Change

Throughout 2025–2026, FKCANT continued to strengthen its systemic advocacy, ensuring the experiences, knowledge and perspectives of foster and kinship carers are represented in conversations that influence policy, practice and decision-making across the Northern Territory's out-of-home care system.

Building on the Foster and Kinship Carer Engagement Project undertaken in partnership with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the regional workshops and carer survey provided valuable insight into the experiences of current and former carers. Importantly, this engagement was not intended to end with consultation. The feedback provided by carers created a foundation for identifying practical opportunities to improve the way carers are supported, communicated with and included as partners in the care of children and young people.

Following the conclusion of the workshops and survey, DCF compiled the findings into a report containing 14 recommendations for improvement. These recommendations provided a clear pathway for progressing the issues raised by carers and moving from listening to meaningful action.

Establishing the Carer Reference Group

In early 2026, a Carer Reference Group comprising 14 foster and kinship carers was established to provide an ongoing mechanism for carer participation in addressing the recommendations.

The group meets monthly and is co-chaired by DCF Executive Director Peter Fletcher and FKCANT CEO Amanda Thompson, with Larrakia Nation and other DCF representatives attending. This structure provides carers with direct access to senior departmental leadership and creates an important forum for open, constructive and solutions-focused discussion.

Rather than carers simply being consulted on decisions after they are made, the Reference Group provides an opportunity for carers to contribute their lived experience to discussions about how policies, processes and practices operate in the real world.

Turning Recommendations into Action

The Carer Reference Group is working through the 14 recommendations, identifying opportunities to strengthen practice, improve decision-making and build more effective partnerships between carers and the Department.

Carers are able to identify where processes may not be working as intended, explain the practical impact of decisions on caring families and children, and suggest workable solutions based on their direct experience of the care system. These conversations provide DCF with valuable insight while giving carers a genuine opportunity to contribute to the development of improvements that affect them.

The establishment of the Reference Group represents an important step towards a more collaborative approach, one where carers are increasingly recognised not simply as service recipients, but as knowledgeable and essential partners in the care team.

Strengthening the Partnership

For FKCANT, systemic advocacy means ensuring the experiences raised by individual carers can contribute to broader and lasting improvements. Issues identified through our advocacy and support services, member engagement and the Carer Reference Group help inform our discussions with government and highlight where policy, practice and communication can be strengthened.

While meaningful system change takes time, the progress made during 2025–2026 demonstrates what can be achieved when carers, FKCANT and DCF come together with a shared commitment to improvement.

FKCANT will continue to support the Carer Reference Group and advocate for progress against the 14 recommendations, ensuring carer voices remain part of the conversation, proposed solutions are informed by lived experience, and commitments translate into practical improvements for carers and the children and young people they support.

A significant advocacy achievement for FKCANT this year was the successful campaign for increased financial support for foster and kinship carers. FKCANT had consistently advocated for an increase to the Carer Allowance and Placement Establishment Payment, highlighting that existing rates had not kept pace with the rising costs of caring for children and young people. Through ongoing engagement with the Minister and Department, FKCANT ensured that the financial pressures experienced by carers remained firmly on the agenda and that carers' voices and lived experience were represented in discussions about reform.

FKCANT was delighted to see this sustained advocacy result in the Minister supporting a 10 per cent increase to carer allowances from 1 July 2026, as well as a substantial increase in the Placement Establishment Payment from $200 to $1,000. These increases represent an important and tangible outcome for carers across the Northern Territory and greater recognition of both the everyday costs of caring and the significant expenses carers can face when accepting a new placement. FKCANT acknowledges the Minister's support for these changes and will continue to advocate for carer payments and supports that are equitable, responsive and reflective of the true cost of providing safe, stable and nurturing care.

NT Home Stretch Committee - Progressing Reform

Throughout 2025–2026, FKCANT continued its active involvement in the NT Home Stretch Committee, contributing the perspectives of foster and kinship carers to the collective effort to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from out-of-home care.

During the year, the Committee moved from re-establishment and priority setting into a more structured program of action. Its January–June 2026 Work Plan established a clear focus on ensuring the Committee is informed by young people with lived experience, strengthening regional representation, learning from successful approaches in other jurisdictions, improving transition planning and after-care support, and exploring safe and stable housing options for young people leaving care.

A significant area of focus has been improving access to extended care and support in the Northern Territory. At the June 2026 meeting, the Committee considered progress on a Deloitte NT Cost Benefit Project, designed to strengthen the evidence base for investment in extended support for care leavers. The Committee noted that approximately 30% of eligible participants in the NT were accessing the extended support offer, compared with approximately 60% nationally, highlighting both the current gap and the opportunity to significantly increase participation.

The analysis is intended to consider both the financial and social benefits of greater investment in extended care, including potential impacts across housing, education, employment, health and other areas of a young person's life. The Committee identified the resulting report as an important future advocacy tool, with planning commencing around its release and engagement with government.

Putting Young People's Voices at the Centre

Importantly, the Committee has strengthened its commitment to ensuring reform is shaped with young people, rather than simply for them.

CREATE Foundation's Youth Participation Strategy 2026 establishes a framework to move beyond one-way consultation towards genuine, action-oriented participation by young people with lived experience. The strategy recognises that young people should have opportunities to influence decisions, contribute to service and system design, and see their experiences translated into meaningful change.

This includes youth membership on the NT Home Stretch Committee, the establishment of a dedicated Home Stretch NT Youth Sub-Committee, and youth-led initiatives designed to bring a broader range of lived experiences directly into the Committee's work. A Home Stretch Survey is also planned for young people aged 15–25 with experience of out-of-home care, including deliberate efforts to hear from young people living in regional and remote areas of the Territory.

This approach will help ensure that priorities such as transition planning, housing, mental health support and ongoing connections are informed by the people who understand the experience of leaving care firsthand.

Building Better Pathways Beyond Care

Safe and stable housing remains a significant priority. The Committee's Work Plan identifies opportunities to explore alternative housing models specifically for care leavers, partnerships with NT Shelter, dedicated community housing allocations and supported tenancy or Foyer-style models. It also recognises the need for consistent support after leaving care and earlier, ongoing transition planning that respects the views of young people.

For FKCANT, participation in the NT Home Stretch Committee is an important extension of our systemic advocacy. The transition to adulthood should not mean the sudden loss of the relationships, stability and support that young people need to thrive. Through collaboration with sector partners, young people with lived experience and government, we will continue to advocate for stronger pathways that provide young people leaving care with the housing, relationships, practical support and opportunities they need to move confidently into adulthood.

Most importantly, the work undertaken during 2025–2026 represents a shift from identifying the challenges facing young people leaving care to developing the evidence, partnerships and lived-experience leadership needed to address them. FKCANT is proud to contribute to this work and to ensure the experiences of carers remain part of the broader conversation about creating better outcomes for young people beyond care.

National Foster & Kinship Care Collective - A Stronger National Voice

Throughout 2025–2026, FKCANT continued to represent Northern Territory foster and kinship carers as an active member of the National Foster & Kinship Care Collective. Bringing together CEOs of foster and kinship carer peak bodies and representative organisations from across Australia, the Collective provides an important national platform to identify shared challenges, exchange knowledge and advocate collectively for reforms that strengthen and sustain family-based care.

While child protection legislation, policy and service delivery largely sit within individual states and territories, many of the issues affecting carers cross jurisdictional boundaries or intersect with Commonwealth responsibilities. Working collectively enables us to amplify the experiences of carers and pursue opportunities for national reform that individual jurisdictions cannot achieve alone.

Financial Security and the True Cost of Caring

A significant focus for the Collective during 2025–2026 has been the financial sustainability of foster and kinship caring. Cost-of-living pressures, inconsistent financial support and the impact caring can have on a person's ability to participate in paid employment all have consequences for the sustainability of carer households.

Increasingly, our national advocacy is highlighting an important contradiction: foster and kinship carers volunteer to provide homes for children for whom governments hold responsibility, yet aspects of Australia's taxation, family assistance and social support systems can leave those same carers financially disadvantaged because they have chosen to care.

The Collective is therefore advocating across a number of interconnected areas, including greater national parity in financial support, the impact of means testing on carers, access to Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy, and the long-term impact of caring on employment and superannuation.

For FKCANT, these issues are particularly important. Financial support should enable a foster or kinship carer to meet the needs of a child; it should not create additional barriers to caring or require carers to absorb costs that arise because they have stepped forward to provide a home for a child who needs one.

Building the Evidence for Reform

During the year, the Collective continued to build a strong evidence base to support national advocacy.

A national survey examining foster and kinship carers and superannuation attracted an extraordinary 1,436 responses. The results provide an important insight into the longer-term financial consequences of caring:

97.7% of respondents believed foster and kinship carers should receive superannuation.
52% were not employed at the time of the survey.
62% were aged between 41 and 60 years.
Some carers reported being outside the paid workforce for more than 10 years as a consequence of their caring responsibilities.

Carers also described drawing on their own savings and superannuation to meet the needs of children in their care or leaving employment entirely to provide full-time care. These experiences demonstrate that the financial impact of caring can extend well beyond the immediate costs of raising a child and can have lasting consequences for a carer's financial security and retirement.

This advocacy is further supported by Australian Institute of Family Studies research referenced by the Collective, which found that the cost of caring for a child in a couple-carer household can be 12–18% higher than raising a child outside the child protection system.

Removing Unintended Financial Barriers

The Collective's work is also examining Commonwealth policies that can create unintended barriers or inequities for foster and kinship families.

This includes advocating around the means testing of carers and Family Tax Benefit, and raising concerns regarding the way the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) operate for foster and kinship care households.

These issues are more than administrative complexities. Access to affordable childcare can directly affect a carer's ability to remain in employment, maintain household income and continue providing care. Where eligibility rules, means testing or administrative processes do not adequately recognise the circumstances of foster and kinship families, the financial responsibility can shift to the very people volunteering to care for children on behalf of the community.

Through the Collective, FKCANT will continue to advocate for Commonwealth policies that appropriately recognise the circumstances of foster and kinship carers and remove financial disincentives to providing care.

Stronger Together - A Personal Reflection

For me personally, it is an enormous privilege to work alongside my colleagues in the National Foster & Kinship Care Collective. Although we represent different states and territories, the challenges facing carers are often remarkably similar, and there is great strength in being able to come together with a shared purpose.

I deeply value the generosity, support and collegiality of my Collective colleagues and the immense knowledge and experience they bring to our discussions. Having the opportunity to draw on that expertise, share what we are experiencing in the Northern Territory and learn from approaches in other jurisdictions is invaluable.



There is also reassurance in knowing that, when we advocate for change, we do not do so in isolation. Together, we are building a stronger national voice for foster and kinship carers and reinforcing a simple but important message: supporting carers is fundamental to supporting the children and young people who rely on them.

Amanda Thompson
Chief Executive Officer

Advancing Trauma-Informed Practice and Decision-Making

Throughout 2025–2026, FKCANT continued to advocate strongly for a Northern Territory out-of-home care system that is genuinely trauma-informed, child-centred and inclusive of carers as essential partners in decision-making.

The recommendations previously presented to the Minister for Child Protection and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) continue to inform our advocacy. In particular, FKCANT remains focused on the need for trauma-informed practice to be embedded consistently across all levels of the child protection system, from frontline interactions and case planning through to leadership, policy development and high-impact decisions affecting children and their families

For FKCANT, being trauma-informed extends beyond completing training. It requires an understanding of how trauma influences a child's behaviour, relationships and sense of safety, and ensuring that decisions and responses do not inadvertently create further trauma. We continue to advocate for specialised training, reflective supervision and access to appropriate therapeutic expertise so that staff and carers are equipped to respond to children and young people with understanding, consistency and compassion.

Positive Progress Through Legislative Reform

We welcomed important progress during the year through the development of the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026, with legislative changes addressing two areas FKCANT has consistently advocated for: strengthening the voice of children and young people in decisions affecting their lives and recognising the important knowledge held by their carers.

Carers live alongside children every day and often have the most detailed understanding of their behaviours, routines, relationships, triggers, strengths and changing needs. Recognising this knowledge and ensuring carers are appropriately included in decision-making is an important step towards better-informed decisions and stronger partnerships within the care team.

Equally important is ensuring children and young people are not passive participants in decisions about their own lives. Strengthening their right to be heard and have their views genuinely considered represents positive progress towards a more child-centred care system.

From Legislation to Practice

Legislative reform is an important foundation, but its impact will ultimately be determined by how consistently these principles are translated into everyday practice.

FKCANT will therefore continue working with the Minister and DCF to advocate for trauma-informed approaches, meaningful participation of children and young people, recognition of carers as valued partners, improved transparency and accountability, and better-informed decision-making across the care system.

We also continue to advocate for measures previously raised with government, including reflective supervision, collaborative decision-making processes, manageable caseloads and appropriate review mechanisms for significant decisions and adverse outcomes.



Our focus remains on ensuring that policy, legislation and practice work together. A truly trauma-informed system must not only understand the impact of trauma, it must actively work to avoid creating further trauma through its own decisions, processes and practices.

FKCANT welcomes the progress made and will continue to constructively challenge, collaborate and advocate for a system in which children and young people are heard, carers' knowledge is respected, and every decision is grounded in safety, stability, connection and the best interests of the child.









LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Building Knowledge, Confidence and Connection

Learning and development remains an important part of how FKCANT supports foster and kinship carers throughout their caring journey. Caring for children and young people can bring unique and complex experiences, and access to relevant, practical and evidence-informed learning helps carers better understand the needs of the children in their care and respond with confidence, compassion and consistency.

Throughout 2025–2026, FKCANT delivered and promoted more than 25 training and professional development opportunities, offered through a combination of face-to-face and online learning. This blended approach provided greater flexibility for carers and helped extend access to learning opportunities across urban, regional and remote areas of the Northern Territory.

Our learning program reflected the diverse needs of carers and the children and young people they support. A strong focus remained on understanding trauma, behaviour and child development, helping carers look beyond behaviour to consider what a child may be communicating through their actions and experiences.

Specialist learning included the Australian Childhood Foundation's Understanding Harmful Sexualised Behaviours training and a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) workshop with Prue Walker, providing carers with greater understanding of complex behaviours and practical approaches to supporting children with additional needs.

Through our partnership with Child Australia, three professional learning workshops explored topics directly relevant to carers' everyday experiences. These included trauma and brain development, self-regulation, child development, guiding behaviour and positive interactions, as well as the importance of rituals and rhythms in creating predictable and nurturing environments for children. Child protection responsibilities were also incorporated into the learning.

Carers were supported with practical skills beyond therapeutic and developmental care. First Aid and CPR training provided opportunities to strengthen essential safety skills, while ThinkUKnow online safety training for foster and kinship carers supported carers to better understand the increasingly complex digital environments children and young people navigate.



25
Training sessions



110
Total combined registrants

Learning That Responds to Carers

While a structured training calendar provides an important foundation, some of the most valuable learning opportunities arise in response to the needs carers identify themselves.

Throughout the year, FKCANT remained responsive to emerging issues and individual circumstances, facilitating tailored learning and connecting carers with specialist knowledge when particular challenges arose. This flexibility enables training to be more than a scheduled activity, it becomes another practical tool carers can draw upon when navigating complex situations and working to maintain safe and stable placements.

Learning also provides an opportunity for connection. When carers come together to learn, they have the opportunity to share experiences, hear different perspectives and recognise that many of the challenges they encounter are shared by others within the caring community.

Our commitment is to continue developing learning opportunities that are practical, accessible, culturally responsive and informed by the real experiences of carers. By investing in carers' knowledge and confidence, we strengthen their capacity to provide children and young people with the understanding, stability and nurturing relationships they need to feel safe, connected and supported to thrive.

ACF Understanding Harmful Sexualised Behaviours



This workshop supported carers to better understand and respond to harmful sexualised behaviours in children and young people.

Delivered with the Australian Childhood Foundation, the session explored the Behaviour Traffic Lights framework, practical response strategies and referral pathways.



Professional Learning Workshops with Child Australia

Three professional learning workshops were delivered with Child Australia to support carers in their day-to-day caring role.

The sessions covered practical topics including trauma and brain development, self-regulation, child development, guiding behaviour, positive interactions, rituals and rhythms, and child protection.



Confident Conversations and Clear Boundaries

This trauma-informed communication workshop supported carers to better understand children's needs, respond calmly during challenging moments, and create safe, respectful boundaries at home.



Delivered with Darwin Youth Services, the session gave carers practical tools for building trust, strengthening connection, and supporting children who have experienced trauma.

Cross Cultural Training Workshop

This session supported carers to build stronger, more culturally aware relationships with children and young people in their care.



This session supported carers to build stronger, more culturally Delivered with Cross Cultural Consultants, the training explored cultural awareness, shared values and practical strategies for working respectfully across cultural differences.

Resilience and Self Care Workshops (Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs)

Three Resilience and Self-Care workshops were delivered in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs, giving carers across multiple regions an opportunity to focus on their own wellbeing.

Led by Dr Teresa Schwellnus from Charles Darwin University, the sessions explored resilience, self-care, mindfulness and practical strategies to support carers' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.



E-Safety Workshop with Australian Federal Police/ ThinkUKnow

Delivered in Darwin and Alice Springs, this eSafety workshop helped carers better understand the online spaces children and young people are using.

Presented by ThinkUKnow Australia, the sessions covered practical strategies for keeping children safe online, understanding current apps, games and online trends, and knowing what to do when concerns arise.



First Aid Workshop

First Aid and CPR training was delivered in Darwin in partnership with St John, helping carers build confidence in responding to emergencies and supporting children safely.

Additional support was also offered to carers in Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek to attend public First Aid sessions in their local areas, improving access to practical training across regional NT.

St John





FKCANT EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Creating Connections, Strengthening Community

396
Total Registrants

Connection is an important part of supporting foster and kinship carers. Caring can be incredibly rewarding, but it can also be demanding and, at times, isolating. Creating opportunities for carers to come together with people who understand the realities of the caring role helps build friendships, informal support networks and a stronger sense of belonging.

Throughout 2025–2026, FKCANT hosted and participated in a range of events and activities designed to bring our carer community together. From informal morning teas and dinners to celebrations and community events, these occasions provided opportunities to recognise the extraordinary contribution of carers, share experiences and strengthen relationships across the Territory.
Importantly, our events are about more than social connection. They provide a relaxed and welcoming environment where carers can talk with FKCANT staff, learn about available supports and services, meet other carers and share knowledge and experiences with people who understand their journey.

Carer Connections

Our Carer Connections continue to be among FKCANT's most popular and well-attended activities.



During 2025–2026, we hosted 32 Carer Connection events across Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, with a total of 396 registrations throughout the year. Events included morning teas and dinners, providing different opportunities for carers to participate around the demands of family life and caring responsibilities.

These informal gatherings create something that cannot always be achieved through formal training or appointments, the opportunity for carers to simply spend time with other carers.

396	12	50
Total Registrants	Average no. registrants per CC	Maximum registrants

Conversations over coffee or dinner can lead to new friendships, shared advice, reassurance and support networks that continue well beyond the event itself. For new carers in particular, meeting others with lived experience can provide an important sense of community and a reminder that they are not navigating the caring journey alone.

Our larger Carer Connections attracted up to 50 registrations, demonstrating the value carers place on opportunities to come together.

We concluded the year's Carer Connection calendar with dinners across Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs, bringing carers and the FKCANT team together to celebrate, reconnect and reflect on the year. These gatherings provided a fitting conclusion to another year of shared experiences, conversations and friendships across our carer community.

More Than an Event

Whether five carers gather for a coffee or fifty come together for dinner, every connection matters. Carer Connections are an important part of FKCANT's commitment to carer wellbeing and retention. They create opportunities for experienced carers to support those newer to the role, for families to develop friendships and for FKCANT to remain connected to the experiences and needs of the people we represent.

As our carer community continues to grow, we will continue creating inclusive and accessible opportunities for carers across the Northern Territory to connect, share, celebrate and support one another.

For upcoming Carer Connections, training and other events, visit www.fkca.org.au.

Carer Dinner Events across Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs

Carer Dinner Events were held in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs, creating valuable opportunities for foster and kinship carers to connect with one another in a relaxed and supportive setting.

These events helped reduce isolation, strengthen peer connection and recognise the contribution carers make across the Northern Territory. They also gave carers time to share experiences, build relationships and feel supported by others who understand the caring role.

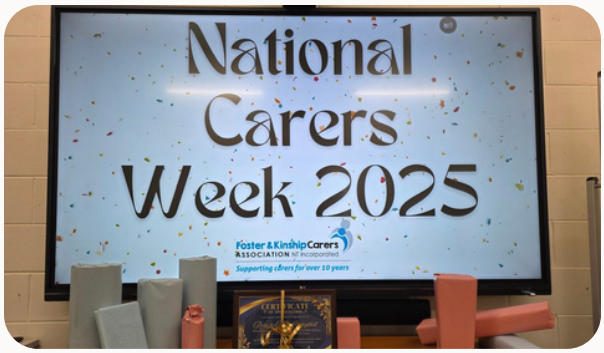




Carer's Week morning tea - '25 - '26

The Carers Week Morning Tea was held at the FKCANT office, bringing carers together in a relaxed setting to recognise and celebrate their contribution.

A special highlight was presenting an award to long-term carers Rose and Terry in recognition of their 30 years of care, commitment and support to children and young people in their placements. The event provided a meaningful opportunity to acknowledge the dedication of carers, celebrate their achievements and thank them for the stability, love and advocacy they provide every day.





Father's Day - September '25

The Father's Day Fishing Event at Barramundi Adventures in Darwin celebrated foster and kinship dads and father figures in a fun, relaxed and memorable way.

Carers enjoyed fishing, spear throwing and golf activities, with friendly competition helping create connection, laughter and recognition of the important role male carers play in the lives of children and young people.











Children and Carers Recognition Event - September '25

The Children and Carers Recognition Event was held in September 2025, bringing together foster and kinship carers, children, families and sector partners to celebrate the people at the heart of our care community. The event provided an important opportunity to recognise the extraordinary commitment of carers and celebrate the achievements, strengths and resilience of the children and young people in their care. Filled with connection, activities and plenty of fun, the day was a wonderful reminder of the importance of coming together as a community to acknowledge carers, celebrate children and young people, and strengthen the relationships that support them throughout their caring journey.





National Foster & Kinship Care Conference 2025

FKCANT staff attended the 2025 National Foster & Kinship Care Conference in Sydney, joining foster and kinship carers, sector organisations and professionals from across Australia.



#A HOME FOR EVERY CHILD

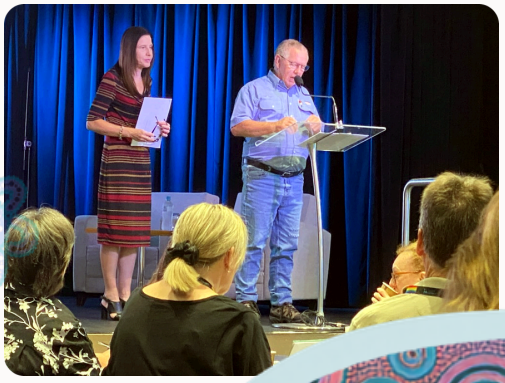
FKCANT also sponsored Foster and Kinship Carers from across the Northern Territory to attend the conference. This provided carers with a valuable learning and development opportunity, giving them access to national speakers, workshops, sector expertise and the chance to connect with other carers from around Australia.

The conference supported carers to build their knowledge, strengthen their confidence and bring new ideas and practical learning back to their own caring roles and communities. It also gave FKCANT staff the opportunity to strengthen national relationships, share NT experiences and bring new knowledge back to support Foster and Kinship Carer families across the Territory.

A huge thank you to Renee Leigh and the Adopt Change team for putting on such an amazing conference.







Annual General Meeting - November '25

FKCANT's 2025 Annual General Meeting brought together members, carers, stakeholders and supporters to reflect on the year's achievements and look towards the priorities ahead. We were delighted to once again welcome the Hon. Robyn Cahill OAM, Minister for Children and Families, whose attendance reflected her continued engagement with FKCANT and support for the foster and kinship carer community. The AGM provided a valuable opportunity for connection, discussion and ensuring the experiences and perspectives of carers remain visible in conversations about the future of the care system.

The AGM also saw FKCANT welcome three new Board members: Sandy Potter, Karen Major and Steve Atherton. Sandy and Steve are long-term foster carers who bring invaluable lived experience and a deep understanding of the rewards and challenges of caring. Karen joined as an invited Board member and has taken on the important role of Treasurer, strengthening the organisation's financial governance and stewardship. We look forward to the knowledge, experience and commitment they will bring to FKCANT as we continue strengthening the voice and support of foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory.

CREATE Christmas Party - December '25

The CREATE Foundation Christmas Party brought carers, children and young people together once again to celebrate the end of the year with plenty of fun, laughter and connection. Held at Kingpin, the event offered something for everyone, with bowling, laser tag and arcade games keeping children, young people and adults entertained throughout the celebration.

FKCANT staff members Jarrad and Jayne joined in the festivities, spending time with carers and families and enjoying the opportunity to connect outside the everyday demands of the caring role. With plenty of food, friendly competition and fun, the event provided a wonderful opportunity for everyone to relax and celebrate together.

FKCANT was also delighted to once again donate a Christmas hamper as a prize, which was won by Katerina, one of our amazing foster carers.



We are always pleased to support CREATE Foundation events that bring the care community together and, most importantly, create opportunities for children and young people to have fun, build positive memories and celebrate the festive season surrounded by people who support and care for them.





Cultural Events with Dingo-Cockatoo Aboriginal Culture

Two cultural family events were delivered with Dale Austin from Dingo Cockatoo Aboriginal Culture, bringing carers, children and young people together for hands-on cultural learning and connection.

Across the two events, around 100 people took part in activities including didgeridoo making, traditional weaving, ground oven cooking, animal encounters and talks, and ochre painting.





These events were warmly received by families and created meaningful opportunities for children, young people and carers to learn together, connect with culture, and share positive experiences.





Due to the strong response, FKCANT plans to continue offering similar cultural activities next year.

Women's Day - March '26

FKCANT staff and carers attended an International Women's Day luncheon at Mindil Beach Casino Resort, joining women from across the community for a day of connection, reflection and celebration. The event provided an opportunity to recognise the strength and contribution of women in caring roles, while giving carers space to hear from guest speakers, connect with others and feel acknowledged for the important role they play in the lives of children, young people and families.

The luncheon also supported Dolly's Dream, raising funds to help further its work in addressing bullying and cyberbullying and creating safer, kinder communities for children and young people. Supporting this important cause strongly aligns with FKCANT's commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and added a particularly meaningful dimension to the day.









Couch Surfing - April ‘26

FKCANT was proud to once again participate in Anglicare NT's Couch Surfing event in April 2026, joining young people, community members and service providers to raise awareness of youth homelessness and the importance of every young person having access to a safe, stable and supportive place to call home.

The event provided another valuable opportunity for the FKCANT team to connect with the community, strengthen relationships across the sector and raise awareness of the important role foster and kinship carers play in providing children and young people with safety, stability and belonging.

Couch Surfing is always a vibrant and engaging event, but behind the activities is an important message. Young people transitioning through and from care can be particularly vulnerable to housing instability and homelessness, reinforcing the importance of strong relationships, early planning and continued support.

FKCANT was pleased to stand alongside Anglicare NT and fellow community organisations in supporting this important conversation and advocating for a future where every young person has a safe place to belong and the support they need to thrive.

Mother’s Day Celebrations - May ‘26

The Mother’s Day events in Darwin and Alice Springs celebrated foster and kinship mums and mother figures, recognising the love, stability and everyday care they provide to children and young people.

The event created a meaningful opportunity for appreciation, connection and celebration, acknowledging the important role foster mums play in supporting children, young people and families across the Northern Territory.









ANNUAL REPORT
CARER RECRUITMENT & ASSESSMENT
JULY 2025 – JUNE 2026

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S INTRODUCTION

The 2025–26 year marked an important period of growth, consolidation and expansion for the Foster & Kinship Carers Association NT (FKCANT) Carer Recruitment and Assessment Program.

Building on the foundations established during the program's first year, FKCANT transitioned from implementation into an increasingly mature and embedded Territory-wide service. Recruitment and assessment functions were brought together into a more integrated pathway, regional service delivery expanded, workforce and operational structures continued to develop, and our partnership with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) strengthened.

Throughout the year, our focus remained on providing high-quality, timely and culturally responsive recruitment, assessment and reauthorisation services while improving the experience of prospective and existing carers. This was achieved within a challenging operating environment that included workforce shortages, delays in probity and external documentation, increasing regional demand, and continued uncertainty regarding longer-term funding arrangements.

Importantly, demand for the service remained strong. While the number of new assessments completed during the second half of the financial year was lower than the first half, this reflected constrained assessor availability rather than a reduction in community interest. By 30 June 2026, a substantial pipeline of prospective carers remained actively progressing through the assessment pathway.

This Annual Report reflects the achievements, challenges and key learnings from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 and demonstrates FKCANT's continued commitment to building a sustainable pool of safe, supported and well-prepared foster and kinship carers across the Northern Territory.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND CONSOLIDATION

During 2025–26, the Foster and Kinship Carer Recruitment and Assessment Program progressed from an implementation and consolidation phase into a more embedded service model.

Following the extension of the DCF funding agreement in June 2025, FKCANT's responsibilities expanded beyond Greater Darwin to include management of the Territory-wide Become a Carer service, Expressions of Interest (EOIs), and staged assessment and reauthorisation activity in Katherine, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek.

This expansion enabled FKCANT to increasingly manage the prospective carer journey as an integrated pathway from initial enquiry through to assessment and authorisation. Bringing recruitment coordination, EOI management and assessment functions together reduced fragmentation, improved continuity of communication and enabled issues affecting eligibility and readiness to be identified earlier.

Core processes for referral acceptance, probity documentation, EOI management, assessment allocation, assessment completion, data management and reporting became increasingly embedded in day-to-day operations throughout the year.

Regular governance and operational meetings with DCF continued to provide an important mechanism for joint problem-solving, clarification of responsibilities and escalation of systemic issues. These communication pathways have contributed to improved coordination and greater consistency in service delivery.

At the same time, the expansion of the program significantly increased its geographical reach and operational workload. Territory-wide EOI management, regional travel, applicant support, new assessments, reauthorisations, stakeholder engagement, quality assurance and increasingly complex reporting requirements have all placed greater demands on the available workforce.

SERVICE JOURNEY AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The 2025–26 year demonstrated substantial progress in the maturity and reach of the service.

A key achievement was the continued development of an integrated recruitment and assessment model. Prospective carers increasingly experienced continuity from their first enquiry through to assessment, with dedicated recruitment coordination supporting early engagement, follow-up and progression.

The appointment of a dedicated Carer Recruitment Coordinator in October 2025 significantly strengthened FKCANT's ability to manage EOIs, coordinate recruitment activities and provide prospective carers with timely information and support.

The program also continued its expansion across the Northern Territory. Assessment and reauthorisation activity developed in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. Increased travel and face-to-face engagement, particularly in Central Australia, strengthened relationships with carers, DCF staff and community stakeholders and increased the visibility of FKCANT's services.

Positive feedback from DCF Greater Darwin Region, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek regarding the quality and professionalism of FKCANT assessment reports was an important indicator of service quality. Feedback highlighted the thoroughness of assessments, quality of analysis and recommendations and professionalism demonstrated by assessment staff.

Carer reauthorisations remained a particular strength of the program. During January to June 2026, all 14 completed reauthorisation assessments were approved by DCF.

Importantly, demand for new carer assessments also remained strong. While completion numbers reduced during the second half of the year, this occurred at the same time as the active assessment pipeline grew significantly. This indicates that assessment output was constrained principally by available workforce capacity rather than declining demand.

RECRUITMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Recruitment became an increasingly significant component of FKCANT's work during 2025–26.

Across the year, FKCANT received strong community interest in foster and kinship caring through both the Become a Carer pathway and direct approaches to FKCANT.

The organisation expanded its community awareness activities through targeted advertising and regional engagement. Television advertising promoting foster and kinship care commenced across Darwin through Channel 9, while broader Territory-wide advertising was being developed to support future recruitment activity.

Regional travel, community engagement activities and local promotion also contributed to maintaining enquiry levels and re-establishing recruitment activity in areas where community interest had previously declined.

FKCANT strengthened its approach to measuring recruitment effectiveness by asking prospective applicants how they became aware of fostering opportunities and what influenced their decision to enquire. This information will assist the organisation to better evaluate recruitment activity and direct resources toward strategies that demonstrate the greatest impact.

Applicant engagement and retention remained important priorities. FKCANT also developed a brief survey for applicants who withdraw or cease engaging with the process to better understand barriers to progression and identify opportunities to improve communication, support and the overall applicant experience.

REGIONAL EXPANSION

The expansion of recruitment and assessment services beyond Greater Darwin was a major development during the year.

In **Alice Springs**, increased face-to-face engagement helped rebuild relationships with foster and kinship carers, DCF staff and community stakeholders. Regular visits strengthened local visibility and supported recruitment, assessment, information and training activities.

In **Tennant Creek**, assessment and recruitment activity continued to develop through regular engagement with DCF and coordinated delivery through the Central Australian service model.

In **Katherine**, referral pathways and service relationships continued to develop; however, recruitment and community engagement remained areas requiring greater focus. Experience during the year reinforced the importance of sustained local engagement rather than relying solely on a Territory-wide recruitment approach.

Regional engagement also began to generate interest beyond the existing funded footprint, including enquiries from Nhulunbuy and East Arnhem.

The experience of regional expansion reinforced the importance of balancing consistent Territory-wide assessment standards with locally responsive approaches that recognise the circumstances, cultural considerations and service environments of individual communities.

KEY LEARNINGS

A major learning throughout 2025–26 was the importance of maintaining an integrated and well-governed pathway from initial enquiry through to assessment.

Earlier experience demonstrated that fragmented responsibility for EOIs can contribute to delays, document duplication, applicant disengagement and inefficient use of assessment resources. Consolidating EOI management, recruitment coordination and assessment within the one program created clearer accountability and improved continuity.

Early engagement with applicants also emerged as essential. Addressing eligibility, housing, safety, probity and readiness issues at an early stage reduces unnecessary assessment activity and helps applicants make informed decisions about progressing.

Applicant engagement remains one of the strongest influences on recruitment outcomes. Regular communication, prompt follow-up and practical assistance with documentation are particularly important in reducing attrition.

The year also demonstrated that recruitment success must be matched by sufficient assessment capacity. Generating additional EOIs does not translate into additional authorised carers unless sufficient qualified assessor capacity is available to progress applicants through assessment in a timely way.

This became particularly evident during January to June 2026. Community interest remained strong and applicant engagement improved, but assessment output was constrained by limited assessor availability. The number of active assessments consequently grew substantially.

Regional expansion has further reinforced that successful recruitment is relationship-based. While centralised systems can support Territory-wide service delivery, sustained local presence and face-to-face relationships remain critical, particularly in regional and remote communities.

Another key learning has been the need for adequate operational leadership and workforce resilience. A small assessment workforce is highly vulnerable to vacancies, recruitment delays, leave and competing management responsibilities. A reduction in even one available assessor can have a material impact on assessment throughput and regional capacity.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

A number of operational and systemic challenges continued throughout the year.

Workforce Capacity and Assessment Output

Workforce availability was one of the most significant constraints on assessment output during the second half of the reporting year.

During January to June 2026, FKCANT continued to manage new assessments, reauthorisations, regional travel, applicant engagement, report writing and quality-assurance requirements with limited assessor availability.

For much of this period, the operational assessment workforce effectively comprised only **two full-time assessors**. The additional Team Leader/Assessor joined late in the reporting period and was subsequently unavailable for part of June due to approved leave.

At 30 June 2026, **42 new-carer assessments remained actively progressing**, demonstrating that reduced completion numbers were not caused by declining applicant demand. Rather, the active pipeline had grown beyond the capacity of the available assessor workforce to progress all applicants to completion within the reporting period.

This experience highlighted the vulnerability of the existing staffing structure to vacancies, leave and workforce transitions and reinforced the need for sufficient assessment capacity and dedicated operational leadership if service demand continues to grow.

Probity and Documentation Delays

Delays in obtaining required probity documentation from prospective and existing carers continued to extend assessment timeframes. SafeNT processing timeframes also affected progression.

FKCANT responded through a more proactive support model, with the Recruitment Coordinator and, where appropriate, Carer Advocacy and Support Officers assisting applicants and carers to understand and complete documentation.

The Recruitment Coordinator also established a working relationship with SafeNT to assist in progressing outstanding documentation where possible.

Placement Information for Reauthorisations

Obtaining mandatory placement-related information from DCF case management teams continued to cause delays in some reauthorisation assessments. Staff vacancies, turnover and cases without an allocated case manager contributed to these difficulties.

FKCANT continued to raise these issues through regular governance meetings and work collaboratively with DCF to strengthen information-sharing arrangements.

Approval Delays

Delays in DCF approval of completed assessments re-emerged during the year despite previously agreed streamlined approval pathways.

FKCANT introduced a formal follow-up process, reviewing submitted assessments after one week and escalating outstanding approvals where required.

CRM and Reporting

The new client record management system became embedded in daily operations; however, considerable work was required to tailor reporting functionality to the complexity of Territory-wide recruitment, assessment and reauthorisation activities.

Staff continued to undertake manual reconciliation and supplementary spreadsheet reporting while data entry practices and system functionality were refined.

Accommodation and Infrastructure

Continued organisational growth placed increasing pressure on FKCANT's existing premises. Limited confidential meeting spaces, interview rooms and suitable areas for online meetings affected daily operations.

The need for larger, fit-for-purpose premises has become increasingly apparent; however, major accommodation and infrastructure commitments cannot reasonably be made without certainty regarding the continuation and funding level of the Carer Recruitment and Assessment Program.

Funding and Contract Certainty

A significant challenge at the end of the reporting year was the absence of certainty regarding the continuation of the program beyond the short-term funding arrangement.

Although FKCANT has established an integrated Territory-wide recruitment and assessment service and is experiencing a growing pipeline of prospective carers, longer-term workforce and operational planning remains dependent on confirmation from DCF regarding future contracting arrangements.

The lack of funding certainty affects FKCANT's ability to recruit and retain specialist staff, commit to suitable premises, establish longer-term regional schedules and make infrastructure investments required to support the service.

SERVICE INNOVATIONS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Innovation throughout 2025–26 primarily focused on strengthening and refining existing systems rather than introducing major structural change.

The integrated recruitment and assessment pathway remained one of the program's most significant improvements, allowing FKCANT to continually review the applicant journey and identify opportunities to reduce delays and improve communication.

The standardised DCF referral form and checklist continued to improve documentation quality and reduce unnecessary follow-up.

The implementation of the CRM strengthened workflow visibility, internal oversight and data integrity, while ongoing refinement aims to reduce reliance on manual reporting.

Recruitment innovation included television advertising, regional promotional activities and improved data collection regarding how prospective carers learn about fostering.

Feedback from applicants, carers, staff and DCF continued to inform service improvements and ensure recruitment and assessment practice remained responsive to stakeholder experience.

STAFFING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The Carer Recruitment and Assessment workforce continued to develop during 2025–26; however, the staffing profile requires careful explanation because the two part-time assessment positions also carry the program's key leadership responsibilities.

By the end of the reporting period, the team comprised:

- **two full-time Carer Assessors** undertaking direct assessment and reauthorisation work;
- **one 0.5 FTE Assessment and Practice Manager**, who also undertakes assessments while providing practice leadership, quality assurance, mentoring and oversight of the Recruitment and Assessment Program;
- **one 0.5 FTE Team Leader/Assessor**, who undertakes assessments while also providing day-to-day operational leadership, staff support, workload coordination and assessment oversight; and
- **one full-time Carer Recruitment Coordinator**, responsible for EOI management, applicant engagement, recruitment activity and progression into the assessment pathway.

Accordingly, the two part-time assessor positions should not be viewed as two additional 0.5 FTE staff available solely for assessment casework. Both positions carry substantial management, supervision, quality-assurance and operational responsibilities in addition to assessment activity.

This distinction became particularly important during January to June 2026.

Following the departure of an experienced assessor and while replacement and leadership arrangements were being established, assessment capacity was significantly constrained. The Team Leader/Assessor did not commence until late in the reporting period and subsequently had a period of approved leave. As a result, FKCANT operated with only two full-time assessors undertaking the majority of direct assessment activity for much of the six-month period.

During the same period, the program continued to absorb Territory-wide recruitment responsibilities, regional travel, reauthorisations and a growing volume of prospective applicants.

The result was a substantial increase in the active assessment pipeline. At 30 June 2026, 42 new-carer assessments remained actively progressing.

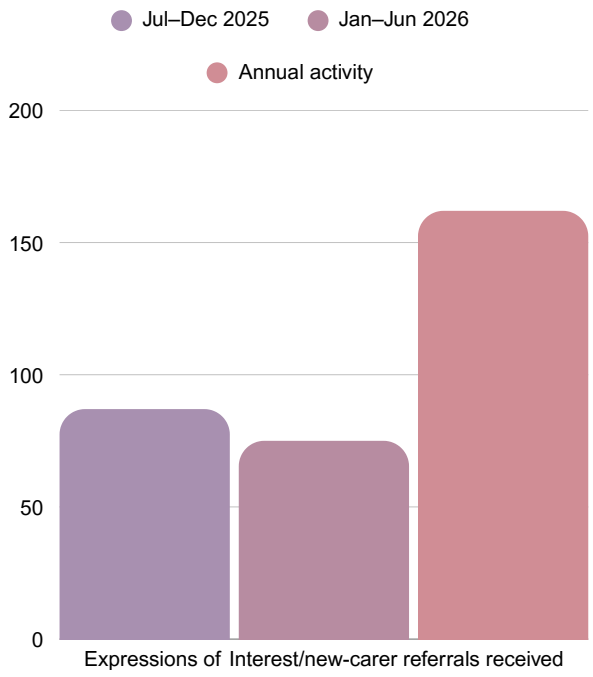
This provides important context for the eight new assessments completed between January and June 2026. The reduction from 15 completions in the previous six months reflected constrained workforce availability rather than reduced demand or reduced applicant engagement.

The experience demonstrates that the current workforce has limited resilience to staff vacancies, recruitment periods, leave or increases in referral volume. It also highlights the importance of separating management and operational leadership responsibilities from direct assessment capacity when considering future staffing requirements.

An additional contract assessor position was advertised in June 2026 in an effort to strengthen capacity; however, recruitment and longer-term workforce decisions remain closely linked to certainty regarding ongoing program funding.

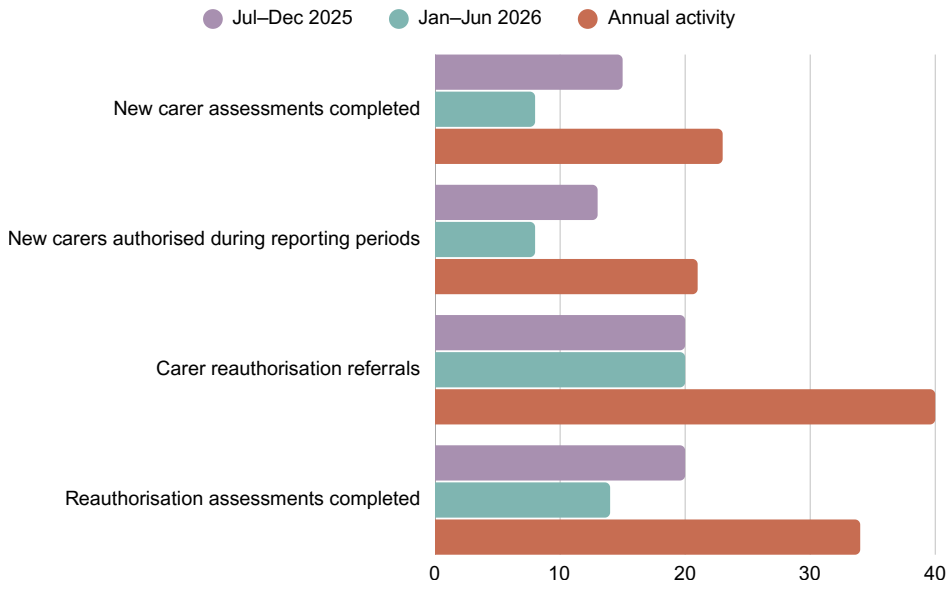
PROGRAM DATA - 1 JULY 2025 TO 30 JUNE 2026

The combined six-month reporting data provides the following annual activity snapshot.



These figures reflect activity recorded within each six-month reporting period. Individual EOIs, assessments and authorisations frequently span more than one reporting period; therefore, annual totals should not be interpreted as a single cohort conversion calculation.

During July to December 2025, 87 EOIs were recorded, including applicants referred through Become a Carer and applicants who approached FKCANT directly. Fifteen new-carer assessments were completed, resulting in 13 new authorisations during the period.



During January to June 2026, 75 **new-carer referrals** were recorded. Eight new assessments were completed during the period. Importantly, a further **42 applicants remained actively progressing at 30 June 2026**, demonstrating a significant pipeline of prospective carers that had not yet reached assessment completion.

The combined annual figures therefore need to be considered alongside workforce availability. The lower number of completions in the second half of the year was not indicative of reduced community interest. Rather, applicant demand remained strong while available assessment capacity was constrained.

The **162 EOIs/new-carer referrals recorded across the year** demonstrate sustained community interest in foster and kinship care. Ensuring sufficient workforce capacity to progress suitable applicants through assessment in a timely manner remains critical to converting this interest into additional authorised carers.

CONCLUSION AND POSITION AT 30 JUNE 2026

The 2025–26 year represents an important transition for FKCANT's Carer Recruitment and Assessment Program from establishment and consolidation toward an integrated Territory-wide service model.

Over the year, FKCANT expanded its regional footprint, integrated recruitment and assessment functions, strengthened recruitment coordination and operational leadership and continued to develop productive working relationships with DCF regional offices and the Contract Management Team.

The program maintained high assessment standards while managing increasing complexity and geographical reach. Strong approval outcomes for completed reauthorisations and positive stakeholder feedback demonstrate the quality and professionalism of FKCANT's assessment practice.

The year also highlighted a significant mismatch between growing recruitment demand and available assessment capacity. By the end of June 2026, 42 new-carer assessments were actively progressing. This substantial pipeline, combined with the workforce shortages experienced during the reporting period, demonstrates that assessment completion numbers cannot be considered separately from staffing capacity.

External factors also continued to affect service performance, including probity processing, access to placement information, approval delays and reporting-system limitations.

A further significant issue is the absence of certainty regarding the program beyond 30 October 2026.

While FKCANT has identified opportunities to strengthen workforce capacity, expand regional engagement, improve applicant progression and further develop Territory-wide recruitment, the organisation is not currently in a position to undertake reliable planning for the full 2026–27 year without confirmation of an ongoing contract and associated funding from DCF.

This uncertainty directly affects decisions regarding:

- retention and recruitment of qualified assessment staff;
- additional assessment capacity;
- management and administrative resourcing;
- regional travel and service schedules;
- expansion of recruitment activity;
- accommodation and confidential interview facilities;
- technology and reporting investment; and
- longer-term service development.

FKCANT has submitted a business proposal seeking continued and increased investment in the service. The proposal identifies the workforce and operational capacity considered necessary to sustainably respond to the demand now being generated through the integrated recruitment and assessment model.

Until DCF confirms the future contracting arrangement, FKCANT's immediate priority is to maintain service continuity, progress the existing assessment and reauthorisation workload as effectively as available resources allow, support prospective carers already engaged in the pathway, and continue constructive discussions with DCF regarding the future of the program.

FKCANT remains committed to the integrated recruitment and assessment model and believes the results achieved to date demonstrate its value. The program has created a coordinated pathway from enquiry through to assessment, expanded access across regional areas and generated a substantial pipeline of prospective carers.

The next stage of the program will depend on whether the service is provided with sufficient contractual certainty and workforce investment to convert this growing demand into timely assessment, authorisation and increased family-based placement capacity for children and young people across the Northern Territory.

LOOKING AHEAD

Priorities for 2026-27

As FKCANT enters 2026–2027, our focus is on building upon the significant progress of the past year and ensuring that growth, stronger partnerships and increased influence translate into meaningful and lasting improvements for foster and kinship carers and the children and young people they support.

The expansion of FKCANT's role in carer recruitment and assessment has created an important opportunity to strengthen the pathway into caring. With Expressions of Interest increasing significantly during 2025–2026, our priority is now to maintain this momentum, supporting prospective carers from their first enquiry through assessment and approval, reducing unnecessary delays and ensuring more suitable carers are available when children and young people need safe and nurturing homes.

We will continue to strengthen recruitment across the Territory, including regional and remote communities, while ensuring our approach is culturally responsive and reflects the diversity of Northern Territory families and communities. Importantly, recruitment cannot be considered in isolation. Attracting carers must be matched by a strong commitment to supporting and retaining them once they begin their caring journey.

From Listening to Action

A major priority for the year ahead will be continuing the work arising from the 14 recommendations of the Foster and Kinship Carer Engagement Project.

Through the Carer Reference Group, foster and kinship carers now have a direct and ongoing opportunity to work alongside FKCANT and senior representatives of the Department of Children and Families to identify practical solutions and improve policy, practice, communication and decision-making.

Our focus in 2026–2027 will be on maintaining momentum and ensuring this important work progresses from recommendations and discussion to visible and measurable improvements for carers.

FKCANT will continue to advocate for carers to be recognised as knowledgeable and essential members of the care team and for their experience and understanding of the children in their homes to be genuinely considered in decisions affecting those children.

Embedding Trauma-Informed Practice

Trauma-informed practice will remain a significant focus of our systemic advocacy.

We welcome legislative progress that strengthens the voice of children and young people and recognises the important knowledge carers bring to decision-making. Our attention will now increasingly turn to how these principles are embedded in everyday practice.

We will continue working with the Minister, the Department and sector partners to advocate for a system where trauma-informed principles are reflected not only in policy and legislation, but in interactions, case planning, placement decisions, reunification processes and the way children, young people and carers experience the system.

Strengthening the Financial Sustainability of Caring

The financial sustainability of foster and kinship care will continue to feature prominently in our advocacy.

Through our involvement with the National Foster & Kinship Care Collective, FKCANT will continue contributing the Northern Territory perspective to national advocacy concerning carer payments, financial parity, means testing, superannuation, Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy.

These issues have significant implications for recruitment and retention. People who volunteer to provide homes for vulnerable children should not experience unnecessary financial disadvantage because they have chosen to care. We will continue advocating for policies that properly recognise both the immediate and long-term financial impacts of the caring role.

Supporting Young People Beyond Care

Our participation in the NT Home Stretch Committee will remain another important area of systemic advocacy.

We will continue working with young people with lived experience and our sector partners to strengthen transition planning, increase access to extended and after-care support, and advocate for stable housing, education, employment and practical supports for young people transitioning to independence.

Central to this work is a commitment to ensuring young people are not simply consulted but have meaningful opportunities to influence the systems and decisions that affect their futures.

Investing in Our Carers

Alongside systemic reform, we will continue investing in the everyday experience of being a foster or kinship carer.

Accessible advocacy and support, meaningful learning and development, opportunities for peer connection and responsive assistance when challenges arise will remain fundamental to our work.

We will continue listening to carers about the training, resources and support they need and strengthening opportunities for carers across the Territory to connect, learn and feel part of a community that understands and values their contribution.

Our Priorities for 2026-2027

In the year ahead, FKCANT will focus on:

- Growing and sustaining the carer community through responsive recruitment, timely assessment and strong ongoing support.
- Progressing the 14 Carer Engagement Project recommendations and supporting the Carer Reference Group to turn carer feedback into practical reform.
- Advocating for trauma-informed practice to be consistently embedded throughout the Northern Territory care system.
- Strengthening carer recognition and participation in decision-making, alongside meaningful participation by children and young people.
- Advancing financial reform for carers, locally and nationally, including issues affecting allowances, means testing, superannuation and access to childcare subsidies.
- Supporting better transitions from care through our involvement in the NT Home Stretch Committee.
- Expanding accessible learning, development and peer connection opportunities that respond to the changing needs of carers.
- Strengthening partnerships while maintaining our independent advocacy voice, ensuring FKCANT continues to constructively collaborate while speaking clearly and confidently when change is needed.

Continuing to Grow, Continuing to Advocate

The coming year presents both opportunity and responsibility for FKCANT.

Our organisation has grown, our role has expanded and the voice of carers is increasingly present in conversations about the future of the care system. Our responsibility now is to ensure that this momentum leads to lasting change.

Success will not simply be measured by the number of carers recruited, assessments completed, meetings attended or matters resolved. It will be reflected in carers who feel respected and supported, children and young people who experience greater stability and belonging, and a care system that listens, learns and responds to the people who experience it every day.

As we move into 2026–2027, FKCANT will continue to be ambitious for our carers and for the children and young people they support. We will build on what is working, challenge what is not, strengthen the partnerships that enable change and ensure the voices of foster and kinship carers remain at the centre of our work.

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.

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