



*Centre for Excellence*  
in Child and Family Welfare Inc.

# **Annual Report** 2016 - 2017



Acknowledgements

The Centre respectfully acknowledges that we work on the traditional land of the Kulin Nation, and we acknowledge the Wurundjeri people who are the traditional custodians of this land.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and those of the future. We acknowledge that we work on stolen land that was never ceded.



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



Our Vision

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

Our Purpose

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

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

**Capacity Building** Strengthen the capacity of organisations to provide services that best suit the needs of vulnerable families and children.

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## Chair's Report

**This annual report comes in the Centre's 105th year and at a time of significant change and development in Victoria's child and family services sector.**

Victoria is poised to implement some of the most significant developments for child, youth, and family services in a generation. Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendations are now changing policy and practice in ways we've never before seen. Victoria's Roadmap for Reform positions child and family services to focus on prevention and early intervention. And the reform process has significant effects on our sector and our workforce.

In 2016-17, the Centre was a strong voice on behalf of the best interests of children in all of these developments.

The Centre's leadership has involved significant public discourse on social issues, resource advice on services, advice on the government's legislative program, and providing organisational guidance towards sector-led best practice.

With this great progress by the Centre there should come thanks. I want to acknowledge and thank Deb Tsorbaris for her continued hard work. Her advocacy on behalf of Victoria's most vulnerable children and young people has been a key driver in government commitments to overhaul child and family services. I also want to thank the committed and dedicated Centre staff.

I would like to thank Board members Grant Boyd, Gerard Jones, Peter Mulholland, Fran O'Toole, Lisa Griffiths, Karen Milward, and Greg Levine OAM for their expertise and experience. And I thank outgoing Vice Chair Sheree Limbrick, and outgoing Board members Kelly Stanton and Athina Georgiou for their dedicated service to the Centre.

I would also like to recognise the long lasting contribution to child welfare from retiring Berry Street CEO Sandie de Wolf AM. Her vision inspires all of us to seek the best possible outcomes for children and families in our care.

Whilst the last year has shown great progress, our look to the future tells us there is more to be done in ensuring we have a capable and effective service system for vulnerable children, young people and families. The latest data from the Australian Institute of Family Studies tells us that vulnerable families are bending under many strains, with increasing rates of children entering out-of-home care.

We have 'reform momentum' but we need to push harder if we wish to turn around current Victorian trends in out-of-home care and family welfare. In a year which includes a state election, the Centre's key focus will be seeking further system reform to improve the way we keep children safe and support Victorian families to keep children safe.

Paul McDonald **Chairperson**



## CEO's Report

**Every day, the Centre works alongside our members and stakeholders to improve the lives of all Victorian children. This work extends from the early years through to leaving care.**

It requires genuine partnership with government and the wider public, to ensure children and young people are safe and develop to their full potential.

2016-17 was another milestone year at the Centre.

This year I was especially inspired by the dedication of our Ball debutantes, by the commitment of carers at our Education Forum, and by the ambition of care leavers entering higher education through Raising Expectations.

**We all have a critical role in building a society where children and young people can achieve anything and know that it's never too late to realise their dreams.**

We worked with government through the Family Violence Royal Commission and Roadmap for Reform initiatives to improve the lives of all children and families.

We have continued to build stronger working relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. I pay tribute to Australia's first Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People Andrew Jackomos, whose leadership on behalf of Aboriginal children, families and communities has left an incredible legacy for us all to uphold.

And we were delighted that Minister Mikakos launched OPEN as the first evidence-based hub in Australia – the sector has shown strong leadership in driving the

shift to the language and practice of outcomes. OPEN partners with researchers and evaluators, documenting local innovations, implementing evidence-informed approaches and systematically engaging with evidence-based models for particular cohorts.

I would like to thank our Board, Chair Paul McDonald, and all Centre staff for their terrific dedication. And I thank our Patron, Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott OAM, for her ongoing and generous support.

I would also like to pay tribute to outgoing Berry Street CEO, Sandie de Wolf AM. Sandie has spent her life working for children, and her leadership is recognised by receiving Life Membership at the Centre, induction into the Victorian Women's Honour Roll, and an AM through the Order of Australia. We will miss you Sandie!

There is great work underway but we need to go further. More children and families are under strain than ever before. This presents a serious challenge to parents, many who are just managing to make it through day by day.

**The Centre is responding by continuing to build collective action and leading a collective voice. Across our sector we have some amazing leaders and thinkers – but we need to be bolder in our efforts to shape a better life for all Victorian families and children.**

Deb Tsorbaris **CEO**

# Advocating for change

that improves the lives  
of children, young  
people and families.



In 2016 and 2017, the Centre continued to advocate for children, young people and families through community campaigns, policy submissions, and sector collaborations.

## Roadmap for Reform

The Centre continued our strong involvement in the Roadmap for Reform agenda for child and family services. **CEO Deb Tsorbaris has co-chaired the Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group alongside Minister Jenny Mikakos since 2016.**

'In 2016-17, Deb also co-chaired:

- the Family Services Redesign Working Group,
- the Learning System Practice Implementation Group – with Frank Oberklaid from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

**The Centre co-led two Roadmap for Reform Symposiums – at the MCG and in Mt Eliza – updating the sector on key developments and seeking input into the design of particular initiatives.**

This meant providing strategic advice and leadership in relation to a number of areas.

These included the South Initiative project, the Intensive Support Service for young people in residential care, and the Intensive Support in the Early Years initiative.

## Reforming the Responses to Vulnerable Children and Families

As part of ongoing efforts to keep the sector informed about the reform process, the Centre hosted a sector briefing in March 2017 with Kym Peake.

This briefing gave CEO and Board members in the child and family services sector unique insight into departmental planning ahead of the state budget and leading into an election year.

*"The next six to twelve months are a critical period for translating our discussions into implementation, and building momentum for change."*

*We know that effecting change within families is difficult. And supporting families, for those changes to stick, is harder still."*

Kym Peake, Secretary of Department of Health and Human Services



*"Over the past 12 months we have worked together - and with the Department of Premier and Cabinet - through symposiums, the Roadmap to Reform Implementation Group committees and family violence consultations on the future vision for child and family services." Kym Peake, Secretary of Department of Health and Human Services*



# Improving outcomes for Aboriginal young people

## Working closely with Aboriginal organisations

The Centre worked closely in 2016-17 with Aboriginal organisations, the Aboriginal Children’s and Young People’s Alliance and our colleagues – particularly Andrew Jackomos, Commissioner for Aboriginal and Young People – to foster a culturally respectful environment and ensure that we are all working in the best interests of Aboriginal children, young people and families.

Our work included active participation in:

- Aboriginal Children’s Forums,
- the Transitioning Aboriginal Children to ACCOs Steering Committee,
- the Cultural Support Plan Implementation Group,
- the Transitioning Aboriginal Children to ACCOs Steering Committee,
- the Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making Group,
- the Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement External Working Group, and
- the Aboriginal Workforce Capability sub-group.

We took part in the Bendigo NAIDOC Children’s Day, donating 100 books written, designed or published by Aboriginal writers, artists and publishers.

These were made available for Aboriginal children from infant to secondary school age.

**We worked closely with the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) on their Family Matters campaign that aims to break the traumatic cycle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child removal.**

The Centre recognised the importance of key anniversaries in 2017 including:

- the 20th anniversary of Bringing them Home;
- the 25th anniversary of the Mabo Decision;
- the 50th anniversary of the Referendum that counted Aboriginal people in the Census and gave federal parliament the power to overrule racially discriminatory state legislation, and
- the 60th anniversary of the NAIDOC Committee.



## Supporting organisations to meet new Child Safe Standards

The Centre supported member organisations to cultivate child safe environments by promoting the *Betrayal of Trust* inquiry and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Centre delivered information sessions on Child Safe Standards, provided advice on child safe policies to organisations, and continued to develop resources.

**With the support of the Commission of Children and Young People, the Centre developed and published a facilitator’s guide to support organisations to train staff, volunteers and contractors on the compulsory Child Safe Standards.**

The guide is intended to equip individuals to train organisations on the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

The Centre developed and delivered over 40 information sessions on Child Safe Standards in 2016-17 to a range of member and non-member organisations.

The Centre was also commissioned by the Commission for Children and Young People to develop and deliver 12 custom training sessions to the entertainment and transport industry.

In addition, the Centre was commissioned by the Victorian Regulation and Qualifications Authority to develop tools and deliver Child Safe Standard training to review bodies and reviewers to assess schools on compliance with the Child Safe Standards.

Further, the Centre assisted the City of Port Phillip to develop child safety tools to support the council to be a child safe organisation, focusing on continuous improvement processes.

The Centre continues to deliver expert training on the Child Safe Standards both to the sector and beyond. In November 2017 the Centre will train the entire workforce of the State Library of Victoria in Child Safe Standards.

We continue to provide training to a diverse range of institutions including community housing providers, youth theatre groups and early childhood and kindergarten programs.



## Redress Scheme for Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse

The Commonwealth has tabled a proposed Redress Scheme to commence in 2018. If made law, the Scheme will be available for child sexual abuse survivors from Commonwealth institutions. The state government and funded institutions need to decide whether to opt in. We will continue to advocate for a Scheme inclusive of all abuse types and easy to navigate for institutional abuse survivors.

# Influencing Policy and Practice

## Submissions and Reports

The Centre made submissions, wrote papers and gave feedback on an extensive range of policy issues, focusing on the needs of children, families and young people. Over 2016-17, our policy and advocacy work included submissions, reports and feedback on:

- ✓ the proposed amendments to the *Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)* addressing direct cross-examining of parties in proceedings involving family violence
- ✓ the Parliamentary Inquiry into Youth Justice
- ✓ the *Senate Inquiry into the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Family Payments Structural Reform and Participation Measures) Bill (No 2) 2015*
- ✓ the Victoria Legal Aid Means Test Review Options Paper: Response
- ✓ the Commission for Children and Young People's *Inquiry into the Implementation of the Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014* Consultation Paper
- ✓ the Productivity Commission's *Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services: Identifying Sectors for Reform*
- ✓ the Victorian Law Reform Commission's *Role of Victims of Crime in the Criminal Trial Process Report August 2016*
- ✓ the Victoria Legal Aid consultation and options paper *Child Protection Aid Services Review Consultation and Options Paper October 2016*
- ✓ the Criminal Law Review: Proposed Reforms to criminal procedure: Reducing Trauma and Delay for witnesses and victims

- ✓ the *Family Violence Protection Amendment Bill 2017 - consultation draft Bill*
- ✓ Baptcare's new research into the impact of family violence directed towards kinship care placements on children and families in Victorian kinship care
- ✓ the Victorian Support and Safety Hub draft state-wide concept and proposed branding concept
- ✓ the Victorian Ombudsman's Office's investigation into financial support for kinship carers

**In coordination with The Council to Homeless Persons, the Centre introduced the August 2016 edition of Parity, with a focus on children and homelessness.**



## Royal Commission into Family Violence and the Support and Safety Hub consultations

In 2016, the Royal Commission into Family Violence delivered its far-reaching report with 227 recommendations. Over the past 18 months the Centre has been working with government, our member organisations, and other stakeholders to support the implementation of these recommendations.

We participated in the Support and Safety Hubs Expert Design group and other advisory groups in late 2016 and 2017, including the Multi-agency risk assessment and management (MARAM) and Information Sharing Expert Advisory Group. In these forums we consistently advocated for the best interests of children and highlighted the critical importance of retaining ChildFIRST functions in any new integrated model.

CEO Deb Tsorbaris continued to participate in the Family Violence Steering Committee and the Social Services Taskforce established by the government to advise on, and oversee, implementation.



# Providing a voice for the sector

In 2016-17, the Centre’s Sector Development Forums focused on discussing systemic, strategic, and long-term issues for sustainable child and family services.

**The Centre convened standing committees for professional workers, concentrating on specific fields of work.**

**Integrated Family Services/Child FIRST (Child and Family Information Referral and Support Team)**

This network focused on services system design and strengthening sector partnerships.

**Leaving Care and Post Care Practitioners**

This network addressing the government policy space after children in care turned 18. Learnings from the Leaving Care and Post Care Practitioners helped inform and guide the Centre in our advocacy and partnership with the Home Stretch campaign.

**Kinship Services**

The Kinship Services network provided an advocacy space for kinship care advocacy and offered networking opportunities to kinship care providers.

**Quality Learning Circle**

The Quality Learning Circle meetings focused on sharing information across operational and quality management workforces in child and family services.

**Foster Care Network**

In partnership with the Foster Care Association of Victoria, these meetings included foster care updates across government, the Fostering Connections project, and the broader foster care sector.

**Placement Prevention and Reunification Network**

A new network of team leaders working in family support, with children who are at imminent risk of being placed in care for the first time. The practice focus discussed how children could remain at home, and reunified with families if they are placed in care.

**Families Social Security Reform Network**

Under the auspices of *Treating Families Fairly*, this network formed in response to recent conditional Commonwealth government policies including the proposed drug trials for welfare recipients and the rollout of cashless debit card trials.

# Building a strong community of supporters

Centre advocacy and campaigning



Photos: Centre staff IDAHOBIT morning tea, staff celebrating International Women’s Day 2017

## Our advocacy is for a safe, equal society for all children, families and young people.

In May 2017, our staff came together for a morning tea of rainbow cupcakes, fairy bread and colourful outfits to celebrate International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT).

We believe in dignity and fairness for all, working closely with LGBTIQ support organisations, foster carers, families, and young people.

**Our Board endorsed a statement announcing our support for a ‘Yes’ vote in the marriage law survey.**



During SNAICC’s Family Matters National Week of Action in May 2017, we formally signed the **Family Matters Statement of Commitment** to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their organisations to achieve the goal of the Family Matters campaign.



The Centre strongly supported the **Home Stretch** campaign – aiming to achieve legislative change throughout Australia to extend the age at which young people leave out-of-home care from 18 to 21 – with an advocacy focus on Victoria becoming a pilot site for reform. We will work to build campaign momentum in the lead up to the 2018 state election.



# Debutante Ball 2017

The Centre was proud to host the 2017 Debutante Ball for young people in or with a lived experience of out-of-home care.

**With 38 young participants and close to 450 attendees on the night, the Ball was a huge success for everyone involved.**

The young people – who are either currently in care, or have spent time in out-of-home care – spent 10 weeks completing dance lessons in the lead-up to the ball, impressing guests on the night with their dance moves.

During her speech, the Honourable Jenny Mikakos, Minister for Families and Children, Minister for Youth Affairs, and Minister for Early Childhood Education, announced that the Victorian government will provide ongoing funding to ensure that the Out-of-Home Care Debutante Ball will become an annual event.

The Centre is proud to be the home of the Ball.



*"I missed every big event at school due to moving around, and then dropped out of school. I missed out on being a princess, which is why the Deb Ball has meant so much to me. I got to have my big day."*

**Reanna - Deb Ball attendee**



*"Very few participants knew each other at the beginning, but many friendships have been forged, and they're all very supportive and encouraging of each other"*

**Erin Moloney - Deb Ball Project Officer.**



*"This Debutante Ball is a symbol of the growth, aspirations and spirit of the young people in care, many of these young people have not had the opportunity to participate in an event that really is, for most young people, a rite of passage"*

**Deb Tsorbaris - Centre CEO**



# Leading and supporting

the development of innovative, evidence-informed policies, programs and practices

Throughout 2016-17, the Centre worked closely with sector organisations, researchers, government, and allied organisations to expand and improve the delivery of services and support to children, young people and families across Victoria.

# Alliance building across research and practice

## Sector Research Partnership now OPEN >> the Outcomes Practice Evidence Network

The **2016 Sector Research Symposium** theme was *Positive futures: Transforming the lives of children and families through research.*

Feedback on the symposium was very positive with particular interest shown in the keynote address delivered by Rudy Kirby and Danielle Dougherty from Mallee District Aboriginal Services on the *Early years at MDAS: An evidence-informed program to support Aboriginal families.*

The Sector Research Partnership, now known as the Outcomes Practice Evidence Network (OPEN), continues to provide the monthly Research Review newsletter to a sector list of over 3,500 people. The Research Review provides an annotated overview of recent research articles and papers, ensuring the sector can access vital resources.

The Centre has actively supported the development of Victoria's **menu of evidence-informed practice and programs**, advocating for trialling evidence-based models in local contexts, but also for the importance of strengthening local programs that show promise.

We have consistently advocated for a sector-driven approach to implementing a **learning system** in the child and family services sector, including hosting the establishment of OPEN to build the capability of the sector to measure outcomes, collect data effectively and use evidence to inform practice.

We acknowledge Brigid van Wanrooy in her work with the Centre to facilitate OPEN, a sector-led enabler for establishing the child and family services sector as a system underpinned by learning and evidence.

In early 2017, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Centre surveyed 35 service providers in Victoria, covering a range of different service types to inform the establishment of the Roadmap for Reform **learning system**.

The survey provided an opportunity for organisations to give their perspectives on:

- current approaches to collecting and using data and analytics;
- barriers to using data and opportunities for improvement;
- promising programs and evidence-based programs;
- capacity and capability of practitioners with regards to building evidence;
- access to evidence; and
- research priorities for the sector.

Anchor

Anglicare Victoria

Baptcare

Barwon child, youth & family

BERRY STREET

belthany

Caroline Chisholm Society

cafs Child & Family Services Australia

children's protection society

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Federation UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

gippsland lakes community health

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

International Social Service AUSTRALIA

Lifeworks ...where relationships matter

MacKillop Family Services

Permanent Care and Adoptive Families

ozchild

Quantum Support Services

THE TIPPING FOUNDATION A 501(c)(3) Tipping Point working together with you

tiredle child + family health service

Connections child, youth and family services

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

VACRO LIFE CHANGING

Wesley Mission

Westcare

Windermere everyone is someone in our community

Thank you to our SRP partners for their support in developing research initiatives for the immediate benefit of vulnerable children, young people and families.

# Strategic projects and collaborations

**The Centre launched and ran the landmark Family Services Workforce Survey – attracting over 600 respondents and providing rich data to inform government decision making, standing committees for professional workers.**

We worked on a **progressive universalism project** with the City of Port Phillip Maternal Child and Health nurses. Working closely with the nurses, we developed a Mentoring program, a Clinical Governance Framework, and a Workforce plan that included a capability framework.

We developed a suite of educational resources and assessment tools for the **Loddon Children and Youth Area Partnership**. The focus of these materials was on the four competencies of social inclusion, collaborative practice, understanding trauma and brain development, and respecting culture and cultural differences.

We reviewed the **Changing Futures** program: an intensive family and early parenting service program for highly vulnerable children and families subject to recent and historical statutory child protection. Our report presented emerging findings from the pilot, identified the effective features of the model, and highlighted areas for improvement.

We undertook a literature review on **Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making** for the AFLDM Project Advisory Group.

## Out-of-Home Care Funders Group

Funded by Equity Trustees and the Sidney Myer Fund in 2016-17, this group connects philanthropists with policy and advocacy work, including the Home Stretch campaign. The Centre would like to acknowledge Natalie Elliot and Kirstie Allen for their bold and innovative vision for collaborative philanthropic work to improve outcomes for care leavers. This is an innovative, brave and unique group, aiming to increase funding for the sector through new partnerships.

We worked closely with practitioners at **Anchor** to develop two practice manuals: one each on foster care and kinship care. We provided these in a highly accessible and innovative online format.

The Centre worked with the University of Melbourne and other sector organisations on the **Invisible Practices** and **K-Contact** projects.



# Raising Expectations – supporting young people leaving care to go on to higher education

Raising Expectations, generously funded by the Sidney Myer Fund, supports care leavers to go onto higher education – through TAFE pathway courses or direct to university.

The Centre has partnered with Federation University and La Trobe University to increase the number of care leaver students studying at the two universities.

Both universities offer financial, housing, academic, and personal supports and services to assist care leavers who want to study. They also developed a Higher Education for Care Leavers Strategy.

**Established in the latter part of 2015, the Raising Expectations team worked hard in 2016-17 to raise awareness and increase the profile of care leavers studying in higher education, ensuring care leavers and carers have access to resources and supports, and to advocate for young people leaving care.**

The team continues to succeed in increasing care leavers enrolments at the two universities. In 2017, Federation University and La Trobe University reported a significant increase in care leavers enrolments.

In mid-2017, combined enrolments were approximately 135, up from 43 in 2016.



Raising Expectations Project Manager Jo Humphries (second from right) with care leavers at Federation University's scholarship awards

In 2016-17, the Raising Expectations project:

- ✓ Continued to run its half day workshop - *Strategies to Support Learning for Young people who have Experienced Trauma* to approximately 465 educators and practitioners to support young people to access and engage in education.
- ✓ Collaborated with Carer KaFE to offer this workshop to over 100 carers across Victoria.
- ✓ Provided ongoing individualised education advice, information and support to carers, care leavers, teachers and sector workers.
- ✓ Raised awareness and delivered information to over 70 carers and sector workers at an Education Forum and provided resources and videos of the presentations.
- ✓ Delivered over 30 presentations to a range of audiences across the community and education sectors on the project.
- ✓ Worked with La Trobe University and Federation University to advocate for care leavers across university programs.
- ✓ Delivered an information session to Residential Care workers at Resi Rocks 2017, providing resources and contacts for those who work closely with young people in care.
- ✓ Developed an Education Guide for Carers in collaboration with the Victorian Department of Education and Training.
- ✓ Featured in The Australian a story about a care leaver studying at Federation University which led to further engagement by care leavers in study.
- ✓ Contributed to education policy and program development and discussion.

**Raising Expectations is a proven success for care leavers. In 2018 the Centre will be seeking support for state and federal funding for Raising Expectations to continue its work.**

# Reconciliation Action Plan

The Centre was pleased to have Andrew Jackomos, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, launch our inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2017-18 during National Reconciliation Week in 2017.

The Centre is extremely grateful for Andrew's leadership and tireless efforts to improve the lives of Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria.

We were also delighted to have dancers from PAN International perform during our launch.

Our plan has four key aims:

- To reflect on and demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation
- To build strong, mutually beneficial and equal relationships with Aboriginal peoples, organisations, and communities
- To consider how we can strengthen the Centre as a culturally safe and respectful organisation
- To create employment and educational opportunities with Aboriginal peoples and organisations.

We'd like to acknowledge Marcus Lee – descendant of the Karajarri people – of Marcus Lee Designs for the beautiful artwork and design of our RAP.

The three circular forms in the artwork represent the growth stages of an Aboriginal child through to adulthood and the etched markings within these forms represent strength of culture and connection to families and communities. The circular forms also evoke the small, medium and large community organisations that the Centre represents across Victoria. The background linear design is a visual expression of the Centre's connection to all the service organisations across Victoria and the strong communication lines for each organisation. And the linear star patterns represent the ongoing journey pathways that these service organisations will continue to embark on.

A 'Reflect' RAP is for organisations starting their reconciliation journey: to strengthen the foundations and infrastructure to build strong and genuine relationships, respect and opportunities with Aboriginal individuals, organisations and communities.

This year our RAP focused on building staff knowledge about Aboriginal cultures, histories and achievements, and strengthening our capability to work in a culturally safe and appropriate way.



## Fostering Connections to give more children a safe, stable home

A first of its kind, the Fostering Connections project was the result of collaboration between Victoria's foster care agencies and the Department of Health and Human Services.

**Components of the project include a dedicated website and enquiry line for new enquirers, a state wide recruitment campaign and the rollout of a sector-wide database and client management tool that enables the sector to gather comprehensive data about enquirers' journey from enquiry to accreditation.**

**Data gathered is reported back to the sector on a monthly basis and enables the sector to observe trends, identify issues and improve service delivery.**

Still within its first year of operation in 2016-17, the project's activities focused on the development of an initial campaign, sector engagement, and the roll out of a Carer Management System including:

- Developing and refining the public campaign to attract more foster carers, in collaboration with the sector and government.
- A roadshow through which the project staff met with agencies.
- Sector-wide training on the use of the Carer Management System.
- Refining enquiry allocation and referral algorithms based on agency catchment area.
- Interviewing every agency to receive feedback on the campaign and its impact on referrals.

By bringing together all out-of-home care agencies across Victoria under one umbrella, the Fostering Connections project has enabled sector-wide collaboration and knowledge sharing resulting in a more coordinated approach to recruitment activities.

Through sector-wide data collection and reporting, this project has for the first time provided insightful sector-wide reporting to agencies and the Department of Health and Human Services about current trends and the status of the sector.

This has enabled out-of-home care agencies to collectively improve many recruitment processes and practices across the sector, ultimately improving carer experiences.



### Good Practice Guide

Each year the Department of Health and Human Services publishes the Good Practice: A Statewide Snapshot report.

The Centre was engaged by the department in 2017 to collate the stories and artwork for the publication.

**The report showcases the achievements of frontline practitioners in their day-to-day practice with vulnerable children, young people and families.**

This year the publication focused on practice in the areas of:

- responding to cumulative harm,
- pre-birth planning,
- safety and empowerment through cultural connection, and
- the use of reflective practice to effect change in case direction.

The publication was released at the 2017 Victorian Protecting Children Awards.

### 2016 Study Tour

**In August 2016, the Centre’s CEO Deb Tsorbaris stepped away from her desk for a month to head out on a Study Tour of London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Oviedo and New York.**

She met with the Children’s Commissioner for England, peak bodies, NGOs, philanthropists, researchers and government workers - gaining insight into the practices and trends of child and family services practitioners worldwide.

They discussed common themes including socioeconomic links to out of home care, issues around legislation, the importance of evidence based practice, and the role of peak bodies.

In September 2016, Deb attended the XIV EUSARF (European Scientific Association on Residential and Family Care for Children and Adolescents) International Conference in Oviedo. The Conference focused on therapeutic residential care, decision making in child care interventions, transitions to adulthood from care, migration and cultural diversity, and family intervention.



*Centre CEO Deb Tsorbaris with Anne Longfield OBE, Children’s Commissioner for England*



## Strengthening capability

**of member and sector agencies delivering services to children, young people and families**

In 2016-17, the Centre worked closely with organisations and individuals in the child, youth and family services sector to build skills and knowledge and ensure we are all striving towards innovation and ongoing improvement.

# Building capacity across the sector

Over 2016-2017 the Centre delivered a range of workshops, and learning and development courses, aimed at building practitioner knowledge and capacity as well as workforce groups in aligned sectors.

We focused our attention on:

- Improving outcomes for children and young people
- Building stronger families
- Building a responsive and flexible workforce
- Preparing leaders and managers in a changing world
- Implementing culturally aware and safe practices

The Centre has experienced significant growth in its customised training delivery and online training development.

## Training participation

Nationally Recognised Training	5 courses 53 completions
Non accredited Training	43 courses 455 participants
Customised Training	58 courses 2342 participants
RCLDS Training	56 courses 1094 participants



## Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy (RCLDS) training

In 2016-17 the Centre continued to facilitate the RCLDS government-funded training for the residential care workforce.

The Centre held a significant number of courses in 2016-17 covering a number of different topics.

Course	Sessions	Attendance
Youth Mental Health First Aid	3	47
Advanced Youth Mental Health	3	30
Recovery from Critical Incidents and Trauma	1	14
Young People and Drug & Alcohol	2	14
Effective Conflict Management	5	63
Supporting Young People with Medication	8	113
Supervisor Training for Residential Care Workers	1	15
Introduction to Working with Aboriginal Children, Families and Workers	7	118
Autism Spectrum Disorder	4	52
Skills in the Looking After Children dimensions	9	151
Culturally Competent Youth Practice	2	14
Normative Behaviour versus Sexual Behaviour	3	68
Good Notes and Documentation in Residential Care	2	41
Applied Suicide Intervention Skills	1	12
Skills in the With Care foundations	2	46
Sexual Exploitation Training	3	296
Total	56	1094

“The diploma helped me hone my skills as a manager, and learn how to manage both myself and my team effectively.”

Diploma Participant

## eLearning at the Centre

One of the biggest challenges for organisations – particularly those in remote locations or with a smaller workforce – is getting the necessary staff training.

If the right training isn’t offered locally, getting to Melbourne can be time-consuming and costly, to say nothing of the difficulty in covering shifts.

The Centre’s online training offered a solution. Learners could go at their own pace, where and when it suited them. Content was instantly updated; remaining current, relevant and engaging in the sector’s dynamic reform environment.

In response to overwhelming demand, the Centre implemented a new online learning platform in 2017 for residential care workers as part of the Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy (RCLDS).

Initial modules - *Cyberbullying, Introduction to Alcohol and other Drugs and Good Notes and Documentation in Residential Care* were enthusiastically received at the Resi ROCKS launch in June 2017.

Participant feedback has informed development of four further modules - *Infection Control, Looking After Children, Supervision and Self-Care* – which will be rolled out in late 2017, and early 2018.

“This is the most interactive online learning program I’ve ever seen and with a busy schedule, I love how I can do it at my own pace.”

eLearning training participant



## Case study: Strategies to Support Learning for Young People who have experienced Trauma

Through work with a number of organisations and local councils, as well as an online survey of carers and practitioners, the Centre identified the need for more information and training around trauma-informed practice.

**Strategies to support learning for young people who have experienced trauma** was developed in to assist carers, teachers and practitioners to understand trauma and the way it affects young people and their learning.

The program provided practical strategies to use at home and school, adapted to the needs of carers, teachers and practitioners – including residential care and youth workers. With over 300 participants in the first six months, program demand continues and feedback is overwhelmingly positive.

The Centre collaborated with Carer KaFE to deliver carer-focused sessions to foster and statutory kinship carers across Victoria. Program delivery will continue throughout 2017 and 2018.

“This program helped build my confidence and abilities in a very stressful situation with a child. As a new teacher this was an invaluable experience equipping me for further challenges. Understanding the importance of constant positive reinforcement and acknowledging their strengths and good choices was a big success for me.”

Training participant and first year teacher at Moomba Park Primary School

# Stronger members and sector services

## Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Young people in residential care require the best possible care that can be provided. The safety and wellbeing of these young people must be the paramount consideration for everyone involved in their care.

From January 1, 2018, all residential care workers in Victoria will be required to hold a mandatory minimum qualification of the Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention.

**The Department of Education and Training recruited the Centre to assist in ensuring thousands of new and existing workers across Victoria met the qualification.**

**Throughout 2016-17, our team worked in a significant partnership with the state government, Melbourne Polytechnic, and community service organisations, to enrol workers in the certificate, assess their current qualifications, and discuss ongoing sector plans.**

The Centre will continue to support the sector through the upskilling process, to build the capacity of the residential care workforce to provide high quality, professional and responsive support to children and young people in residential and out-of-home care.

## The LOOKOUT Centres Expert Insights Group

Providing guidance for early years services

In 2016-17 the Centre worked with Victoria's Department of Education and Training as a member of the LOOKOUT Education Support Centres Expert Insights Group.

The department consulted closely with the Centre to produce a handbook to guide the work of LOOKOUT Centre Principals and staff, department staff, community service organisations providing out-of-home care services, schools including designated teachers, and carers.

## Accredited Training

**Accredited Training case study: BSB51915 Diploma of Leadership and Management**

### Preparing Leaders and Managers for a changing world

The Centre began offering the Diploma of Leadership and Management in 2016, and in 2017 ran a second intake of participants.

Aiming to prepare leaders and managers for a changing world, the diploma has been received extremely well by participants who have noted that it has been invaluable in advancing their management skills.

The 12 diploma units include organisational management, working with teams, and self-care as a manager.

The diploma runs over nine months, followed by time for assessment work, and participants have applied from a wide run of community service organisations across Victoria. Managers, executives, team leaders and coordinators have all participated.

We are currently recruiting participants for 2018, and are looking forward to assisting the sector with their needs.

*"The diploma helped me hone my skills as a manager, and learn how to manage both myself and my team effectively."*

Diploma Participant

## Resi Rocks 2017

The 11th Resi Rocks was held in June 2017, with more than 380 residential care workers and community service organisation representatives attending on the day.

It was a fantastic opportunity for residential care workers to take time out and learn new concepts, as well as meet others in their position from across the state.

### Resi Rocks stands for Recognising Our Carers Knowledge and Skills.

The focus of the 2017 Resi Rocks was to:

- acknowledge the importance of residential care work and residential care workers;
- promote the important role of residential workers as part of the professional care team;
- acknowledge practice excellence; and
- celebrate and have fun!

Zeus the therapy dog charmed the crowd, workers were introduced to drumming and music as a therapeutic tool, and groups tested out their artistic skills with art therapy sessions.

Alkira from Anglicare took out the Residential Care Team Award.

Gillian Knott from Salvocare Eastern was awarded the Residential Care Leadership Award.

Lisa Melilli from Salvation Army Westcare was the recipient of the Individual Worker Award.



# Continue building

a proactive, responsive and sustainable Centre



In 2016-17, Centre staff focused on building a strong membership base, a diverse and collaborative organisation, and a network of allied sectors.

# Engaged, informed and supported members

Throughout 2016-17 the Centre expanded its digital output significantly, broadening our reach and profile in online spaces, ensuring that the sector can easily access our resources, training and commentary.

In 2017, the Centre launched its new website, aiming for a user-friendly platform and a space to disseminate information to the sector and beyond.

With the website came a new system to register for our training sessions and events, as well as a simple form to fill out for those who want to request membership with the Centre.

The Centre's social media engagement was also a focus, and we have become an active presence on Twitter in both the sector and as part of wider discussions.

We have been able to connect with organisations and individuals utilising Twitter and Facebook who may not otherwise have come across the sector's work.



397,000  
Twitter impressions 2016-17



3,628  
Sector Buzz Newsletter Subscribers



265% increase in  
Facebook Likes



## Learning from our history over 105 years

As part of the Centre's 105th birthday celebrations, we held a one-day seminar with our patron **Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott** in May 2017. During the seminar, Professor Scott took the audience on a journey through historical perspectives on child and family welfare services in Victoria.

She looked at both successes and failures, focusing on how reforms were achieved and how we can apply those processes and goals to future work.

Professor Scott discussed some of the major turning points in the child welfare system, analysed shifts in attitudes and knowledge, and answered questions around change and progress in the sector.



# Our Board and Staff Team

As of June 30, 2017

## Board

Paul McDonald	Chairperson
Sheree Limbrick	Vice Chairperson <i>Resigned 26 June 2017</i>
Grant Boyd	Treasurer
Gerard Jones	Board Member
Peter Mulholland	Board Member
Fran O'Toole	Board Member
Lisa Griffiths	Board Member
Athina Georgiou	Board Member <i>Resigned 26 June 2017</i>
Kelly Stanton	Board Member <i>Resigned 12 June 2017</i>
Karen Milward	Independent Expert Member
Greg Levine OAM	Independent Expert Member

## Executive

Deb Tsorbaris	Chief Executive Officer
Sue Maddison	Executive Assistant

## Operations and Finance

Chris Shelly	Director – Operations and Finance
Grace Kasper	Bookkeeper
Rosie Sparks	Administration Assistant

## Communications

Matt Incerti	Director – Communications, Media and Engagement
Chloe Papas	Communications and Engagement Co-ordinator

## Learning and Development

Kim Somers	Manager – Learning and Development
Corinne Davis	Business Development Officer
Jim Vale	eLearning Project Officer
Natasha Lobo	Compliance Admissions Officer
Natalie Mather	Training, Events, RCLDS Officer
Erin Moloney	Project Officer – Debutante Ball
Claire Simmonds	Project Officer – RCLDS

## Policy, Research and Advocacy

Michele Lonsdale	Director – Social Policy and Research
Alice Wilson O'Neill	Senior Policy and Research Officer
Joanna Humphries	Project Manager – Raising Expectations
Jo-anne McMahon	Project Co-ordinator – OoHC Funders Group
Annabel Luscombe	Project Officer – Social Policy and Research
Rochelle Armstrong	Project Officer – Social Policy and Research
Jordan Miller	Project Officer – Social Policy and Research
Raelene Jones	Project Manager – Residential Care Worker VET Initiative

## Child Safe Unit

Mary Kyrios	Manager – Child Safe Unit
Georgette Antonas	Project Officer – Child Safe Unit
Ondine Childs	Project Officer – Child Safe Unit

## Fostering Connections

Zena Hosseini	Project Manager – Fostering Connections
Dan Christie	Project Support – Fostering Connections
Andy DuLaney Shaw	Business Analyst – Fostering Connections
Kasmira Gregory	Communications and Engagement Co-ordinator – Fostering Connections

# Building a Strong Member Base

The Centre's members are the cornerstone of our work. We work closely with and for our member organisations and individual members to advocate on behalf of children, young people and families across the state and country.

Our members inform our projects, submissions and advocacy campaigns.

Throughout 2016 and 2017 our membership base continued to grow, with a number of new organisations joining us.

**We saw a significant increase in students applying to become part of the Centre; which has led to an upcoming campaign around university orientation weeks and plans for student networking events in 2018.**

We will continue to do our best to represent the needs of our members to government, and to work closely with organisations within the sector and those with allied services.



# Financial reports

## Treasurer's Report

After another year of significant activity at the Centre, the Board is pleased to present an operating surplus of \$461,668 for the financial year ended 30 June 2017. Analysis of the financial reports shows the following movements:

- Revenue for the year increased by \$958,849 or 27% from 2015-16, with;
  - Affiliation Fees from members increased by 1%, with overall membership levels increasing.
  - Revenue from Business Undertaking increased by 4%, with increased levels of training, consultancy and projects over the year.
  - Government funding increased by 41% over the year, with the Fostering Connections project being a major component of this increase across the year.
  - Income from investments increased by 10% over the year.
- Overall expenditure for the year increased by \$743,405 or 22% from 2015-16, with;
  - Employee benefits increased by 18%, reflecting additional staffing resources for a number of funded projects including Fostering Connections.
  - Operations expenses increased by 35% reflecting the expenditure on the increasing levels of training, consultancy and projects over the year.
- The current assets for the year increased by \$3,300,430 or 96%, with;
  - Cash and cash on hand together with other financial assets increased by 100%, as cash and funds on deposit increased in line with other liabilities (unexpended project grants) in relation to funded projects at year end.
- Non-current assets for the year increased by 1% with Depreciation for the year of \$53,516.
- Total liabilities for the year increased by \$2,851,178 or 132%, with;
  - Other liabilities (unexpended project grants) increased by \$2,328,413 due to funding received for projects occurring in the 2017-18 financial year.

- The Statement of Cash Flow shows a net increase in cash and cash equivalents across the year of \$3,306,929. The change in cash flow primarily represents a timing difference between when a project is funded and when those funds are expended.

The Centre maintains a healthy level of reserves to ensure that the important work of the Centre continues to support our members and member organisations in their work with vulnerable children, young people and their families.

I would like to thank the members of the Finance committee during the 2016-17 financial year:

Paul McDonald, Lisa Griffiths, Graham Boal and Chris Baring-Gould.

I would also like to acknowledge the Centre's finance team for their professional work during the year.

The following financial statements overview has been extracted from the Centre's Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2017. The financial statements have been prepared as General Purpose Financial Statements in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. The financial statements have been audited in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and Australian Auditing Standards by Crowe Horwath Melbourne. The full financial statements can be obtained from the Centre's website or by request to the Centre (03) 9614 1577.





Grant Boyd  
Treasurer

## Statement of Surplus or Deficit and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2017

	2017 (\$)	2016 (\$)
Revenue	4,496,942	3,538,093
Investment income	81,039	73,594
Other gains and losses	(517)	-
Depreciation expense	(53,516)	(65,931)
Employee benefits expense	(1,990,072)	(1,691,737)
Operations expense	(1,758,331)	(1,303,246)
Office expense	(227,162)	(225,284)
Occupancy expense	(69,638)	(64,642)
Motor Vehicle expense	(17,077)	(21,551)
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	461,668	239,296
Other comprehensive income	-	-
<b>Total comprehensive income attributable to members of the Centre</b>	<b>461,668</b>	<b>239,296</b>

## Statement of Cash Flows

For the Year Ended 30 June 2017

	2017 (\$)	2016 (\$)
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Receipts from customers	7,219,664	4,473,516
Payments to suppliers and employees	(3,927,324)	(3,360,162)
Interest received	81,039	70,474
Net cash generated from operating activities	3,373,379	1,183,828
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(86,450)	(39,048)
Proceeds from sale of property plant and equipment	20,000	-
Net cash used in investing activities	(66,450)	(39,048)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	3,306,929	1,144,780
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	3,318,163	2,173,383
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>	<b>6,625,092</b>	<b>3,318,163</b>

## Statement of Financial Position

At 30 June 2017

	2017 (\$)	2016 (\$)
<b>Assets</b>		
Current Assets		
Cash on hand	4,240,758	970,474
Other financial assets	2,384,333	2,347,689
Trade and other receivables	121,361	94,240
Other assets	6,523	40,142
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>6,752,975</b>	<b>3,452,545</b>
Non-current assets		
Property, plant & equipment	1,023,235	1,010,819
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>1,023,235</b>	<b>1,010,819</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>7,776,210</b>	<b>4,463,364</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	534,818	459,359
Deferred revenue	536,097	114,668
Provisions	140,104	124,811
Other liabilities	3,778,816	1,450,403
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>4,989,835</b>	<b>2,149,241</b>
Non-current liabilities		
Provisions	22,859	12,275
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	<b>22,859</b>	<b>12,275</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>5,012,694</b>	<b>2,161,516</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>2,763,516</b>	<b>2,301,848</b>
<b>Equity</b>		
Accumulated Surplus	2,763,516	2,301,848
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>2,763,516</b>	<b>2,301,848</b>

## Statement of Changes in Equity

For the Year Ended 30 June 2017

	Accumulated Surplus (\$)
Balance at 1 July 2015	2,062,552
Total comprehensive income for the year	239,296
Balance at 30 June 2016	2,301,848
Total comprehensive income for the year	461,668
Balance at 30 June 2017	2,763,516

We work closely with our members to advocate on behalf of children, young people and families across the state and country.

Our member organisations







Anchor, Anglicare Victoria, Australian Childhood Foundation, Australian Childhood Trauma Group, Australian Community Support Organisation, Baptcare, Barwon Child, Youth & Family, Benalla Rural City Council, Bendigo Community Health Services, Berry Street, Bethany Community Support, BridgingWorx, Brophy Family & Youth Services – Warrnambool, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Bubup Wilam, Camcare, Caroline Chisholm Society, CatholicCare Melbourne, CatholicCare Sandhurst, Centacare Ballarat, Child and Family Services Ballarat, Children’s Protection Society, Christian Brethren Community Care Ltd T/A Temcare, City of Melbourne, City of Port Phillip – Family and Children’s Services, City of Yarra, Cobaw Community Health Service, Cohealth, Colac Area Health, Community Living and Respite Services, Concern Australia, Darebin Community Health, Doncare, Drummond Street Services, Eastern Access Community Health, Eastern Domestic Violence Service, Eastern Regions Mental Health Association, Emerge Support, Family Access Network, Family Life, FamilyCare, Foundations Care, Gateway Health, Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative, Gippsland Lakes Community Health, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, Improving and Promoting Community Health, Jesuit Social Services, Jewish Care, Junction Support Services, Kara House, Key Assets, Kyabram Community & Learning Centre, Life Without Barriers, Lifeworks Relationship Counselling and Education Services, Lighthouse Institute, MacKillop Family Services, Make A Difference Dingley Village, Mallee Family Care, Mallee Track Health & Community Services, Marillac, Melton City Council, Mirabel Foundation, Moira, Moonee Valley City Council – Family and Children’s Services, No to Violence, Odyssey House Victoria, ONCALL Personnel and Training, OzChild: Children Australia, Permanent Care and Adoptive Families, Quantum Support Services, Relationships Australia, Rumbalara Family Services, Safe Steps, The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, The Reach Foundation, The Queen Elizabeth Centre, The Salvation Army Crossroads – Coburg North, The Salvation Army SalvoCare Eastern, The Salvation Army Social Housing and Support Network, The Salvation Army Westcare, The Tipping Foundation, Tweddle Child and Family Health Service, Uniting, Upper Murray Family Care, Victoria Legal Aid, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self Help, Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, Victorian Co-operative on Children’s Services for Ethnic Groups, Windermere Child and Family Services, Women’s Information, Support & Housing in the North, Youth Support and Advocacy Service.

Special thanks to donors:

Estate Trustees, Equity Trustees, The Sidney Myer Fund, The Wardell Teresa Fund, The William Angliss Charitable Fund.



By using ecoStar rather than a non recycled paper for this report, we reduced the environmental impact by:

-  **117kg of landfill**
-  **17kg of CO2 and greenhouse gases**
-  **174km of travel in average European car**
-  **3,435lt of water**
-  **202kWh of energy**
-  **191kg of wood**

Source: Carbon footprint data evaluated by Labelia Conseil. Virgin fibre paper data from latest European BREF data.



*Centre for Excellence*  
in Child and Family Welfare Inc.

## About the Centre

For over 100 years we have advocated to advance the rights and wellbeing of children, young people and families experiencing economic, social and cultural disadvantage.

We advocate for the rights of children and young people to be heard, to be safe, to access education and to remain connected to family, community and culture.

We represent over 100 community service organisations throughout Victoria working across the continuum of child and family services, from prevention and early intervention to the provision of out of home care.

Our member agencies are at the forefront of supporting vulnerable children, young people and families and we support their capacity to meet their goals.

## Contact

Centre for Excellence in  
Child and Family Welfare

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Find us on Twitter @CFECFW  
and Facebook



The Centre acknowledges  
the support of the  
Victorian Government

[cfecfw.asn.au](http://cfecfw.asn.au)

ABN: 24 629 376 672  
RTO: 3696