

Our lives. Our stories.

Victorian children, young
people, and families.



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 children and families experiencing vulnerability.

Our details

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Acknowledgements

We, at the Centre, respectfully acknowledge that our work is done on the traditional land of the Kulin nation and we acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the traditional custodians of the land. We pay respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded, and that this was and always will be Aboriginal land.



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.



Contents

Chair’s report	06
CEO’s report	08
<hr/>	
01. Advocating for and with the sector	11
Tribute to Dr Dakhina Mitra	11
Budget outcomes	12
In the Media	13
Submissions and reports	13
Treating Families Fairly	14
Online safety workshops	14
Mental health	15
Working alongside Aboriginal colleagues and organisations	16
MARAM Practice Development Project Child Wellbeing and Adolescents Who Use Family Violence in the Home	18
Young People’s Media Network	19
Voice of Parents	20
Out-of-Home Care – Education project	23
<hr/>	
02. Walking alongside children and young people	25
Child Wellbeing Project	25
Early Start, Bright Future project	27
Supporting our sector to keep children, young people and families safe	28
Family Preservation Reunification Response feedback	31
<hr/>	
03. Strengthening sector capability	33
OPEN – Outcomes Practice Evidence Network	33
Knowledge translation activities	38
Residential Care Sector Occupational Health and Safety Research Program	39
Tri-Peaks partnership	41
Drafting MARAM practice guidance	44
Practice leadership activities	44
Training development	45
Fostering Connections	45
Economic case for foster care	46
Raising Expectations	47

Contents

04. Growing a responsive and sustainable Centre	51
Social Services Regulation Reform	51
Learning and Development	52
Evidence Based Decision Making for Human Services Leaders course	52
Training workshops delivered for Centre member organisations	53
Supporting compliance with Victoria’s new Child Safe Standards	53
These are our kids	53
MARAM training	54
NDIS Training	54
Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy	55
Shared Lives: training for Foster Care practitioners	58
Beginning Practice	59
Strategic networking at the Centre	60
<hr/>	
05. Staying connected to our sector	63
Out-of-Home Care Philanthropic Network	63
Campaigning for our sector	65
Continuing to spread the word and raise awareness for children and their families: key stats	67
Media awards	68
Our board and staff	70
Our members	72
<hr/>	
06. Financial Statements Overview	75
Treasurer’s Report	76
Statement of Surplus or Deficit and Other Comprehensive Income	78
Statement of Financial Position	79
Statement of Changes in Equity	80
Statement of Cash Flows	81

Chair's Report

Since assuming the role of board chair last year, I've had a bird's eye view of the child and family services sector's activities, its spectacular achievements and the complex challenges it faces. I also have full visibility of the Centre's integral role in supporting the sector: as a mediator, facilitator, advocate and ally to its members, broader sector stakeholders, and, most importantly, service users. For these reasons, the past year has been rewarding, inspiring and has given me a genuine sense of shared accomplishment, for which I am grateful to the Centre and the sector.

It's been fascinating to watch the sector grow and evolve. The Centre has long advocated for the use of evidence in both the development and implementation of programs, and it is encouraging to see the use of evidence is increasingly being placed at the centre of practice and policy.

The Centre has supported several evidence-based programs, most notably the Evidenced-Based Decision Making for Human Services Leaders course, which it co-delivers with Carnegie Mellon University. This year, a record number of human services leaders enrolled in the course, which trains leaders in evidence-based decision making.

The Early Start, Bright Future project had a successful first year, effectively contributing to the evidence base that feeds our understanding of the barriers to early years' service engagement that children, caregivers and vulnerable families face. In its first year, the program reached over a thousand professionals from the sector and related sectors, making

significant strides towards creating a culture that prioritises every child's right to early learning.

The Family Preservation Reunification Response, which is delivered in part by the Centre, has entered its second phase, with the goal of expanding the program's reach and breadth. The response has been overwhelmingly positive, and the increased confidence and competence of practitioners involved in the response to deploy evidence-based skills underscores the program's worth.

The Outcomes Practice Evidence Network (OPEN) has continued to highlight evidence that improves outcomes for children, youth and families, culminating in a highly successful symposium event last October. The OPEN team and the Centre were devastated when a valued and respected team member, Dr Dakhina Mitra, died tragically and unexpectedly. Everyone who knew or worked with Dakhina valued her outgoing, charming, hardworking and personable nature. She will be greatly missed and never forgotten.

Looking ahead, I am confident the Centre will continue to deliver on its vision and to assist its members and the sector in any way it can. I'd like to thank the Centre's CEO, Deb Tsorbaris, whose passion shines through everything she does, as well as the Centre's staff, the Centre's board of directors and, importantly, those working in the sector. The sector's synergy is the binding force that enables the great work we do, and I am consistently astounded by my colleagues' tenacity and commitment at the Centre, in the sector and in the Department.

“The Centre has long advocated for the use of evidence in both the development and implementation of programs, and it is encouraging to see the use of evidence is increasingly being placed at the centre of practice and policy.”



Dr Lisa J. Griffiths

Chairperson, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

CEO's Report

It's been another whirlwind year for the Centre and the sector, and I continue to feel so very fortunate to have witnessed the many steps taken towards improving the lives of children and families over the past 12 months. The pandemic hit children and families hard, but the sector's and its stakeholders' unwavering commitment to recovery has been steadfast, and I thank you all for that.

We have continued to work with and for our valued members on our shared goals, none of which would be achievable without the strong network of stakeholders collaborating to deliver impact every day. Our collaboration, shared ideas, issues, and efforts makes us who we are and enables us to speak collectively and effectively on behalf of the sector.

The last year has seen a greater emphasis on lived experience and its incorporation into policymaking, and it has been heartening to see this principle becoming more mainstream in the thinking surrounding child and family services. The ground-breaking Voice of Parents program, which has made significant inroads in providing a platform for parents involved in the child protection system, is one standout. This was initially funded by Equity Trustees and the Gandel Foundation for whom we are so grateful. The Voice of Parents has allowed the Centre to collaborate with a group of incredible parents to deepen our understanding of what service users want and need, providing us with invaluable insights that will guide our future policy prescriptions. We've also launched our Young Person's Media Network which provides care-experienced young people with the skills and resources they need to advocate for the sector on behalf of young people in care.

The Centre and its members have continued to build an evidence base of what works for children and families, which serves as the foundation for policies and programs at state and national levels, and we've participated in and led on several independent thought pieces that contribute to the conversation about foster care. We commissioned consultants at the Cube Group to create a seminal piece of research that revealed the true monetary value of investment in foster care.

We've expanded our digital footprint to reach more people than ever before, leveraging our position in the media and among stakeholders and amplifying our influence as the sector's peak.

We have continued to see the effectiveness of early intervention and the use of evidence in keeping children out of care and in safe and happy homes. The Early Intervention Investment Framework was a wonderful example of the powerful impact of prevention on outcomes, and I hope that it will be more widely implemented in the coming year.

We also held our first Connecting Communities Regional Tour, visiting five locations in Victoria to hear about the unique challenges that regional communities face in the child and family services sector daily. The tour was a huge success, and it gave us much-needed clarity on what the sector needs and how we can support the work of our members to meet those needs. The tour's main

message was unequivocal: things have been difficult in regional communities, with the cost of living crisis and a lack of access to services crippling many families. We look forward to extending our Connecting Communities Tour in 2023.

The sector has accomplished some truly incredible things in the last year, and we have much to be proud of. However, we are clear about the persistent challenges that children, young people, and families face, and recognise that there is much more to be done. Residential home underfunding remains a serious issue, and more is needed to improve the lives of all children entering care, whether residential, foster, or kinship. This will necessitate a greater collaborative commitment to holistic care, which includes education, health, and mental health responses.

The Centre is held together by countless individuals, and I am grateful to each and every one. I'd like to thank the Centre's staff, who are a pleasure to work with and impress me every day with their innovation and dedication. Thank you to the Board for their reasoned advice and resolute commitment that guides the Centre forward. Thank you to the Department, without which none of this would be possible. And most of all, I'd like to thank the sector and its many workers and stakeholders who deliver impact on the ground. You are the ones truly making a difference to the lives of children and families across the state.

Listening to the challenges that communities and families face across Victoria compels me to reflect on who the Centre is, what we do, and what we stand for. After nearly 110 years we continue to be a solutions-based, problem-solving organisation that covers the broad spectrum of issues affecting children and families, and adapts to the changing nature of the challenge we face. The sector continues to evolve, necessitating agility, responsiveness, and adaptability. Yet the Centre's vision remains unchanged: to ensure that all Victorian children, youth, families, and caregivers are happy, safe, connected to family and culture, and have access to the services they require.

Thank you to everyone who makes this goal possible and supports us to do what we do.



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

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

1. Advocating for and with the sector

Tribute to Dr Dakhina Mitra

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare is deeply saddened to share with you the tragic news about the recent and sudden passing of our much-loved friend and colleague, Dr Dakhina Mitra, who suffered a brain aneurysm in late June 2022.

Dakhina had worked at the Centre for the past four years, mainly in the Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network (OPEN) team, bringing depth and nuanced ideas to all our work. She loved being at the Centre, feeling like she was at the heart of policy, research and advocacy work that could genuinely make a difference to children's lives. She used technology in creative ways to facilitate interactive participation in our online forums and webinars and our annual OPEN Symposium.

Dakhina had a PhD in sociology, specialising in child labour research and participatory research design. For Dakhina, research was never just an academic exercise, but about making lives better and always about capturing and supporting the voices of those most impacted by hardship or disadvantage to be heard. She was previously an international development professional, working in research and international development for more than 15 years, including as a senior research consultant with Child Safe Horizons and a program support coordinator with Save the Children.

At the Centre, she generously shared her knowledge and enthusiasm for building the evidence base around what works for children and young people. OPEN and our sector benefited greatly from her intelligent teasing out of ideas and capacity for knowledge sharing and translation to make complex research accessible. She had a remarkable ability to determine the essence of a problem and find practical and compassionate solutions.

Through her work she touched the lives of so many people. The tributes to Dakhina that have flowed into the Centre all refer to her warmth, positive approach to life, joy in helping others, integrity and passion for the rights and safety of children. Her advocacy work to support multicultural communities and families, and to make sure the views of children and young people were reflected in all our projects and policies, was particularly inspiring.

Dakhina had that rare ability to light up a room with her presence, even in a Zoom or Teams meeting. She made each person she engaged with feel valued and supported. Most of all, Dakhina was fun to be with. Her life outside work was filled with music, dance, singing, cultural celebrations, writing and advocacy. She made the most of every minute of her short life.

Dakhina has left an impact on every single person she engaged with. She has been described as the heart of the Centre and this is true in so many ways. She is a much loved and greatly missed friend and colleague.

Budget outcomes

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare welcomed the budget’s \$272 million investment in child protection and family services, as well as the range of initiatives funded through the Early Intervention Investment Framework.

In the context of COVID-19 recovery, the 2022/23 Victorian Budget had to respond to extraordinary and difficult circumstances. Continued government investment in child and family services, out-of-home care, family violence, mental health and wellbeing, and early childhood education are all positive steps.

Given the number of children entering Victoria’s child welfare system and the complexities of their needs, the announcement of \$57.6 million over three years to work with an additional 1,000 families is a much-needed measure to address demand and support staff capacity. The Centre recognises the government’s emphasis on supporting children and families with disability.

We recommend the additional \$19 million in funding for residential care providers for one year, which is to ensure therapeutic residential care is provided to the young people who need it the most, be implemented over a longer period of time across all Victorian residential care units.

The Centre welcomed the government’s continued emphasis on self-determination, the state’s Treaty path and funding for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.

The Centre acknowledged the increased emphasis on school-based supports as a result of the pandemic, as well as several measures across the Justice portfolio, particularly those aimed at diverting children from the youth justice system.

We were pleased to see continued investment in family violence prevention, with a special emphasis on children, through funding to sustain delivery of specialised therapeutic interventions for children and young people who have been victims of family violence.

The Centre and the child and family services sector will continue to collaborate with the government to advance opportunities for every Victorian child, young person, family and carer who requires support.

In the media

Read Deb Tsorbaris’s articles for Probono Australia

- [Affluent but unequal: How the urban-regional divide is affecting Australian children](#)
- [It’s good that children’s mental health is finally being addressed – but there is more to do](#)
- [Government intervention can help vulnerable children](#)
- [Youth and child homelessness matters, why aren’t we doing more about it?](#)
- [Protecting our children in chaotic times? We need more than a national framework](#)
- [How to support young people on their digital journeys](#)
- [The issue of violence against children should never be ignored](#)
- [COVID-19 is the impetus we needed to level up child welfare](#)
- [Considerations and complications of our online world](#)
- [Child poverty is a policy choice](#)
- [Foster Care Week reminds us we always need more foster carers](#)
- [COVID-19 through the eyes of children and young people](#)
- [Homelessness shouldn't be inevitable for women and children escaping family violence](#)

Submissions and reports

Our submissions in 2021–22 included:

- Purpose, intent and adequacy of the Disability Support Pension
- Implementing the successor plan to the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–20
- Social Services Legislation Amendment (Consistent Waiting Periods for New Migrants Bill 2021)
- Developing the next National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Act: Update and Engagement
- Review to improve victims’ experience of summary criminal proceedings
- Inquiry into Victoria’s Criminal Justice System
- Inquiry into Social Media and Online Safety
- 2022–23 Pre-Budget Submission (Federal)
- National Strategy Advisory Group Model consultation paper
- Draft National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–23
- Inquiry into children affected by parental incarceration
- Inquiry into Victorian Universities’ investment in skills



Treating Families Fairly

The Treating Families Fairly alliance, which brings together a small group of community service organisations, peak bodies and academics to advocate for welfare reform, financial stress and improving economic and social conditions for families, continued to meet twice-monthly in the past year. One highlight was the opportunity to hear from Mary O'Hara, an award-winning social affairs journalist who writes about poverty and social justice. She talked about her work in seeking to overturn the 'toxic poverty narrative', which shames and blames people, and shared insights into how to construct messages to shift attitudes. Mary also talked about Project Twist-It, the multi-platform storytelling initiative she established to enable marginalised voices to be heard, including through the stories of young people. Early in 2022, the alliance heard from Jamie Crosby, CEO of Families Australia, who spoke about the collective outcomes we are trying to achieve in the interests of children and families. One of the Centre's interns, Ed Cronin, also presented to the Treating Families Fairly alliance on the key findings from his literature review on the impacts of poverty on children. The Centre acknowledges the important role of David Tennant, CEO of Family Care, who co-chairs Treating Families Fairly with the Centre.

Online safety workshops

As part of a national initiative by the eSafety Commissioner, the Centre received a small amount of funding from the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) to consult with groups of foster and kinship carers in Victoria about the online experiences of the children in their care. The Centre consulted with around 85 carers and gained invaluable insights into the challenges being experienced in trying to keep children and young people safe online. The carers shared approaches that had worked for them and suggested ideas for information and guidance that could help them keep children safe in a rapidly changing online environment.



Mental health

On 20 September 2021, the Centre co-hosted an online forum with Berry Street called 'Where are children in the mental health and reform agenda?' The Centre shared the range of work our sector does along the continuum of mental health and wellbeing with the two workforces – adult mental health services, child and family services – and government. Our presentation highlighted how child and family services provide safe, tailored and localised services for children and families with multiple, complex and co-occurring needs, supporting families experiencing mental health and wellbeing concerns at different times of need.

We participated in a series of Department of Health workshops focused on the design of the Statewide Trauma Centre to help shape the principles and criteria for procurement.

We have continued to co-host a cross-sector working group with FaPMI (Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness) to improve collaborative approaches across child and family services and mental health services to make sure family members get the support they need.

We have also been in discussions with the Department of Health to identify what the role of the non-government sector looks like in the rollout of the mental health reforms. We have advocated strongly for our sector to have a meaningful role in these reforms given the range and quality of the work our member organisations do in this area.

“We can balance risks, harms and benefits by including children in discussions about their online safety.”

Centre for Excellence, Inquiry into social media and online safety submission





Working alongside Aboriginal colleagues and organisations

Aboriginal Children’s Forum

The Centre continues to be a member of the Aboriginal Children’s Forum (ACF), ACF Working Group, Wungurilwil Gapgapduir (WWGG) Steering Committee and the various WWGG Objective Working Groups.

During 2021–22, the Centre attended four ACFs (two online, one in Traralgon and one in Ballarat. The ACF discussed a range of themes including early help, the impact of COVID on young people, a new foster care policy, cultural competency standards, and workforce development.

Joint forum on Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care

In July 2021, the Centre co-hosted a forum with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) on Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC), and the lessons learnt from VACCA’s approach to Child Protection. The forum was well attended and provided important insights for community services organisations when considering guardianship under planned legislation.

The Centre acknowledges the lifetime work of Connie Salamone Executive Director of Strategy & Services at VACCA. Her incredible work, the partnerships she forged, and her impact on the community will continue to be celebrated.

Child Wellbeing Project

The Centre has made significant efforts to engage with the Orange Door Network and the family services sector in order to truly listen to their needs. In response, we created seven practice guides, a suite of training modules, and a three-part webinar series focused on practical techniques for engaging with infants, children, and young people. In addition, a forum to re-enforce the importance of the participation of children and young people.

Child information sharing

The Centre received a further 12 months of funding from the Peak Sector Capacity Building Grant from Family Safety Victoria and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to provide further support for sector implementation of the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) framework, the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS). Over the last year, the Centre has continued to convene the MARAM Alignment Working Group, which supports the process of organisational alignment and embedding of the MARAM, and the co-facilitation of a quarterly cross-sectoral network with Safe and Equal and NTV (Collaborative Sectors Network). As well as the production of collaborating with the Statewide Children’s Resource Program on the production of a Child Focused E-Learn Package, the development of the Emerging Themes video series that will shine a light on:

- recognising children as victim survivors in their own right
- how effective system collaboration and coordination can keep children and families safe
- safe and effective engagement with young people experiencing family violence
- working with children and young people who have experienced relational trauma.

The Centre also successfully applied for the Child Information Sharing Grants Program, which provided the opportunity to work with the Department of Education and Training (DET) and DFFH to bring together stakeholders from across information sharing sectors and focus on what ‘wellbeing’ means to different sectors, and how information sharing has or could improve child wellbeing. The Centre is currently developing a series of tailored information sessions for children, youth and family practitioners and service providers designed to increase confidence and capacity in the use of CISS. The sessions involve experts from the field demonstrating opportunities for creating and embedding child – and youth-focused practices, which also includes practice examples addressing emerging challenges and potential solutions.

The Centre acknowledges the lifetime work of Connie Salamone Executive Director of Strategy & Services at VACCA. Her incredible work, the partnership she forged, and her impact on the community will continue to be celebrated.

MARAM Practice Development Project Child Wellbeing and Adolescents Who Use Family Violence in the Home

In April 2022, the Centre was successful in attaining funding to support Family Safety Victoria (FSV) to work on practice guidance responses to children and young people under MARAM. The overall goal of the resource development was to ensure workforces and services across the system – such as hospitals; education, children and family services; specialist family violence services; Victoria Police; and youth justice – collaborate to provide wellbeing responses to children and young people in the context of family violence that are informed by trauma, age and developmental lenses.

To date, the Centre has supported FSV in the facilitation of 15 sector consultation sessions and the production of 10 practice drafts directly relating to children and young people who are victim survivors of family violence, as well as children and young people who may be using violence in the home.

The Centre will continue to work alongside FSV to further develop content focused on the needs of children and young people, which is accessible and can be easily applied to practice by professionals across the sector.

Incorporating the voice of lived experience

Pictured below: Reggie Chang speaking with SBS



“When the journalist was gentle, welcoming and respected my boundaries, it made me feel comfortable and created a safe environment for me to tell my story.”

Ruby, member of the YPMN

Young People’s Media Network



The Centre launched the Young People’s Media Network in November 2021, a network of young people with out-of-home care experience who receive paid media spokesperson training and opportunities to become advocates for positive change.

The Centre is dedicated to amplifying young people’s voices in order to effect positive change. To accomplish this, the Centre believes young people who have been in care deserve to be supported and empowered to advocate for themselves and the issues they care about.

All too often, the voices and experiences of young people who have been in care are portrayed in crisis situations, where young people, often under the age of 18, have limited capacity to advocate for themselves. Young people must be able to speak to the media about the care system in order to shift the narrative about out-of-home care.

The Centre provides training through the media network three to four times per year in collaboration with a variety of organisations, including Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) and Australian Progress. Young people who are part of the network can attend training regularly to keep their skills up to date.

As of 30 June 2022, we have:

- delivered three training sessions in partnership with YACVic and Australian Progress
- trained eight young people with an out-of-home care experience
- successfully pitched four media stories
- trained staff members from Raising Expectations to better support young people with media
- had two members meet with Minister Anthony Carbinos to launch the Fostering Connections Play a Part campaign
- launched the Young Persons Media Network website.

The Young People’s Media Network has proudly been featured in various Victorian news and media outlets:

- Joy FM: The benefits of fostering
- SBS News: Keeping fostered children connected to their heritage
- The Wangaratta Chronicle: Raising Expectations helps fuel Ruby’s determination
- The Courier: Raising Expectations supports more young people from out-of-home care to enter higher education
- SBS News: Thousands spend time in foster care each year. For some children, maintaining tradition and culture is vital



Voice of Parents

 cfecfw.asn.au/voice-of-parents/

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare acknowledges that deeply listening, collaborating and co-designing with lived experience groups is critical to the success of our work and that of our stakeholders. Ultimately, we believe it is an essential step to breaking down stigma and discrimination that people with lived experience often face.

The Voice of Parents project, a first in Victoria was the catalyst for profiling nine birth parents with lived experience of the child protection system in a design project. The project, funded for two years by Gandel Foundation and Equity Trustees and the Arthur Gordon Oldham Charitable Trust resulted in developing, testing and refining lived experience prototypes inclusive of a remuneration package.

The project success was underpinned by co-design principles resulting in a participation model, framework and resources to support service delivery and practice improvements.

Our achievements

- [Parent Advisory Group](#)
- Model and framework of Parent Participation, Charter of Parent Participation, toolkit of resources written for organisations, practitioners and parents
- DFFH workforce Lunch and Learn activities
- Developing fee for service learning and development proposal
- [Presentation to Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Group](#)



Lived Experience Design Project

The Voice of Parent's project provided strong foundations and an evidence-base to expand our parent participation model resulting in an enhanced lived experience design program. Our lived experience design program is informed by co-design principles and frameworks, Voice of Parent's Inclusion Framework and design thinking approaches to produce artefacts that visually and verbally share the voice and story of lived experience designers, our parents.

The lived experience project provides an empowering platform for birth parents with lived experience of the child protection system to meaningfully engage in a series of co-design reforms and provide advice to government and the sector.

Our current parent design group consists of eleven diverse parents focusing on reform projects currently funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

Our achievements

- Grew parent design group knowledge of child and family policy and service design
- Increased parent design group confidence to engage in co-design approaches
- Increased parent design group to eleven parents
- Introduced a Buddy Support for new parents
- Profiled lived experience voice
- Advised sector and government
- [Deliver Early Help Eight Design Solutions](#)
- [Deliver Family Group Conferencing 8 Practitioner Tips](#)
- Delivered Engaging Parents with child protection learning and development video
- Delivered education inquiry consult with the Commission for Children and Young People





“One of the most crucial elements of supporting children in care with their education is the relationship between the child and carer, their case manager, and the school.”

Out-of-Home Care Education Project

Out-of-Home Care – Education project

The Out-of-Home Care – Education project is funded by the Department of Education and Training (DET) for two years, to build greater awareness, particularly among carers and child and family services, of the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment partnering agreement and The Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care. We work in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance and VACCA, ensuring professionals supporting carers and children in out-of-home care have access to information and resources to advocate for children in care in their education.

We began the project in August 2021, with a strong focus on sector consultation, surveying and interviewing care service providers, carers and kinship engagement teams across the state. We hoped to gauge the sector's knowledge of the partnering agreement and confidence in advocating for supports for children in care.

We developed a survey for kinship and foster care contracted case managers and received over 80 responses from individuals spanning 17 organisations. Simultaneously, we held extensive consultations with individuals and teams across the state. We also ran focus groups, led by Kinship Care Victoria, with kinship carers. We spoke with the kinship engagement teams, met with regional carer advisory groups and consulted with Foster Care Association Victoria. We heard brilliant examples of good practice, where teams around the children and young people worked collaboratively to ensure the best outcomes.

Based on the rich feedback we received during our consultation period, we developed a series of foundational resources to promote consistent understanding across the sector. These are hosted on our new education resource hub on the Centre's website. To complement them, we collaborated on a training package with the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance, which will be rolled out in the latter half of 2022.

One of the most crucial elements of supporting children in care with their education is the relationship between the child and carer, their case manager, and the school. This is also key to the success of the project. The Centre has built strong relationships with the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance, VACCA, and LOOKOUT Centres, and has strengthened its existing relationships with the sector and carer peak bodies. We were lucky enough to be invited to attend Yarning Time with Bendigo District Aboriginal Cooperative's Mutjang Bupuwingarrak Mukman Team, the Alliance, and LOOKOUT North West team members, and thank the team at BDAC for hosting us on their land.

The project continues into 2022, with a focus on strengthening capability in the residential care space. We also look forward to working with the Commissioner for Children and Young People on their Systemic inquiry into the educational experiences of children and young people living in out-of-home care.



2. Walking alongside children and young people

Child Wellbeing Project

Over the last financial year the Centre has been undertaking a dedicated project aimed at making sure key workforces in the Orange Door network are well equipped to identify and prioritise what is in the child's best interests, work in ways that promote children's participation in the decision making and processes that affect them, and make sure children and young people are safe and able to thrive. Project activities included the following:

- A review of the literature to identify the latest international research on themes relating to family violence and impacts on children and young people, effective models of interdisciplinary practice, and the role of collaboration within the service sector.
- A survey of 265 professionals who work across the child, youth and family services sector – as well as drug and alcohol services, family violence, out of home care and health services – to identify confidence and capacity levels, barriers to / enablers for professionals to work with children and young people
- Sector wide focus groups involving 92 participants, and an additional 25 consultations involving 32 professionals, expanding on the information obtained through the sector wide surveys.
- Contributed to the development of practice guidance material to support practitioners in the Orange Door network to be able to improve practice regarding case noting and recording of information relating to engagement with children and young people.
- Provided consolidated feedback from survey and consultation participants on ways in which Family Safety Victoria's CRM could be further improved.
- Drafted a series of practice guides covering a wide range of topics relevant to professionals working with children and young people in the Orange Door network.
- This work was funded by Family Safety Victoria and supported by hundreds of professionals across Orange Door workforces who regularly provided their insights to and also sought guidance from the Child Wellbeing team.



Early Start, Bright Future project

The Centre's Early Start, Bright Future project commenced in September 2021 and has a vision for every child – regardless of postcode, family circumstance or cultural background – to thrive when they enter school.

Early Start, Bright Future is driving cultural change within the child and family services sector, highlighting the importance of access to quality early learning opportunities for children experiencing disadvantage and centring a child's right to education as key to transforming their life outcomes.

Contributing to the evidence base about the factors that hinder and facilitate access to engagement in early years services by children, carers and vulnerable families

We completed a literature review to identify the latest international research on the factors that hinder and facilitate engagement with early years services by carers and parents.

We also completed a sector consultation surveying 36 parents and carers and 390 professionals who work with children zero to eight years old across the child and family services and early years sectors. The goal was to identify barriers to / enablers for families in accessing early years services. This was an invaluable opportunity to hear from carers and parents directly about their experiences and the consultation has informed project activities, ensuring we address the most immediate needs for workforces and families.

Working with community service organisations, Child FIRST and Orange Door practitioners and early years professionals to build workforce capability and provide information and training to practitioners

Early Start, Bright Future is building a connected system across multiple sectors to better support children experiencing vulnerability to access early learning, with a focus on two years of kinder before school. Through presentations, workshops, webinars and digital resources, Early Start, Bright Future has connected with over a thousand professionals from child and family services, kindergartens, long day care centres, maternal and child health services, local government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

We commenced delivery of a monthly newsletter providing clear, concise information on early years services aimed at professionals working with families with children zero to eight years old. With a growing subscription base of over 1500, the newsletter has created a key communication channel between the Department of Education (DET) and the child and family services sector, keeping practitioners informed about early years sector updates and reforms.



“Early childhood is the best time to positively impact the future health, wellbeing and development of a child. Currently around 1 in 5 children in Australia arrive at school developmentally vulnerable and once that gap opens it is difficult to close.”

In partnership with DET’s Early Childhood Improvement Branches, we delivered online training to 310 child and family service professionals, focused on improving workforce confidence and capability to navigate the early years service system for children and families. Participants reported increased confidence and knowledge in supporting children to access kinder, and facilitated introductions across sectors, which will support future collaborations – a significant step towards providing more seamless support for families.

In collaboration with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation and Foundation House we delivered a series of inclusion webinars to over 300 professionals in the early years and child and family service sectors. Webinars focused on ways of working with families and children who have experienced trauma and promoted early childhood education and care (ECEC) as a powerful intervention strategy.

We established the Early Years Working Group, increasing awareness and support of the challenges and enabling vulnerable children to experience access to early learning opportunities.

We announced the Early Years Hub and Finder, an online professional resource focused on connecting children to health, education and care supports in the years before school. It simplifies system navigation, providing practical information about federal, state and local government subsidies and services available for Victorian children. This Finder Website can be accessed on a desktop, tablet or smartphone and used wherever professionals meet with families: at a service, in a family’s home or in the community. It is hosted on the Early Years Hub alongside the Resource Library, which offers resources to support parents and carers to engage positively with early years services for children.

As a result of this critical work, Early Start, Bright Future has secured funding for another two years so we can make sure children that stand to benefit most from early learning opportunities are actively welcomed, participating and included.

Supporting our sector to keep children, young people and families safe

Family Preservation Reunification Response

The Family Preservation and Reunification Response (FPRR) is an innovative approach to delivering evidence-based and integrated support to vulnerable children and families. The aim is to prevent at-risk children entering or re-entering care services and reunifying children safely with their families. In collaboration, FPRR agencies, Child Protection and other professionals work with the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), and

the Centre for Evidence and Implementation, to build strong links into community to increase the safety and stability of children.

The FPRR has expanded considerably in the past year with more community service organisations coming on board to participate in the innovative initiative. To make sure there is consistency in service delivery, the Centre has been pivotal in delivering coaching to team leaders and practitioners, building their confidence and competency in the use of evidence-based practices adopted in the FPRR. A key aim of our coaching is to strengthen practitioner reflection in a safe environment for learning and exploring new understandings and skills.

The Centre’s Practice Lead team has observed shifts in practice by Team Leaders and practitioners in the FPRR, resulting in increases in overall confidence and competence in the use of the evidence-based skills. Working with our partners, the Centre is thrilled at the positive feedback we have received on the impact of coaching on practice, which has in turn led to better outcomes for families. We look forward to continuing our lead role in driving systemic and cultural change across the child and family services system through coaching, training and supporting the implementation of the FPRR Initiative.

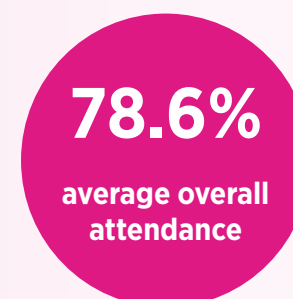
A Team Leader’s reflections:

Coaching has been an absolutely reflective space for me as a Team Leader – a space to reflect on my practice in mentoring and guiding my practitioners and to plan for group sessions with my practitioners to deepen their understanding of the Practice Elements. A very useful and rich experience to help me grow and develop my team and I to be sustainable and achieving the best outcomes with our families.

A Practitioner’s reflections:

Coaching provides me with a reflective space, where I am thinking about things from different perspectives, using the Practice Elements in my sessions to work with families, empowering them to find a different way forward.

In the past 12 months, the eight practice leads have provided:



“I am incredibly humbled by the innovation of the Centre’s member organisations and our sector in working to keep children safe, healthy and thriving.”

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

Family Preservation Reunification Response feedback

Parent

“It’s great having someone actually listen to us and give us answers to what our questions are, not just tell us stuff.”

“It’s brilliant to have someone complimenting us and telling us when we’re doing something good or right, for so long we’ve just been told what to do or what we’re doing wrong.”

Practice lead

“I have observed practitioners having more self-awareness of the practice elements and how they are using them in their daily practice, and how this is bringing about better outcomes for the families they are working with.”

“I’ve really noticed the shift in practices and thinking ... Practitioners who traditionally rescued families with the best of intentions ... [are] now considering ways to empower families to be their own best advocates and problem solvers.”

Team leader

“Love the coaching space, especially the role plays, to try first in a safe space how to use the practice elements with my practitioners to guide them and empower them in their roles.”

Practitioner

“I really like how the practices and coaching gets you to think how we can do things differently. There are always things you can try when you’re feeling stuck with a family.”

“We are learning about how to guide families for change, rather than directing or trying to fix their problems for them ... This means they build skills and resources to do things for themselves and not rely on services.”



3. Strengthening sector capability

— • • Outcomes Practice
• O P • Evidence Network
• E N • Child and Family
— • • Services

OPEN – Strengthening the evidence base

The Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network (OPEN) is a partnership between Victoria’s child and family services sector, government and research, aimed at supporting the use, creation and sharing of evidence from research, practice and client experience to deliver better outcomes for children, young people and families.

Highlights of 2021–22 included:

- Growing a thriving network with 1,759 subscribers from 466 organisations across child, youth and family services; health and allied services; government; education; research institutions; and more.
- OPEN Symposium 2021: Working on What Matters, Sharing What Works – a 3.5 day digital event in October 2021. The event was better than ever with 31 presentations, attracting 225 participants from 89 different organisations. We had four wonderful keynote speakers in Dr Norman Swan, Prof Sharon Goldfeld (Murdoch Children’s Research Institute), Jonathan Breckon (OPEN Innovation Team, UK) and Liz Weaver (Tamarack Institute Canada).

Feedback from participants:

“I just wanted to give a huge shout out to all the CFECFW staff and the Open Team for the excellent symposium you have all pulled together. Having been a part of the team that pulled together the YACVic conference in August this year, I know what a massive task it is, especially to move it online and at a time of year when people are exhausted.”

“I have been to a number of online PD and conferences these past 18 months and this one was up there with the better organised ones. There are a lot that are very under par, so Deb, your leadership here is greatly appreciated. Thanks for investing appropriately to support a well-developed, engaging online program for our sector. I hope you are all planning to have a rest after successfully running ‘Open 21’ you all deserve it.”

A positive evaluation of OPEN was undertaken by Urbis in mid-2021, which supported further funding allocation until June 23, 2022.

Key findings included that OPEN:

- has played a valuable role in supporting the Roadmap for Reform by laying a strong foundation for the sector to engage in and improve evidence-informed practice
- reflects international best practice for the design and management of ‘evidence centres’
- is relevant for organisations at various levels of evidence-informed practice maturity
- has successfully shifted sector attitudes towards evidence-informed practice and developed evidence capability and capacity
- represents an economically efficient approach to building sector capability, strengthened by its position with the Centre.

OPEN advisory services

We continued to provide free or low-cost advisory services to our sector, offering project support, coaching and training to strengthen confidence, knowledge and capability to identify, develop and use diverse forms of evidence in service design, delivery and evaluation.

OPEN advisory and support services are in high demand. In 2021–22, OPEN delivered intensive project support (IDEAS projects) to 11 organisations, training sessions to 10 organisations and provided advice and coaching to 26 organisations.

Support for OPEN’s services highlight the value of support services that takes a ‘learning through doing’ approach to building key skills. Participants consistently comment on the value of the approach in building confidence and enthusiasm for strengthening their outcome and measurement focus, and embedding this within program implementation and evaluation.

Feedback from sector organisations:

“OPEN has been SO incredibly helpful. I really wish we were aware of this service before we were granted this pilot program funding. However, we are very thankful to have OPEN onboard now. I have learned about the very basics of evaluation, program design, co-design and program logics. This, in turn, has resulted in me feeling confident that we can produce a great piece of work which accurately reflects the great outcomes of the program and ultimately will better our chance of being refunded.”

“Significant support and increased knowledge of key components of evidence practice has enabled me to confidently progress with engaging a workforce in this process.”



OPEN Forums

OPEN Forums are now twice-monthly. During 2021–22, 50 organisations provided presentations at an OPEN Forum or the OPEN Symposium on innovative practices, programs and research. These sessions have attracted a total of 858 participants. Topics and presenters included:

Month	Session Title	Speakers	Attendees
Aug	Embedding evidence into everyday practice: Getting started on a tight budget – lessons from Family Care and the Lighthouse Foundation	Dr Janet Congues (Family Care), Tia Di Biase and Jackson Petrie (The Lighthouse Institute)	74
Sept	Parents Under Pressure (PuP) and Family Foundations – lessons about two evidence-based programs	Nikki Hill and Lynda Leigh (Good Shepherd Australia) and Samantha Bladon (Merri Health)	78
Oct	OPEN Symposium: Working on what matters, sharing what works – 3.5 days, 10 sessions, 31 presentations	Host Deb Tsorbaris and Prof Cathy Humphreys	225
Oct	Sharing the Journey: Victoria and Aboriginal Family Preservation and Reunification Response (FPRR) workshop	DFFH, Centre for Evidence and Implementation, VACCA, OzChild, Mackillop, Anglicare Victoria, CFECFW	213
March	OPEN Event: Coffee talk – information session on evidence-based decision making for human services leaders	Dr Lisa Griffiths (OZChild), Eric Barends (Carnegie Mellon University), and Alumini	48
March	OPEN Forum: Youth in focus –insights into supporting at-risk young people	Ariel Couchman (Youthlaw), Melinda Lawley and Frankie Doig (The Bridge Youth Service), lived experience consultants Shorna Moore and Tanya Corrie (MCM)	89
June	OPEN Forum: Embedding evidence into practice – establishing whole organisation/cross-organisation approaches	Windermere, Parenting Research Centre and Social Ventures Australia	93
Ongoing	OPEN is supporting the delivery of the ‘evidence based decision making’ course (April–September 2022)	Run by Eric Barends (CEBMa) and co-hosted by Lisa Griffith (OzChild)	38

OPEN Groups

Reflecting input from the sector, OPEN coordinates two special interest groups to foster sector sharing, capability and collaboration. These are:

The Evaluation Community of Practice (Evaluation CoP), which meets twice-monthly and provides an opportunity for those in evidence-related roles to share knowledge, tools and expertise; generate shared language and understanding about evidence practice; and foster and develop collaborative cross-organisational projects. The Evaluation CoP currently has 30 members and representatives from 20 organisations including Anglicare; OzChild; Barwon Child, Youth & Family (BCYF); Whitelion; Lighthouse Foundation; CREATE; VACCA; Bethany; Family Life; MacKillop; research institutes; and youth services within local government. Last year the Evaluation CoP collaborated through a series of workshops on the strengthening evidence practice in the child and family sector.

The Multicultural Community Working Group, which commenced in 2020 and meets quarterly is composed of senior representatives from the state government and agencies that provide services to multicultural communities across different sectors including children and family, youth, aged care, out-of-home care, and disability. The group’s purpose is to inform the advocacy and capability building work of the Centre and OPEN about the service needs and barriers for multicultural communities in accessing quality services. Members include the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, BCYF, Brotherhood of St Laurence, DFFH, Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, and Settlement Services International (Victoria).

Knowledge translation activities

Translating and sharing knowledge, new research, technical resources and promising and innovative practice through the OPEN portal brings the right knowledge, to the right people at the right time. During 2021–22, OPEN supported improved access to evidence from research and practice through:

- developing monthly research reviews, which are distributed to over 300 subscribers
- preparing five case studies on innovative programs (quarterly), which consistently attract high levels of traffic. These include:
 - home.plate, a hospitality training program (Change Co.)
 - Step-Up Program, adapted to cater to 10–11-year-olds (BCYF)
 - Tarrengower Prison family video visits program (VACRO)
 - Service Coordination Program (Jewish Care)
- Youth Leadership Program Area (CMY)
- preparing five reviews to share event recordings and a snapshot of events related to the work of child and family sector. These are promoted via the newsletter and include:
 - Panel on Safety in the Family Court (ANROWS)
 - Community Around the Child, a program to reduce the criminalisation of young people in residential out-of-home-care – Prof Jane McGillivray (Deakin University) and Soula Kontomichalos (Department of Justice and Community Safety)

“OPEN supports Victorian child, youth and family services to use and build evidence from research, practice and client experience to deliver better outcomes for children, young people and families.”

- Approaches to support child mental health in culturally and linguistically diverse communities – Anagha Joshi (AIFS), Julie Ngwabi (Emerging Minds), and Zakiyyah Muhammad (psychotherapist and mental health social worker)
- Community listening: What happens when we start with children and families? – Dr Tim Moore (Centre for Community Child Health), Catherine Thompson and Kerry Laming (Hands Up Mallee) and Tara Day-Williams (Department of Social Services)
- Exploring collective impact initiatives and approaches to evaluate them: Features, opportunities and challenges – Liz Weaver (Tamarack Institute).

Residential Care Sector Occupational Health and Safety Research Program

The program was funded by WorkSafe Victoria and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to improve the health and safety outcomes of residential care workers by building leadership capability and understanding of strategies to prevent occupational violence and aggression across each level of the residential care system and changing cultural attitudes towards occupational violence and aggression.

To achieve this, we co-designed a multi-level safety leadership capability and occupational violence and aggression prevention framework and pilot training program tailored to the residential care sector.

The Centre will seek to role this training out more broadly in the coming year.

- Delivered Promoting Safety in Residential Care
 - Training modes included face-to-face, hybrid and E-Learning
 - 189 sector participants attended from 8 Residential Care providers
 - Co-designing training package with Residential Care Working Group
- Delivered pre and post pilot training evaluation
 - Deliver final evaluation report

The Centre is working with Department of Families, Fairness, and Housing to fund and rollout the program across the sector.

Quotes from pilot training

Frontline Worker

“The training was great. I feel we could have had more time to discuss more case studies, perhaps the course over a full day. I personally learn so much from case studies and the discussions that follow. But otherwise, I really enjoyed the training and found it really relevant.”

Supervisor

Additional training and ability to take members off for training; Additional employees (whole sector issue); More transparency in client matching.”

Frontline Worker

“I thought the training was very informative and Simon was brilliant as the facilitator. Not only did it reinforce the knowledge that I have already learnt over the years both in practice and in theory, but it also gave me more knowledge about keeping myself safe and my co-workers, both physically and mentally. I would certainly recommend this training for the new Carers coming through, maybe as part of ongoing induction process and as a refresher for Carers who have been with us for a while.”

Frontline Worker

“Further training for all staff to properly understand the underlying communicational purpose of challenging behaviours. A better understanding of environmental factors regarding behaviours of concerns, the ability to work backwards and dissect a behaviour into 100 little steps, to find out where the trigger points are.”

Frontline Worker

“Additional training so that all workers are Trauma Informed.”



Tri-Peaks partnership

A collaborative initiative between the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, and the Victorian Healthcare Association to promote and support good governance and integrated practices in the child and family, alcohol and other drug and community health sectors.

The Tri-Peaks Partnership has continued to identify opportunities for synergy and demonstrate the need for, and importance of, cross-sector partnership and collaboration.

Two key programs include:

Webinars: a professional platform bringing together cross sectoral workforces to build capabilities, share knowledge and promote practice improvement.

Mentoring: building leadership and management capacity across the three sectors.

Our achievements

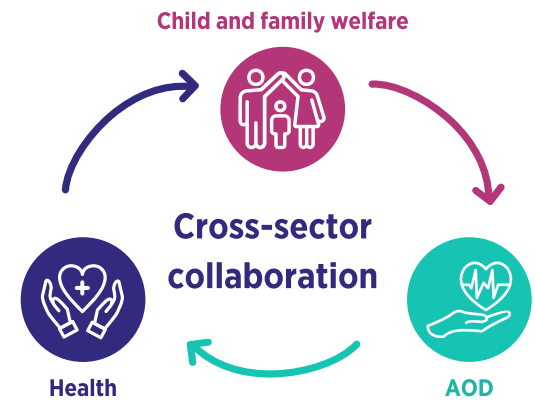
successfully delivered webinars including:

- Two mentoring intakes comprising 48 participants including Board Members, CEO, Senior Executive and Senior Practitioners.
- Where we are at: The social, economic, and wellbeing impacts of COVID-19 and exploring the ‘new vulnerable’
- Voice of the Client Framework and Implementation Tool
- Rethinking Child Protection system design assumptions for families with multiple and complex needs
- Global Trends in Long-Term Covid Resilience
- Technology and Addiction Part 1: Gaming and eSports
- WorkSafe Victoria On Creating Mentally Healthy Workplaces
- Technology and Addiction Part 2: Gaming Addiction
- International insights on the impact of COVID-19 on children and family services
- Omicron: lessons learned and where to next
- Brief Interventions
- Safe Standards across Health and Community Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs and Children and Family sectors
- Substance use Disorder
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)
- Alcohol and Other Drugs and the LGBTIQ+ community
Innovation Series commencing October 2022: Home Stretch, Child Maltreatment, Family Drug Treatment Court: Collaborating with parents to support family reunification
- Successfully secured two years funding to continue project commencing 2023-2024

Tri-Peaks Project

Tri-Peaks facilitates critical connections, information sharing and networking, and a cross-sectoral program of work

Responding to workforce development opportunities across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria



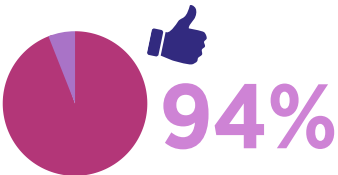
Promoting improved understanding of complex common clients across three sectors

25 

Webinars have been delivered since the beginning of the project

3945+

People attended Tri-Peaks webinars between 2020 to 2021



Of attendees rate the webinars good or excellent

80 

Participants took part in the 2020-21 Board Mentoring Program

7 

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations attended Tri-Peaks webinars between 2020 to 2021

444+

Organisations attended Tri-Peaks webinars between 2020 to 2021



The suite of MARAM practice guidance for children and young people will be released early in 2023.

The AVITH project team is working across three project areas:

- Supporting development of adolescent-focused

MARAM Practice Guidance

- Delivering practice leadership activities
- Training development

Drafting MARAM practice guidance

The Centre has been working collaboratively with Family Safety Victoria (FSV), alongside other Subject Matter Expert groups, to develop the Adolescent-focused MARAM practice guidance materials. The Centre has been instrumental in drafting and reviewing foundational knowledge and practice content, and co-facilitating stakeholder consultation sessions.

The MARAM Practice guidance includes evidence-informed practical guidance for responding to young people using violence in the home and assessing child wellbeing in the context of family violence.

Our input means that workforces and services across the system can work together to provide a trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate response to young people who are using violence in the home. This involves a whole of family approach to assessing and managing risk and wellbeing and effective information sharing practices.

The suite of MARAM practice guidance for children and young people is expected to be released in 2023.

Practice leadership activities

Funded by Family Safety Victoria (FSV), the Centre is continuing to help build the evidence base in relation to what works for young people who use violence in the home. The Centre has been focusing on practice leadership activities designed to increase professional knowledge and skills and support practice improvement relating to Adolescent Violence in the home (AVITH) service responses. The activities encourage practitioners to hold the voices of young people front and centre when designing and implementing their program responses.

Our work has included establishing a Community of Practice for Family Violence Therapeutic Intervention and Adolescent Family Violence (FV & AFV) providers; a webinar series investigating the different contexts in which this kind of violence occurs and the drivers of violence in the home by a young person as well the implications for practice; a workshop series focusing on particular aspects of program design or service delivery; and establishment of an AVITH network with regular newsletter mailouts.



Pictured Below: Minister Anthony Carbinas, Centre CEO Deb Tsorbaris, and sector CEOs

Training development

In response to a growing sector need for professional development on the subject of adolescent violence in the home, the Centre’s project team has been developing training content which will be offered as interactive online content.

Fostering Connections

Fostering Connections is a sector-led initiative offering prospective carers a first point of call and centralised information on the process of becoming a foster carer in Victoria. The service also provides a referral pathway for enquiries to agencies across Victoria. Since its inception in 2016, Fostering Connections has processed over 30,000 enquiries. It represents all Victorian foster care agencies and services and is a critical part of Victoria’s foster care infrastructure.

In 2021–22, Fostering Connections celebrated the launch of its new foster care awareness and attraction campaign, Play a Part. The launch followed months of dedicated work by Victoria’s foster care agencies, drawing on their collective vision for and knowledge of best practice in foster care marketing and recruitment. The new campaign calls on all Victorians to play a part in their community by becoming a foster carer.

Play a Part launched in May 2022 and received over 4 million social media impressions in its first month. The campaign has also appeared on prime-time television, across digital advertising and in newspapers across the state. Play a Part captures the diversity of foster carers in Victoria by including images of Victorians from all communities and walks of life, and running translated versions in Vietnamese, Cantonese, Arabic, Punjabi and Sinhalese.



Fostering Connections has also supported our sector by:

- providing a Play a Part co-branding pack and practical support to agencies to promote and leverage the new campaign
- offering general marketing and communications support to agencies including carer attraction activity reviews and recommendations on key infrastructure such as websites and content development
- rolling out a hybrid training delivery model for Shared Lives so that prospective foster carers can continue their pre-accreditation training when unable to attend in person
- supporting improved data use, input and literacy in the sector through an online training suite, webinars and one-on-one consultation

Fostering Connections has also maintained business as usual by:

- processing 5,118 Victorian foster care enquiries via the Family Journey content management system
- running a dedicated suite of communication activities and events with agencies to promote foster care during Foster Care Week
- facilitating sector collaboration and information exchange

Over the coming year, Fostering Connections looks forward to further engaging and educating Victorians through the Play a Part campaign, helping prospective carers in their journey, and supporting foster care agencies to attract and recruit new carers.



Become a foster carer
Play a part

Watch the Play A Part video by clicking here.



Economic case for foster care

On behalf of our sector, the Centre commissioned the Cube Group to undertake a review of the economic value of foster care in Victoria. In its report, *Valuing what matters: The economic value of foster care in Victoria*, Cube describes the enormous economic benefit of foster care to the Victorian community, the equivalent of \$80m in providing 2.9 million hours of active caregiving and \$435 million in avoided costs of placing children in alternative forms of care. The report highlighted the significant challenges facing the foster care system in Victoria and called for the development of more fit-for-purpose models of foster care in line with the experiences of carers, emerging models of enhanced support for foster care and the principles of Aboriginal self-determination and cultural safety.



Raising Expectations

Raising Expectations supports young people with a care experience to aspire to, access and succeed at TAFE and university in Victoria. By bringing together the community and post-secondary education sectors, we are changing a culture of low expectations for care-experienced young people, to one full of hope and possibility.

Despite being a challenging year for many young people who continue to contend with the impacts of disrupted education and learning, the program continued to grow, providing a high level of support to our students and their supporters. The Centre and our three partners, Federation University Australia, La Trobe University and Swinburne University of Technology worked hard to ensure that care-experienced students got wrap-around, on-the-ground support to achieve their life and learning goals.

Some highlights for Raising Expectations this year include:

Increased access and attainment

Raising Expectations continued to record strong numbers of enrolments for care-experienced students at TAFE and university in 2021-22:

- The program – which began with just 43 identified care-experienced students studying – saw over 600 care-experienced students enrolled at our three partner institutions.
- 164 care-experienced students completed their studies at TAFE and university, graduating with a range of new skills and qualifications.

Care experienced young people care about their communities and want to make a difference. Many are pursuing careers in areas experiencing skills shortages, such as the caring and health professions.

Top fields of study across our partner institutions:

TAFE (VET)

1. Community services (including mental health)
2. Nursing
3. Business, accounting and bookkeeping
4. Building and construction
5. Technology and education

University

1. Law, justice and criminology
2. Health sciences and nursing
3. IT and computer science
4. Social work and psychology
5. Science

Launching our Peer Mentoring Program

Raising Expectations responded to the on-the-ground needs of care-experienced students by establishing a Peer Mentoring Program for TAFE and university students across the state. By carefully pairing new students with student mentors based on shared interests and student needs, the program aims to ensure care experienced students have the guidance, advice and networks they need to thrive – all from someone who understands them. In its pilot phase, the program has two models; a face-to-face iteration run at Swinburne University of Technology, and an online model open to TAFE and university students across the State. Mentors attend comprehensive training by the Raising Expectations team before commencing their mentoring roles and receive remuneration in recognition of their time and lived experience.

Capacity building and awareness raising

Raising Expectations has continued to work across the community and education sectors to increase awareness of and build aspiration for care-experienced young people. We have focused on building the confidence and capability of the workforces and systems surrounding care-experienced young people to ensure students are appropriately supported.

Some of our key initiatives include:

- Development of two open-access professional development eLearning modules for TAFE and university staff: *The out-of-home care system in Victoria* and *Experiences of trauma and impact on engagement in education*
- Delivery of two interactive, tailored workshops provided to Victoria's 13 TAFE providers via the Raising Expectations TAFE Network: Supporting care-experienced students: *Taking a trauma-informed approach* and *Igniting self-determination in young people who experience complex and challenging disadvantage* with Shayne Hood
- The launch of the comprehensive resource *Life After School Guide: Supporting young care-experienced people in their transition to post-school study, training or work*
- Delivery of tailored workshops to our TAFE and university partners, including half day workshops for staff at Victoria University and La Trobe University to support their work with care-experienced students.

“I want people to know that care experienced people have just as many rights as anyone else. We deserve to achieve anything we want to.”

Ruby, care-experienced journalism student

Strengthening communications

Raising Expectations reached more people across more platforms to change the narrative around post-secondary educational aspiration and attainment for care-experienced young people.

This year we focused on speaking directly to more young people about going to TAFE or university. We incorporated their voices and experiences into our communications, sharing honest stories and insights that highlighted the strength and tenacity of care-experienced young people to challenge a culture of low expectations.

To do this, we launched a second fortnightly newsletter for care-experienced young people called *Game Changers*, and we joined Instagram! We also ensured care-experienced students were recognised beyond the sectors we work in, by supporting them to share their stories with journalists and local media outlets.

We continued to connect the dots between TAFEs, universities, community services organisations and individual young people, meeting the needs of the project's diverse stakeholders through the development of tailored resources.

Click here to sign up to our newsletter





4. Growing a responsive and sustainable Centre

Social Services Regulation Reform

On 16 September 2021, Parliament passed the Social Services Regulation Bill, which gives effect to a comprehensive new regulatory scheme for Victorian social services. The scheme, which will be implemented in a phased manner from 1 July 2024, aims to reduce or prevent harm to social services users. The Centre is represented on the Taskforce that has been established to guide the work. The Taskforce provides strategic advice that incorporates the viewpoints of service providers and service users to inform the development of draft regulations, communications materials and the Regulatory Impact Assessment process.

Learning and Development

The Centre continues to be a strong provider of learning and development (L&D) opportunities for our sector, and allied sectors. As the peak body, and a registered training organisation (RTO) delivering accredited and non-accredited training, we have a unique understanding of industry needs and the ability to develop bespoke L&D informed by the best available evidence, policy and reform. This year, along with our member organisations, the Centre has worked in partnership with a range of agencies including the Department of Health, Department of Families, Fairness & Housing (DFFH), central and east, west and south divisions; Family Safety Victoria (FSV); and the Victorian Regulations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) to develop and deliver a variety of packages to strengthen the knowledge and skills of practitioners working with children, young people and families.

Evidence Based Decision Making for Human Services Leaders course

This year, the Centre, via OPEN, in partnership with Centre for Evidence Based Management (CEBMa) at Carnegie Mellon University and OzChild, enrolled the largest contingent of human services leaders in the course to date. We recognise that the responsibilities of leaders and managers in not-for-profit organisations have changed significantly in the past five years. They must be able to guide their organisations to deliver programs and services underpinned by the best available evidence, and aligned to the state government’s reform agenda. In April 2022, thirty leaders from across the sector commenced this critical 12 month course, not only building their own skills but contributing to the overall uplift of our sector. Congratulations to all.

“As a CEO, undertaking this course helped me gain an understanding of contemporary concepts and evidence-informed knowledge. It promoted my critical analysis skills and I found it challenging in a good way. I will go back and look at this content over and over again. The course has enabled me to quickly digest the enormous amount of information that’s presented to me, to help sift through the noise, and make good decisions faster.”

Heidi Tucker, CEO, Anchor on the Evidenced Based Decision Making for Human Services Leaders course

Training workshops delivered for Centre member organisations

The Centre delivers a wide range of training workshops for our members and allied services working with children, young people and families. In 2021–22, the Centre delivered 100 targeted training workshops, reaching approximately 2000 practitioners. Some of the most accessed workshops were:

- Best Interests Case Practice Model (BICPM) framework (22 Sessions)
- Case notes and record-keeping (17 Sessions)
- Engaging and talking with young people who experience trauma (seven sessions)
- Assessing and building parental capacity through the Best interests case practice model training framework (six sessions)
- Advanced case management (five sessions)
- Digging deeper: Coaching skills for practitioners; Self-care and vicarious trauma (three sessions each)

Supporting compliance with Victoria’s new Child Safe Standards

The Centre worked alongside Victorian organisations and agencies to support their compliance with the new Child Safe Standards that came into force on 1 July 2022. We delivered five monthly information sessions and 17 live training sessions, while 90 people completed the Introduction to Victoria’s new Child Safe Standards eLearn on the Centre’s learning management system (LMS). Before decommissioning the earlier eLearn on the previous standards, 216 completions were registered on the LMS from February to June 2022. The Centre also supported five organisations with the development of implementation plans and risk management strategies to enable their compliance.

These are our kids

The Centre has partnered with several philanthropic groups to establish a project dedicated to improving outcomes for children who are victims of family violence. Together with the GKM Group, Equity Trustees, the Ross Trust, The Edith Kemp Memorial Trust, VCF – The John Minogue Bequest Frank Montagnese Foundation, The Zachary Nancarrow Fund, Coopers Investment, the Centre commissioned Deloitte Access Economics to provide a report on the impact of family violence on children, identify

evidence-informed programs and responses, provide an economic analysis designed to estimate the avoided cost to government and the community if effective interventions were in place and able to lessen the impact of family violence on children. This report will help inform next steps as the initiative continues to grow.

We are very excited and privileged to be working with such a wonderful group of funders to raise the profile of children experiencing family violence in Victoria, as well as to provide evidence and advice on how we can reduce the impact and trauma on Victoria's children.

MARAM training

The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) framework supports services to effectively identify, assess and manage family violence risk. The framework has been established in law under a Part 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008.

Throughout 2021–22, the Centre was funded by DFFH to deliver MARAM intermediate-level training for child, youth and family services, and multicultural affairs workforces. The Centre was also funded by the Department of Health to deliver MARAM intermediate-level training to designated mental health, alcohol and other drug and homelessness community health workforces.

The Centre has delivered MARAM training to over ten thousand participants since the project's inception in 2020. Of those, 2,702 participants attended MARAM training throughout 2021–22.

In 2022, the Centre developed two innovations in MARAM training:

- The Centre delivered MARAM workshops co-designed with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). These workshops took an open, yarning approach. They were successful and highly engaging.
- The Centre commenced development of a series of 'Putting MARAM into practice' workshops. These workshops will tackle the most common practice challenges faced by practitioners working with MARAM. The first 3 workshops will begin in September 2022.

NDIS Training

In 2021–22 the Centre continued to deliver monthly 'Working with the NDIS to support families at risk' training for child and family services in partnership with DFFH and the Association for Children with a Disability. This training remains popular in the sector: Over 3,000 practitioners from a range of workforces have now attended. Over 99% of attendees said they would recommend the training.



Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy

The Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy (RCLDS), funded by DFFH, is a backbone initiative that recognises the link between a skilled and supported residential care workforce and the outcomes for young people in care. The Centre works closely with the RCLDS reference group to understand the needs of the residential care workforce. With guidance from the RCLDS strategic leadership group, the Centre undertook a range of activities aligned to the four priorities outlined in the 2021–23 RCLDS Strategic Framework.

Major projects

This year, the Centre commenced two strategic projects to guide workforce development planning and implementation including the RCLDS workforce research project and the RCLDS L&D framework.

- Workforce & delivery data gathered represents up to 17 provider organisations and 2,205 staff
- Sector L&D data gathered identifies subject and delivery gaps and opportunities.



“The residential care workforce has shown us what is possible and how you have continued to lead, care and inspire young people, throughout another very unique and challenging year.”

Deb Tsorbaris, Centre CEO

RCLDS training facilitation

RCLDS facilitated 90 accredited and non-accredited live training workshops, including ‘Motivational interviewing, counselling skills for non-counsellors and Aboriginal cultural awareness’ (delivered by VACSAL); 790 residential carers completed courses. As of 30 June 2022, there were 1,251 residential care workers registered on the Centre’s LMS. The most completed workshops in 2021–22 were:

- Beginning Practice: Mandatory minimum qualification: nine sessions, 101 completions
- Skilled at looking after children (LAC): six sessions, 91 completions
- Effective conflict management: nine sessions, 89 completions
- CALM suicide intervention: five sessions, 70 completions
- Supporting young people with medication: five sessions, 51 completions.

Residential care lived-experience group

Drawing on the lived experiences and perspectives of young people who have lived in residential care is a key priority for RCLDS. The Centre, facilitates the residential care lived experience group – eight young people aged 18 to 25 years who are working on a range of projects to benefit young people currently in care. This year, the group developed a proposal for a lived-experience mentor program and initiated a podcast series for new workers.

Resi ROCKS

Resi ROCKS is an important element of RCLDS that celebrates practice excellence and cultivates a culture of learning and innovation. In 2021, the Centre delivered an online event that saw 250 people gather to recognise the extensive achievements of the residential care workforce. The annual Residential Care Awards, celebrating the efforts of individuals and teams, were announced live at Resi ROCKS by former Minister for Child Protection, Luke Donnellan. Four \$2,000 educational scholarships were also awarded to facilitate further learning and development.

“The trainer was fantastic; I have taken away so much from the session ... It’s also made me so much more aware of my own and my co-workers’ needs regarding mental health. I would recommend to anyone in the community services field. Great training! 10/10!”

Residential carer, Berry Street, after attending the CALM training.

“[The trainer] was very engaging and knowledgeable. He made everyone feel comfortable and allowed us to speak and interact, which was important and helpful.”

Residential carer, Anglicare, after attending Aboriginal Cultural Awareness training

Self-paced eLearning is an important element of L&D delivery. RCLDS provides community service organisations with eLearning packages to self-manage, as well as enabling the workforce to access training easily via the Centre’s LMS. The following completions were registered by the Centre.

eLearning course completions

- Fire safety (mandatory): 1169
- Infection control in residential care: 370
- Reportable conduct scheme, residential care workers: 93
- Supporting young people with medication online: 87
- Good notes and documentation in residential care: 71
- Supervision conversations: 10
- Total: 1800

Shared Lives: training for Foster Care practitioners

In the last year the Centre delivered:

- One final Shared Lives familiarisation session to complete the uplift to the new package.
- Four Shared Lives Victoria three-day training sessions: training 63 Foster care staff in the full package.

In partnership with DFFH, the Centre conducted a survey to identify the training needs of the Victorian foster care workforce in relation to the Step-by-Step mandatory foster care assessment tool. Based on feedback we developed ‘Interview Skills’ training to enhance Step by Step assessment capability, the demand was so significant we will be delivering five sessions in total. The Centre will also once again, deliver face to face Step-by-Step training in Victoria in 2023.

Nationally accredited training

Diploma of Leadership and Management

In December 2021, Windermere hosted the graduation ceremony for the Windermere, WAYSS and Better Places class of 2021 Diploma of Leadership and Management students. The diploma is a practical, hands-on course that provides the critical tools needed for new and emerging leaders, and importantly, skills existing managers can apply immediately to effectively develop and execute strategy and lead successful teams.

The next intake of the diploma commenced in February 2022 with 12 participants. In 21-22 the Centre’s RTO delivered three Diploma units to 34 participants. The subjects reflect leading management and leadership techniques, while being tailored to our sector. This year, we have included interviews with relevant sector representatives to aid discussion and inquiry.

Beginning Practice

The Centre continues to deliver Beginning Practice (the mandatory minimum qualification for Victorian residential care workers) to the sector. This course has been delivered via remote learning since 2020 and hence is able to cater to the training needs of organisations in regional Victoria. In 21-22 the Centre’s RTO delivered 9 courses (4 units counted as 1 course) and registered 101 completions.”

The four Beginning Practice units are:

1. Facilitate responsible behaviour (CHCCCS009)
2. Provide primary residential care (CHCPRT009)
3. Work with children and young people with complex trauma and attachment issues and needs (CHCPRT010)
4. Work effectively in trauma-informed care (CHCMHS007).



Strategic networking at the Centre

A critical part of our engagement with the child and family services sector is the wide range of practice and strategic networks and alliances the Centre facilitates.

These include:

Child and Family Services Alliance meetings, where the alliance chairs, facilitators and coordinators come together and identify issues relating to the efficient functioning of the alliances across Victoria, sharing information and highlighting examples of effective interagency collaboration.

Child FIRST, Integrated Family Services and the Orange Door network meetings, which bring together practitioners working in child and family services, Child FIRST and Orange Door to discuss emerging issues and share data, opportunities and good practice examples.

Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness (FaPMI), which regularly meets to explore opportunities for working in more integrated ways across mental health and child and family services. This group has a strong focus on making sure families where a parent has a mental illness can be supported.

Foster Care Network, which provides a regular forum for foster care case workers to come together and share emerging issues, solutions, gaps and needs.

Kinship Care Network, which provides a regular forum for kinship care case workers to strongly advocate for the needs of kinship carers, including identifying challenges and potential solutions.

Leaving Care and Post Care Network, which has a strong focus on supporting young people before and during their transition from care to independent living, while staying connected to education, employment, safe accommodation and healthcare.

Quality Learning Circle, The Quality Learning Circle Network convened by the Centre continues to generate interest with participant numbers growing to around 70 over the past year. The range of topics continued to be broad covering the new Child Safe Standards, Social Services Regulation Bill, Social Services Regulation Reform updates, Commonwealth vs State regulatory standards cross over (for example, with the NDIS), CIMS, Victims of Crime, audits, accreditation, Reportable Conduct Scheme and other quality assurance related requirements and challenges. The group hears from department colleagues and participants also provide updates about their work in quality assurance. New members are always welcome.

Rainbow Tick meetings, which identify and discuss progress towards participating organisations becoming more LGBTIQ-inclusive in line with the Rainbow Tick Standards and indicators.

Media and communications roundtable, which brings together communications representatives from a range of organisations to discuss issues and pool ideas and strategies for engagement.

Out-of-home care providers, This group was born out of the Centre’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and initially was a fortnightly meeting with senior level representatives of out of home care providers & the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing covering all things COVID related. The group continues to meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues of relevance to out of home care.

Over the past year, the Centre has provided critically important opportunities for information sharing as the pandemic has evolved. Many of the sessions were held weekly and then monthly, such was the appetite for information during COVID-19. Attendees wanted to know the latest public health information, the impact of COVID-19 on families and service provision, the latest technology and creative workarounds, updates on vaccination policy, and ways of keeping staff and clients safe.

The Centre has been a vital conduit of two-way information during the past year of COVID-19, with attendance at these network sessions skyrocketing in some instances. The meetings have provided a vehicle for information from government to the sector and from the sector to government, informing COVID-19 decisions, policies and strategies.

Having the sessions online has meant anyone across the state can participate without having to travel. It has been wonderful to see an increase in participation among regional and rural colleagues in the discussions, updates, emerging issues and sharing of promising practices.

The Centre welcomed 15,787 attendees to our network meetings, events, and webinars over the last financial year (a 47% increase from the previous financial year)



5. Staying connected to our sector

Out-of-Home Care Philanthropic Network

Since 2019 the Out-of-Home Network has been solely funded by Equity Trustees, with funding from Mars-Stride Trust, David Taylor Galt Charitable Trust, R.M. Ansett Trust, and James Raymond Hartley Charitable Trust.

The Out-of-Home Network is a collaborative group of philanthropic organisations with a shared interest in improving the outcomes of children and young people at risk of entering, or with an experience of, out-of-home care. The Centre is committed to building capacity through knowledge sharing, brokering networks with a range of stakeholders including the OoHC sector, State Government and those working in policy and research fields.

The OoHC Network Innovation Grants initiative is an inclusive, collaborative funding approach promoting transformative impacts for children, young people and families with a lived experience of out-of-home care.

There have been significant achievements this year:

- The groundbreaking Voices of Parents initiative was delivered
- Delivered a range of network presentations including Impact of COVID-19 in OoHC, Aboriginal sectors perspective on the impacts of COVID-19 in OoHC, State Budget and DFFH forward priorities, Kinship Care and The Centre's Connecting Communities Regional Tours
- Enhancing the lived experiences of Aboriginal birth parents, [Innovation Grant 1](#). Bringing up Aboriginal Babies at Home project awarded to Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
- Profiling the voice of young people, [Innovation Grant 2](#). Stand Up for Our Rights: A Youth empowerment project awarded to Youthlaw
- Key Policy and Research papers focusing on current Out-of-Home Care research reports and inquiries, government policy and funding; and in the media reporting
- We look forward to our five year celebration event to acknowledge the great work and impact of this network.
- <https://www.cfecfw.asn.au/oohc-philanthropic-funders/>



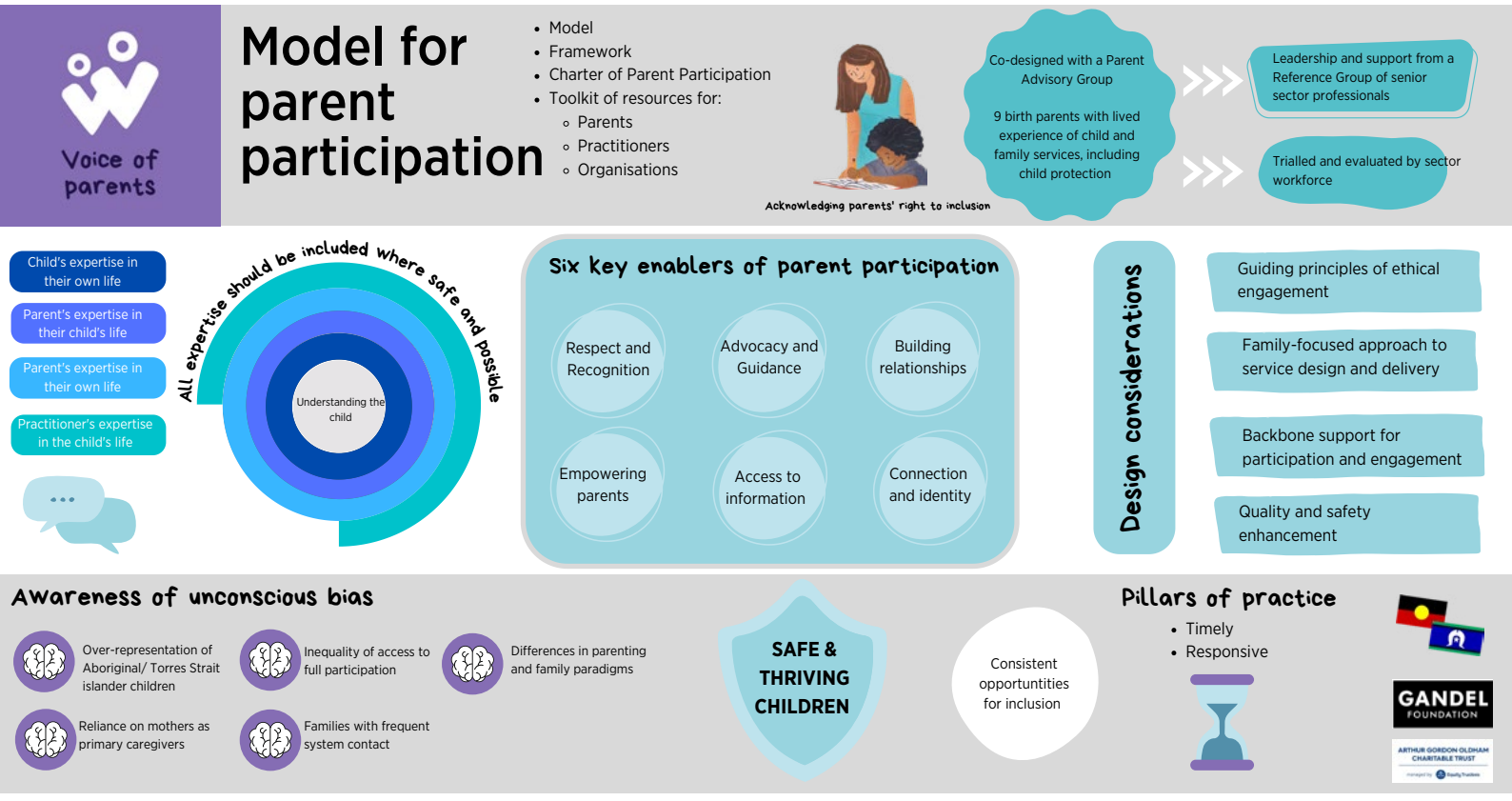
Pictured above: Voices of Parents group with CEO Deb Tsorbaris

Campaigning for our sector

Embracing Equality: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ communities is in crisis. Urgent action is needed to end the discrimination and inequities experienced by LGBTIQA+ people. The Centre is proud to be part of a group of peak service sector organisations in Victoria that have come together and created the Embracing Equality charter to show their commitment to making positive change as allies of LGBTIQA+ communities. The Embracing Equality pledge has also been developed for individual service providers to sign onto as they commit to work toward safe and culturally appropriate services for LGBTIQA+ people.

#HomeToBilo: This group is made up of Biloela residents, family friends and supporters. Supporters have come together to help Nades, Priya and their girls after they were taken from their home in Queensland and placed in detention. We want them #HometoBilo.

Home Stretch: As part of the Victorian Government's \$1 billion Victorian State Budget 2020-21 investment in children and families, \$64.7 million will make the landmark Home Stretch program universal – extending state supports for young people leaving care from 18 to 21 years. Home Stretch provides an accommodation allowance so a young person can remain living with their kinship or foster carer if they wish, or transition to supported independent living arrangements. From 1 January 2021, that support will continue up to the age of 21 for every young Victorian in out-of-home care.



**RAISE
THE RATE**

Raise the Rate: The campaign to Raise the Rate for Good is key to reducing poverty and inequality in Australia. The goal of the Raise the Rate for Good campaign is to fix our social security safety net permanently so that it keeps people out of poverty by providing an income of at least \$65 a day.

**#Raise
The Age**

Raise the Age: Children don't belong in prison. Everyone knows that children do best when they are supported, nurtured and loved. But across Australia, children as young as 10 can be arrested by police, charged with an offence, hauled before a court and locked away in youth prisons. When children are forced through a criminal legal process at such a formative age, they can suffer immense harm – to their health, wellbeing and future. Ten-year-old kids belong in schools and playgrounds, not placed in handcuffs, held in watchhouses or locked in prisons away from their families, community and culture. Governments can change this by raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years.

**HEALTHY
HOMES FOR
RENTERS**

Healthy Homes for Renters Campaign: More people are renting than ever before, but some homes are making people sick. We need basic energy efficiency standards to ensure healthy homes for renters. Legally enforceable energy efficiency standards would require property investors to make their rental properties safe.

CHANGE THE DATE

Change the Date: The Centre acknowledges that 26 January is not a day of celebration for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may see this day as one of mourning, survival and resistance. This country is home to the oldest continuing culture on earth, which serves as a powerful reminder of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's connection to the land, water and skies across the nation.

**FAMILY
MATTERS**

Family Matters: Family Matters is Australia's national campaign to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture. Family Matters aims to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2040.

**Celebrating
TRANSGENDER DAY OF
VISIBILITY**

International Transgender Day of Visibility: We envision a world where every person, no matter their gender or the way they dress, feels safe and has the opportunity to grow and thrive in school, at home, at work and in the community. A world where transphobia is called out, challenged and becomes a thing of the past. To promote the inclusion and safety of trans and gender diverse people, we stand in support of children and young people to express themselves and live life as their true selves this and every day. We thank the 36 member organisations who supported this statement.

Media awards





Too often, the voices of Victoria's children, young people and their families aren't heard in the media. Despite growing public awareness of family and domestic violence, the impact of the pandemic on children's mental health and wellbeing, and the dangers of the online world, reports frequently dismiss the importance of engaging with the voice of lived experience.

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare – Victoria's peak body for children, young people and their families – will be recognising journalists who have sought to elevate the voices of children and families in a respectful and material way.

Now in its third year, the Media Awards includes four categories:

- Best story about children
- Best story about young people (awarded by young people)
- Best story about children or young people in out-of-home care
- Best story about families

We're pleased to announce that the winners of this year's Media Awards were:

	<p>2022 Media Awards</p> <p>Best story about children</p> <p>Winner: David Estcourt & Smeyya Ilanbey The Age</p> <p>"Parliamentary inquiry recommends raising age of criminal responsibility to 14"</p> <p>Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare</p>		<p>2022 Media Awards</p> <p>Best story about young people</p> <p>Winner: Jewel Topsfield & Sophie Aubrey The Sydney Morning Herald</p> <p>"We're not 'snowflakes': Why young people have it harder than ever"</p> <p>Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare</p>
	<p>2022 Media Awards</p> <p>Best story about families</p> <p>Winner: Matilda Marozzi ABC Radio Melbourne</p> <p>"Signs of domestic abuse trigger 'are you safe at home' question from concerned parent"</p> <p>Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare</p>		<p>2022 Media Awards</p> <p>Best story about children and young people in out of home care</p> <p>Winner: Katri Uibu ABC News</p> <p>"Bad parent"</p> <p>Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare</p>

Continuing to spread the word and raise awareness for children and their families: key stats

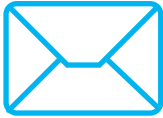
Throughout 2021-22, the Centre has used social media to promote Days of Significance, internal projects, new legislations and policies, and media releases from local MPs. Our community on LinkedIn consists of like-minded and interested individuals. We have averaged approximately 1,000 new LinkedIn followers per financial year for the past few years. During this period, our followers grew 64.9%.

The Centre's content is received remarkably well on LinkedIn. Followers regularly and consistently engage with the Centre's work on this platform. The Centre's best performing posts receive over 150 likes per post.

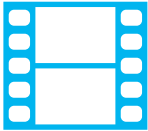
Our Twitter platform is best used for live-tweeting, resharing information and quick communication to followers. We have a strong network on Twitter: profile visits during this period increased by 38.3%.

The Centre's website counted 92,000 sessions across this period, with the majority of users navigating to the site to engage with the Centre's online learning and training opportunities.

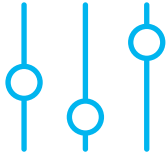
We have seen consistent growth across our YouTube platform as we continue to upload webinars and reshare content across social media. Our watch hours have increased by 58% percent, with users still engaging with our older videos, too.



eNewsletters: SectorBuzz (fortnightly), Daily Digest (twice weekly), COVID-19 updates (as required)



Media: Monthly feature in Pro Bono News, as well as frequent pitches to other outlets and news desks across the state



Radio: Regular radio appearances on JOY 94.9, 3CR, and RRR, as well as on regional and rural radio

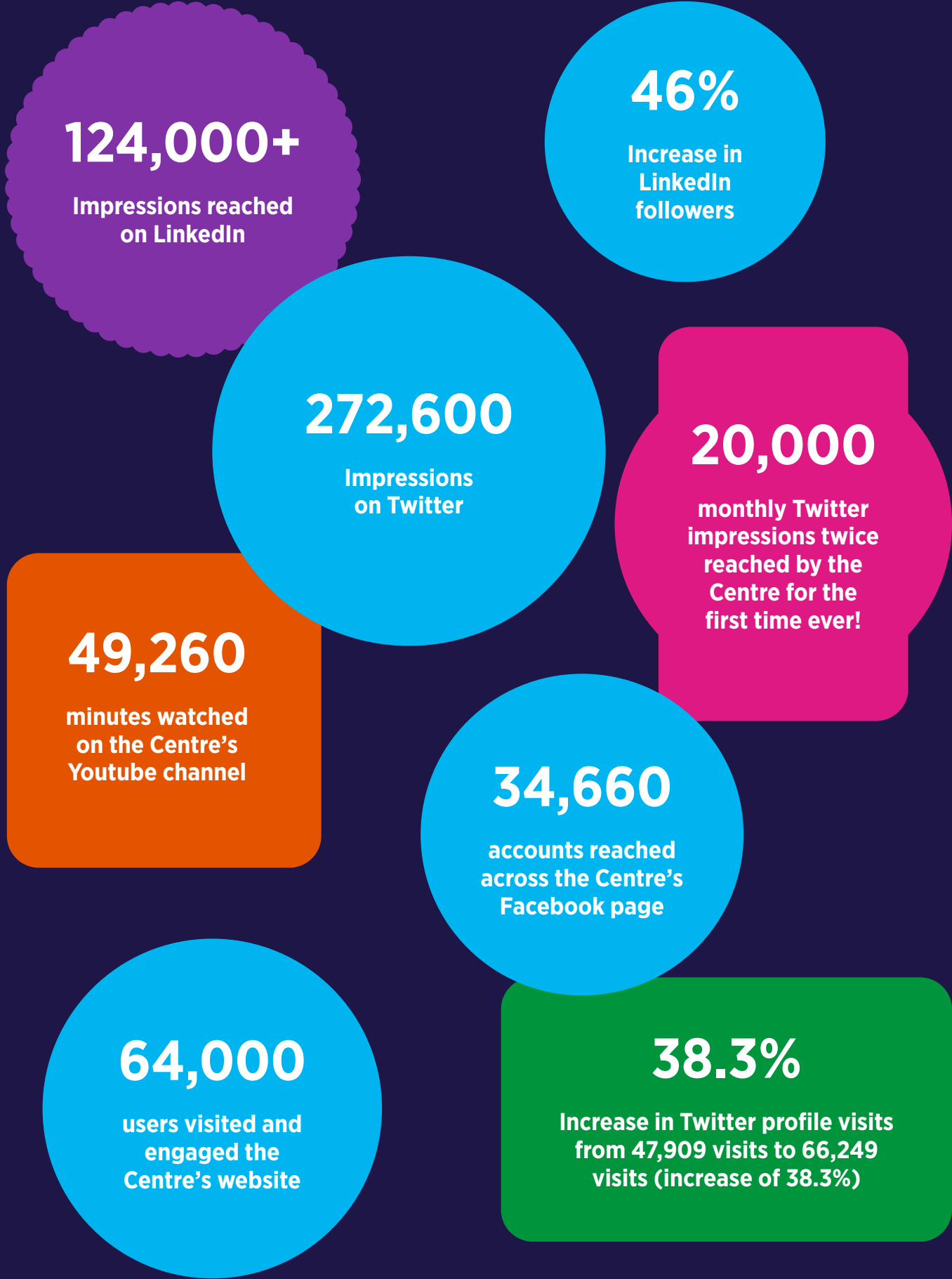


Social Media: Daily updates on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn



Days of Significance: Creating campaigns for Days of Significance relevant to our members, stakeholders, and sector

Key stats for 2021-22



Our board and staff

Our Board	Name
Chairperson	Dr Lisa Griffiths
Vice Chairperson	Silvia Alberti
Treasurer	Teresa Jayet
	Michael Perusco
	Graham Boal
	Andrew Bruun
	Sue White
	Sue Sealy
	Allison Wainwright
	Deb Tsorbaris

Position	Name
Chief Executive Officer	Deb Tsorbaris
Executive Assistant	Sue Maddison
Executive Advisor	Imogen Gerraty
Operations and Finance	
Executive Manager – Operations & Finance	Padraic Keyes
Senior Financial Accountant	Lakmini Kulathunga
Office Coordinator	Sheena Lestock-Kay
Bookkeeper	Grace Kasper
Finance Business Partner	Justine Koutsoupas
Reception – Administration Officer	Matthew Edwards
Project Officer	Oliver Tsorbaris
Projects	
Director – Strategic Innovation	Paulleen Markwort
Senior Manager Strategic and Innovative Projects – VoP, Tri Peaks, FC	Danielle Walt
Senior Project Officer – Voice of Parents	Nicky Paterson
Senior Project Officer – Voice of Parents	Naomi Tootell
Senior Project Manager, Residential Care Sector OHS Capability Program	Mary-Lou Proppe
Project Manager MCRI – Child Healthcare, Adversity and COVID-19 Project	Karen McLean
Project Officer – MCRI – Child Healthcare, Adversity and COVID-19 Project	Ennur Erbası
Learning and Business Development	
Senior Manager – Learning and Business Development	Emily Mellon
Senior Trainer – NDIS, MARAM, Customised Training	Mark Ryan
Training and Events Officer	Helen Evans
Learning and Development Coordinator	Celeste Oliver
Expert Consultant – Youth Support Facilitator	Reggie Chang
Compliance Admissions Officer	Natasha Lobo
Shared Lives Coordinator	Glenda Quinn
Administration Officer (MARAM)	Henry Small
Expert Consultant	Rosie Tu
Expert Consultant	Maggie Howse
Communications	
Executive Manager – Strategic Projects and Communications	Nevena Spirovska
Media & Communications Advisor	Katie Wand
Graphic Designer & Digital Coordinator	Selena Repanis

Position	Name
Fostering Connections	
Senior Manager, Strategic and Innovative Projects	Danielle Walt
Foster Care Connection Specialist	Jasmine Isaacs
Acting Manager	Dan Christie
Campaign and Communications Lead	Bronwen Maher
Policy, Research and Advocacy	
Deputy CEO – Director – Policy, Research & Advocacy	Michele Lonsdale
Policy Manager	Lisa Abbey
Project Manager – (OPEN)	Mandy Charman
Senior Project Officer – (OPEN)	Sarah Ryan
Senior Project Officer	Karalyn Davies
Practice Lead	Emily Sinnbeck
Senior Policy and Research Officer	Kelly Bowey
Program Manager (Family Preservation and Reunification)	Sue Wilson
Practice Lead (Family Preservation and Reunification)	Joanne O’Connell
Practice Lead (Family Preservation and Reunification)	Elle Sherwin
Practice Lead (Family Preservation and Reunification)	Kiersten Van Aperen
Practice Lead (Family Preservation and Reunification)	Sri Kirkwood
Practice Lead (Family Preservation and Reunification)	Laura Gawenda
Practice Lead (Family Preservation and Reunification)	Viv Interrigi
Project Officer – Child Wellbeing	Anna Ferro
Project Manager – Raising Expectations	Pearl Goodwin-Burns
Project Officer – Raising Expectations	Ursula Cliff
Project Communications and Support Officer – Raising Expectations	Laura Cashman
Project Officer (Early Years)	Harriet Wilson
Project Officer – Information Sharing	Lucinda Kelly
Project Officer – Information Sharing	Emma Nugent
Senior Project Officer – Information Sharing	Sharon Clerke
Interns	
Intern, OPEN	Gabrielle Victoria
Intern, OPEN	Elly Shirvell
Intern, Policy and Research	Fitzpatrick Hickey

Our members

Full members

Access Health and Community, Act for Kids, Allambi Care Ltd, Anchor Inc, Anglicare Victoria, Aruma , Australian Childhood Foundation, Australian Childhood Trauma Group, Ballarat and District Aboriginal, Co-operative Limited, Baptcare, Barwon Child, Youth & Family, Benalla Rural City Council, Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd, Bendigo Community Health Services, Berry Street, Bethany, Community Support, Brophy Family & Youth Services Inc – Warrnambool, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Bubup Wilam, CareChoice (Aust) Pty Ltd, Caroline Chisholm Society, CatholicCare Sandhurst, CatholicCare Victoria, Centacare Ballarat, Child and Family Services Ballarat, Christian Brethren Community Care Ltd T/A Temcare, City of Darebin, City of Melbourne, City of Port Phillip – Family and Children’s Services, City of Yarra, Cohealth, Colac Area Health, Community Living and Respite Services (CLRS), Concern Australia, Dandenong & District Aborigines Co-operative Limited, Dhauwurd-Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service, Doncare, Drummond Street Services, EACH Social and Community Health, Eastern Domestic Violence Service, Family Access Network Inc, Family Life, FamilyCare, Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative, Gippsland Lakes Complete Health, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, Goolum – Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative Limited, Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-operative Limited, IPC Health, Jesuit Social Services, Jewish Care, Junction Support Services Inc., Kara House, Key Assets, Kids First, Kyabram Community & Learning Centre, Life Without Barriers, Lighthouse Foundation, MacKillop Family Services, Make A Difference, Dingley Village Inc., Mallee Accomodation and Support Program, Mallee District Aboriginal Service, Mallee Family Care, Melbourne City Mission, Melton City Council, Mirabel Foundation Inc, Moira Inc, Moonee Valley City Council – Family and Children’s Services, Multicultural Community Services Geelong Inc, Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation, Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-operative, Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, No to Violence, Northern District Community Health, Odyssey House Victoria, Olivia’s Place, ONCALL Group Australia, Oz Child, Permanent Care and Adoptive Families, QEC, Quantum Support Services Inc, Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation, Relationship Matters, Relationships Australia, Rumbalara Family Services, Safe Steps, Save the Children Australia, Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health, TaskForce Community Agency, The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, The Bridge Youth Service , The Reach Foundation, The Salvation Army, Thorne Harbour Health, Tweddle Child and Family Health Service, Uniting, Upper Murray Family Care, VANISH Inc., VICSEG New Futures, Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People’s Alliance, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc. (VACCHO), Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (VACRO), Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operative Ltd, Windamara Aboriginal Corporation, Windermere Child & Family Services Inc., Yarra Ranges Kinders, Yooralla, Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS) – Fitzroy, Zoe Support Australia

Subscriber members

YMCA Victoria, Council of Single Mothers and their Children, Association for Children with a Disability, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), Federation of Community Legal Centres (FCLC)Allah Muhammad Ali Fatima Hassan Hussain Federation, The Pyjama Foundation, Playgroup Victoria, Kids Under Cover, Settlement Services International, Ability Assist, Catholic Social Services, Mansfield Shire Council, HenderCare Foundation



6. Financial Statements Overview

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022



Treasurer's Report

During the last year, it has been a pleasure to work alongside the Board and the Centre's finance team as the Centre's treasurer.

The Board is pleased to present an operating surplus of \$1,281,565 for the financial year ended 30 June 2022. Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to members of the Association is \$1,049,234. The total revenue for the year was \$9,039,872 and expenditure was \$7,870,922.

Assets have increased by \$2,187,432 (17%), primarily due to an increase in cash. Liabilities have also increased by 1,138,199 (33%), due to an increase in accrued expenses for activities that have started but are not yet complete.

The Centre holds a sufficient level of reserves to guarantee that the Centre will be able to continue to support our members and member organisations in their invaluable work with vulnerable children, young people, and their families.

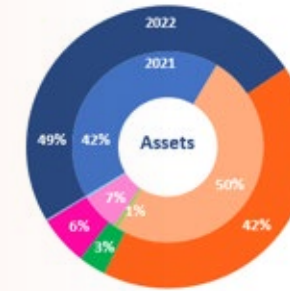
I would like to thank the members of the Finance committee during the 2021-22 financial year:

Lisa Griffiths, Graham Boal and Andrew Bruun. 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 2022. These general-purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ('AASB') and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. The Association is a not-for-profit entity for financial reporting purposes under Australian Accounting Standards by Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd. The full financial statements can be obtained from the Centre's website.



Expenses		Year ended 30 June 2022 (\$000's)
Employee benefits		4,518
Operating expenses		2,975
Overhead expenses		378
Total Expenditure		7,871



Liabilities		Year ended 30 June 2022 (\$000's)
Deferred revenue		2,168
Trade and other payables		1,389
Employee Benefits		609
Other liabilities		275
Total Liabilities		4,441

Revenue by source		Year ended 30 June 2022 (\$000's)
State government contribution		7,556
Affiliation fees		580
Business Undertakings		514
Philanthropic and donation		391
Total Revenue		9,040



Assets		Year ended 30 June 2022 (\$000's)
Cash		7,460
Other financial assets		6,336
Property, Plant & Equipment		861
Trade & other receivables		479
Other Assets		21
Total Assets		15,157



Teresa Jayet
Treasurer

Statement of Surplus or Deficit and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Revenue	9,039,872	9,010,373
Investment income	91,683	103,707
Gain on disposal of property, plant and equipment	20,930	
Depreciation expense	(65,269)	(68,771)
Employee benefits expense	(4,518,157)	(3,752,990)
Operations expense	(2,642,977)	(2,642,977)
Office expense	(231,407)	(228,262)
Occupancy expense	(70,496)	(71,399)
Motor Vehicle expense	(10,959)	(10,854)
Surplus for the year	1,281,565	2,338,827
Other comprehensive income <i>Items that may not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss</i>		
Changes in fair value of assets classified as fair value through other comprehensive income	232,331	334,923
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to members of the Association	1,049,234	2,673,750

Statement of Financial Position

At 30 June 2022

Assets – Current Assets	2022 \$	2021 \$
Cash and cash on hand	7,460,288	5,971,661
Other financial assets	6,335,715	5,972,757
Trade and other receivables	478,789	131,342
Other assets	21,158	35,836
Total current assets	14,295,950	12,111,596
Non-current assets	2022 \$	2021 \$
Property, plant and equipment	860,660	848,789
Right of Use Asset – equipment	-	8,793
Total non-current assets	860,660	857,582
Total current assets	15,156,610	12,969,178
Liabilities – Current Liabilities	2022 \$	2021 \$
Trade and other payables	1,388,969	698,043
Deferred revenue	2,167,614	1,752,888
Provisions	588,564	488,048
Lease liabilities	-	9,150
Other liabilities	275,000	325,000
Total current liabilities	4,420,147	3,273,129
Non-current liabilities	2022 \$	2021 \$
Provisions	20,563	29,383
Lease liabilities	-	-
Total non-current liabilities	20,563	29,383
Total liabilities	4,400,710	3,302,512
Net Assets	10,715,900	9,666,666
Equity	2022 \$	2021 \$
Accumulated Surplus	8,367,877	6,780,332
Reserves	2,240,352	2,546,332
Revaluation reserve	107,671	340,002
Total Equity	10,715,900	9,666,666

Statement of Changes in Equity

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	Accumulated Surplus \$	Reserves \$	Revaluation Reserve \$	Total \$
Balance at 1 July 2020	5,117,837	1,870,000	5,079	6,992,916
Surplus for the year	2,338,827	-	-	2,338,827
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-	334,923	334,923
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to the members of the association	2,338,827	-	334,923	2,673,750
Transfer to reserves	(676,332)	676,332	-	-
Balance at 30 June 2022	6,780,332	2,546,332	340,002	9,666,666
Surplus for the year	1,281,565	-	-	1,281,565
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-	(232,331)	(232,331)
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to the members of the association	1,281,565	-	(232,331)	1,049,234
Transfer to reserves		676,332	-	-
Balance at 30 June 2022	8,367,877	2,240,352	107,671	10,715,900

Statement of Cash Flows

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

Cash flows from operating activities	2022 \$	2021 \$
Receipts from customers	9,401,777	8,994,251
Payments to suppliers and employees	(7,827,621)	(7,052,859)
Net cash inflows from operating activities	1,574,156	1,941,392
Cash flows from investing activities	2022 \$	2021 \$
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(73,416)	-
Net payments for financial assets	(94,646)	372,395
Interest received	91,683	103,707
Net cash inflows / (outflow) from investing activities	(76,379)	476,102
Cash flows from financing activities	2022 \$	2021 \$
Payment of lease liabilities	(73,416)	-
Net cash outflows from financing activities	(9,150)	(17,782)
Net increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	1,488,627	2,399,712
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	5,971,661	3,571,949
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	7,460,288	5,971,661

About the Centre

For over 100 years, the Centre has advanced the rights and wellbeing of children, young people and families in Victoria. 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 Victorian organisations working across the continuum of child and family services, from prevention and early intervention to the provision of out-of-home care. Our members are at the forefront of supporting children, young people and families.

Contact

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The Centre acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government



Families,
Fairness
and Housing



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Child and Family Welfare