

Annual Report 2014 - 2015



Foster Carers' Association NT

I N C O R P O R A T E D

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The Chair & Executive Director's Report

It gives us great pleasure to present the 2015 Annual Report of Foster Carers' Association NT Incorporated.



"Empowering carers through knowledge, support and advocacy" is the Association's vision for foster and kinship carers for the future.

The Foster Carers' Association NT continues to advocate for reforms in the foster care system to improve processes for foster and kinship care in the Northern Territory.

In May our Board of Management participated in a focus weekend which revisited the strategic plan and its alignment with the constitution.

Foster Carers Association NT continues to advocate for positive change by participating in forums, consultations and in regular meetings with the Department of Children and Families and other key stakeholders.

The Association has committed to an active media campaign highlighting the value of the work foster and kinship carers do within the community. Recognised as the 'go to' agency for foster and kinship carers in the Territory, local media has sought out Foster Carers' Association NT for a position on proposed legislation changes, current practice and future options for Out-of-Home Care.

This year also saw us launch our very first 'Foster Care Expo' in both Alice Springs and Darwin. Carers, prospective carers and other interested people attended on the day to meet the exhibitors who showcased their agencies and services on the day. Staff and Board members were congratulated on the extraordinary success of both events and agreed that the Expo's should continue as a regular activity in Alice Springs and Darwin.

We are pleased to advise an increase in membership this financial year to a total of 649 members. Much work has been done to grow these networks ensuring access to vital information, support and advocacy is available to each and every member.

Over the past year we have further developed our advocacy and support program in all regions across the Northern Territory and are proud to have such dedicated professionals as part of our hardworking team. Lucja, Catherine

and Rosalyn continue to work closely with foster and kinship carers, advocating strongly, in often difficult circumstances.

Our advocacy service has been under significant demand this year identifying the need for greater investment by government to improve out-of-home care services and increased support for foster and kinship carers.

It goes without saying that we could not deliver the high standards of services that we do without the support provided by our administration team. Both Bianca and Ingrid are an integral part of our association.

Bianca is often our first point of contact and juggles a multitude of tasks to ensure the team is well supported whilst at the same time making sure the office runs smoothly. Ingrid is our information specialist keeping communication lines open via the monthly newsletter, Facebook and our website so that carers are kept up to date with the latest news and other information.

Each year our elected board members make a substantial contribution by volunteering their time and energy to the organisation. Without their generous commitment to our association, we could not do the important job that we do today so it is with great appreciation that we thank each and every one of them.

This year we say farewell to our long standing Alice Springs Board member, Barb Geraghty. Barb has decided to step aside after new nominations from Alice Springs for this year's board elections. Barb has been with the association since its' incorporation in 2003 and was part of the restructured 'management' plan (the current service model) in 2011. Thank you Barb for all your work over the years.

Phillipa Cosgrove is also standing aside this year with family and work commitments influencing her decision. We were pleased to hear that Phillipa intends to continue volunteering at FCA events and activities.

Most importantly, thank you to all foster and kinship carers who work tirelessly to provide a warm and loving home for some of the Territory's most vulnerable children.

The work you do, changes lives forever!

Sue Price

Sue Price
Chair

Ann Owen

Ann Owen
Executive Director

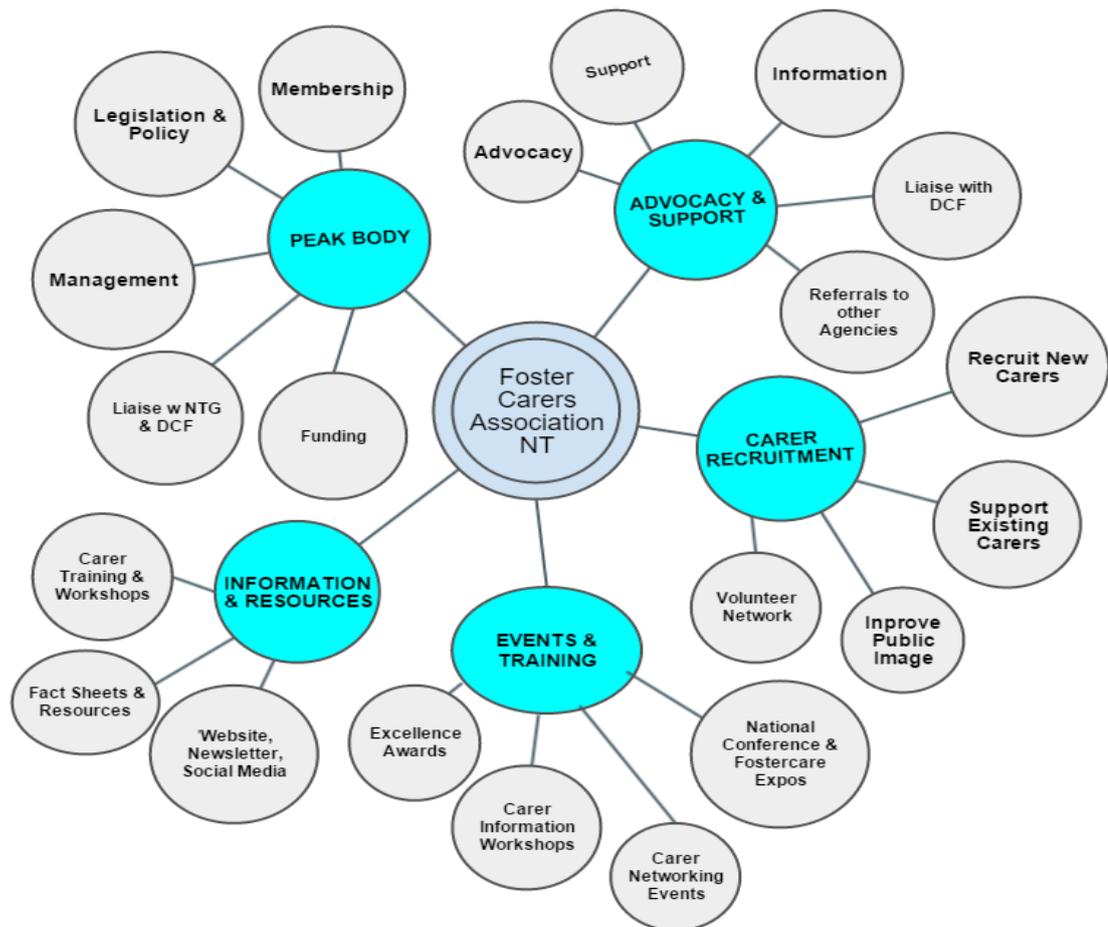
The Association

Foster Carers Association NT has been instrumental in building better outcomes for foster and kinship carers in the Northern Territory.



Foster Carers' Association continues to work in partnership with government and other agencies to contribute to policy and legislation and represent the needs and interests of foster and kinship carers.

As the Peak Body for foster and kinship carers, our service objectives are focused on empowering carers through the provision of information, support and advocacy. The Association ensures carers have access to current information on carers' rights, policy and support services to assist them through their care journey. We continue to offer confidential advice, advocate for better outcomes and ensure that supports are in place to maintain and sustain placements for the children in care.



The 2015 Board of Management

It is with great admiration that we give our most sincere thanks to our hardworking board who give up their personal time to 'make a difference'.

<p>Sue Price Chair</p> <p>Appointed 2012</p> <p>Sub-committees: Remuneration committee Conference Masterplan</p>	<p>Jennie Vallely Vice Chair</p> <p>Appointed 2012</p> <p>Sub-committees:</p>	<p>Phillipa Cosgrove Treasurer</p> <p>Appointed 2013</p> <p>Sub-committees: Remuneration committee</p>
<p>Lesley Taylor Secretary</p> <p>Appointed 2013 Constitution committee Remuneration committee</p>	<p>Louisa Castle</p> <p>Appointed 2013</p>	<p>Darrin Whatley</p> <p>Appointed 2012</p>
<p>Barb Geraghty</p> <p>Appointed 2003</p>	<p>Kay Eade</p> <p>Appointed 2013</p> <p>Sub-committees: Constitution committee Conference Entertainment committee</p>	<p>Robyn Koop</p> <p>Appointed 2013</p>

The 2015 Board of Management snapshot taken on the Strategic Planning Day with facilitator: Bronwyn Clee.



Left to right: Sue Price, Lesley Taylor, Louisa Castle, Bronwyn Clee (facilitator) Robyn Koop, Jennie Vallely, Darrin Whatley and Phillipa Cosgrove. (not pictured Kay Eade & Barb Geraghty)

Our Strategic Direction

It gives us great pleasure to present the 2015 Annual Report of Foster Carers' Association NT Incorporated.

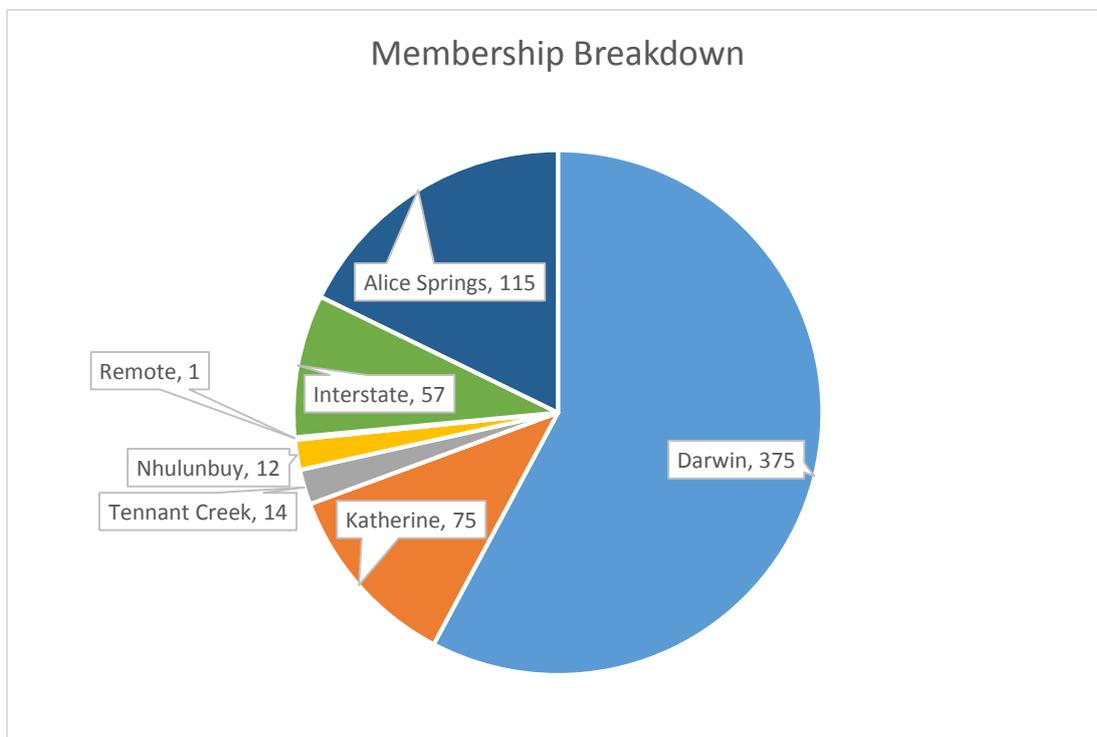
Strategic Plan 2015

Priorities	Goals	Strategies
Our Association	We have a clear purpose and strategic direction that meets the needs of our carer community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide a group identity and autonomous voice ▶ Portray a positive image and recognition of value
Our Carer Community	To empower carers to acquire skills and knowledge to effectively support the children and young people in care, to reach their full potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Strengthen partnerships ▶ Facilitate training & professional development ▶ Research ▶ Relevant information resources ▶ Current website ▶ Provide advocacy & support
Our Service	To provide excellence in all our endeavours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Measuring membership service ▶ Collect and collate service data ▶ Measure, assess and evaluate services ensuring they are accessible, responsive and flexible to meet the changing needs
Our Governance	A strong and inclusive 'Territory wide' Board of Management that is open and transparent, ensuring the Association remains viable, vibrant & sustainable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Review constitution annually in line with legislation and changing business needs of the Association ▶ Conduct a skills audit of the Board of Management ensuring representation from all regions and cultural ethnicity to provide a balanced and sound management skills mix ▶ Ensure financial sustainability for the Association through transparent and open reporting ▶ Maintain an active risk management process ▶ Report on meetings, service deliver and other core business to our members

Our Members

Whilst the search for new carers continues to be challenging in the Northern Territory, we are pleased to advise that our association membership has been steadily increasing.

This year we've reached 649 members representing a substantial 480% increase since July 2011, demonstrating clearly that our association continues to provide a much needed voice for foster and kinship carers within the Northern Territory.



The Organisational Structure

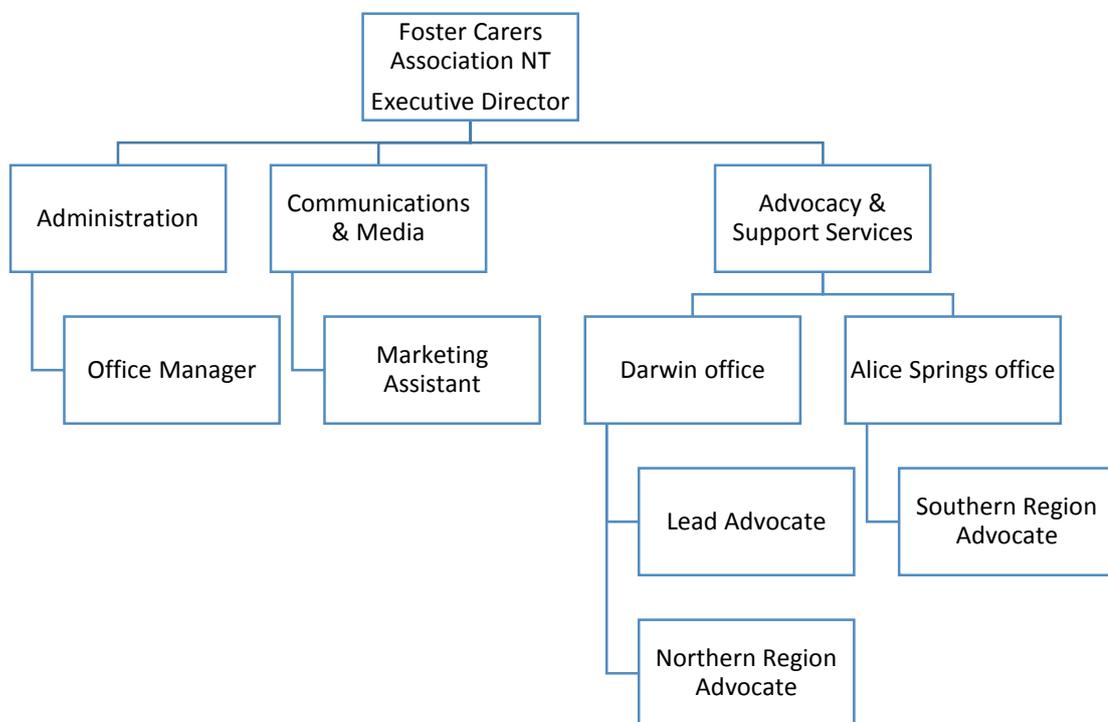
A small but highly qualified team, the Association functions very efficiently with six (6) staff Territory wide.

With an office in Alice Springs and Darwin, we work closely together despite the vast distance between each of these centres.

Our well-coordinated team, staff support each other effectively using a range of new media to keep connected despite the distance, utilising a range of technologies such as teleconferencing, skype and email technology to keep connected.

As part of our commitment to deliver effective services to foster and kinship carers, we rely heavily on quality Information Technology services and consider connectivity a vital element of our service.

We remain committed to ensuring services offered in Darwin were also available to carers in Alice Springs and continue to balance our service delivery with need so that we benefit carers where ever they may be. Katherine and Tennant Creek are in our sights for training opportunities as they become available.



The Advocacy & Support Program

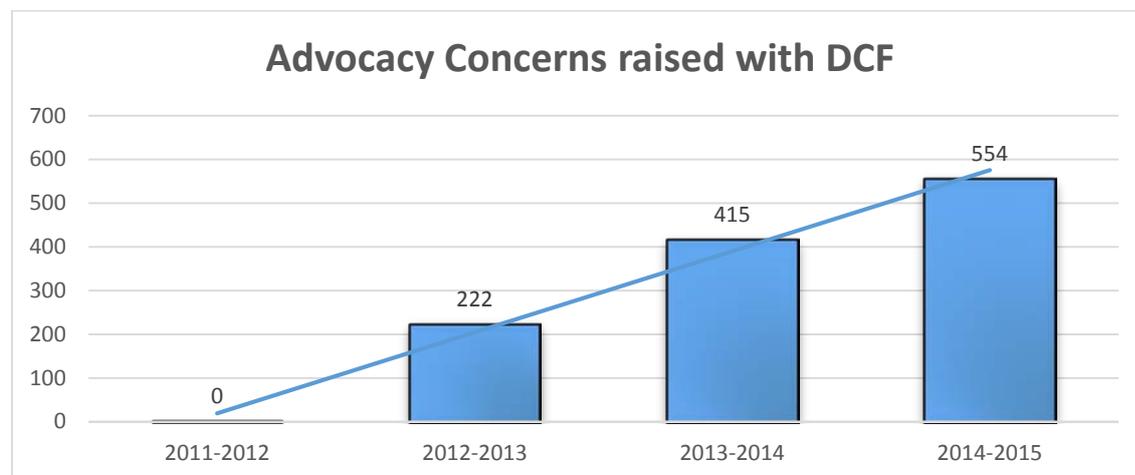
Foster Carers' Association NT's vision is the principle driving the success of the Advocacy and Support Program.

The program has been adapted over recent years to best suit the needs of foster and kinship carers in the Northern Territory and continues to grow with the increasing needs of foster and kinship carers.



Lucja, Catherine and Rosalyn as Advocates are focused on ensuring carers are well supported whilst they care for the most vulnerable Territory children. We continually petition the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to bring about change and advocate for fair practice.

Advocating and supporting carers has led to 544 issues and concerns raised with DCF on behalf of carers over the past twelve (12) months.



Our offices are receiving more enquiries each week from carers requesting support and advocacy, clearly indicating the increasing need of our service. The above chart reflects the increased advocacy concerns raised with DCF over the past four (4) years.

It is important to note that the complexity of casework varies in each region requiring differing strategies to effect a satisfactory resolution. Our advocates are skilled professionals with considerable experience in this field and work closely with DCF to seek solutions around policy and practice.

In addition to advocacy, our team has facilitated a number of training and workshops throughout the year. Whilst we try to replicate the training and

events that we do in Darwin in both Katherine & Alice Springs sometimes it's not possible.

It is our belief that providing access to important training provides and empowers

This year we held over 25 events in all regions including: Carer networking events in all regions, we sponsored 17 people to attend the National Foster Care Conference in Hobart, held information sessions about Trauma & the Developing Brain, hosted a White Balloon Day morning Tea in Alice Springs, facilitated legal information sessions around the Permanent Care Order, Carers Rights and legal processes and the role of the Children's Commissioner in the Northern Territory and many others. Some of these events would not be possible without other agencies working closely with us and we look to continue those partnerships in the coming years.

The major foster carers activity for the year was the Darwin Foster care Expo which attracted over 100 prospective carers, new carers and other interested people for a fun filled day. Over 60 children had their faces painted, held 'Lady Gaga' and kicked a footy around the park with NT Thunder.

A great day was had by all and plans were put in place for the Alice Springs Expo in August 2015.

Each month we hold an information session in our

Darwin office for prospective new carers in the hope that we can assist with increasing foster carer numbers in the Territory.

Each year the team gets together to plan the events for the coming year so that we provide a balance of interesting information and fun events that are a little creative and fit everyone's needs.

Next year the National Foster Care Conference is in Darwin so we're looking forward to sharing our part of the world with other carers across Australia and hope to see many of our members there!



The Treasurer's Report

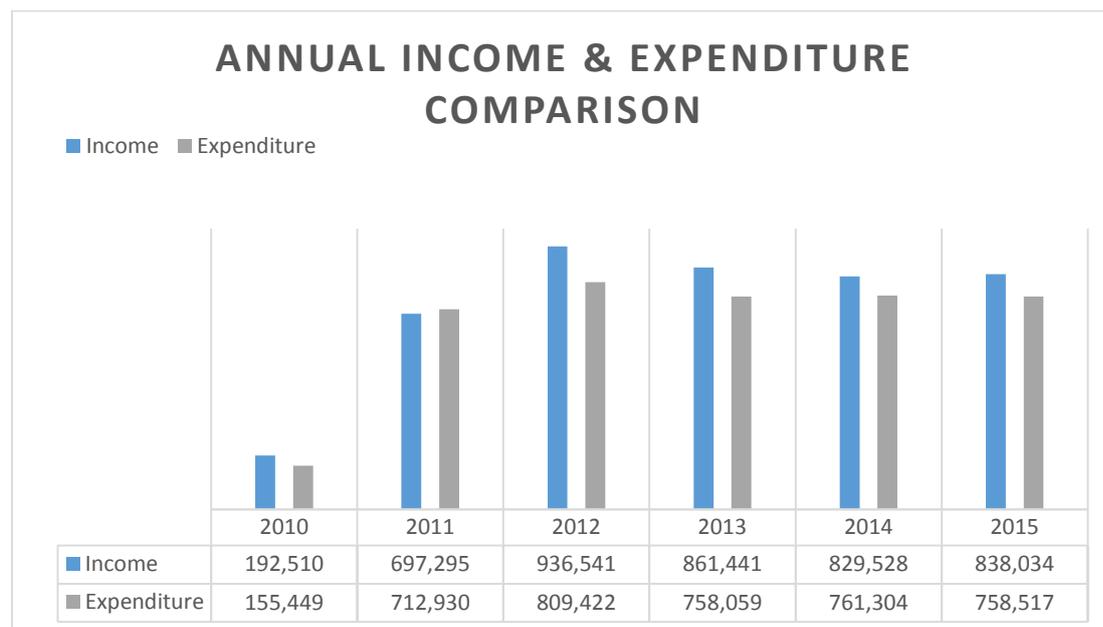
Phillipa Cosgrove

Foster Carers Association NT Incorporated is pleased to present our audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2015.

Foster Carers' Association continues to maintain a strong financial position with consolidated income for the 2015 financial year at \$798,203 carrying forward an operation surplus of \$79,516.52 which has been allocated to the 2016 National Conference project in Darwin.

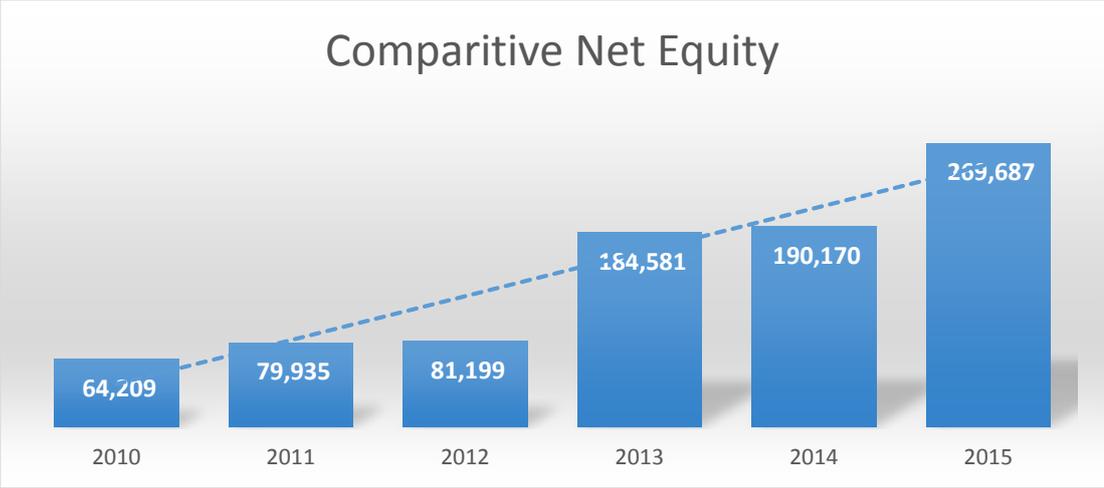
Our income for 2015 was attributed predominantly to Northern Territory Government funding through the Department of Children & Families.

Foster Carers Association NT has been well supported by the Department of Children and Families with our current funding secured until June 30, 2016 however we recognise the risk and limitations that financial dependence brings and will continue to review opportunities for ongoing sustainability as we move forward.

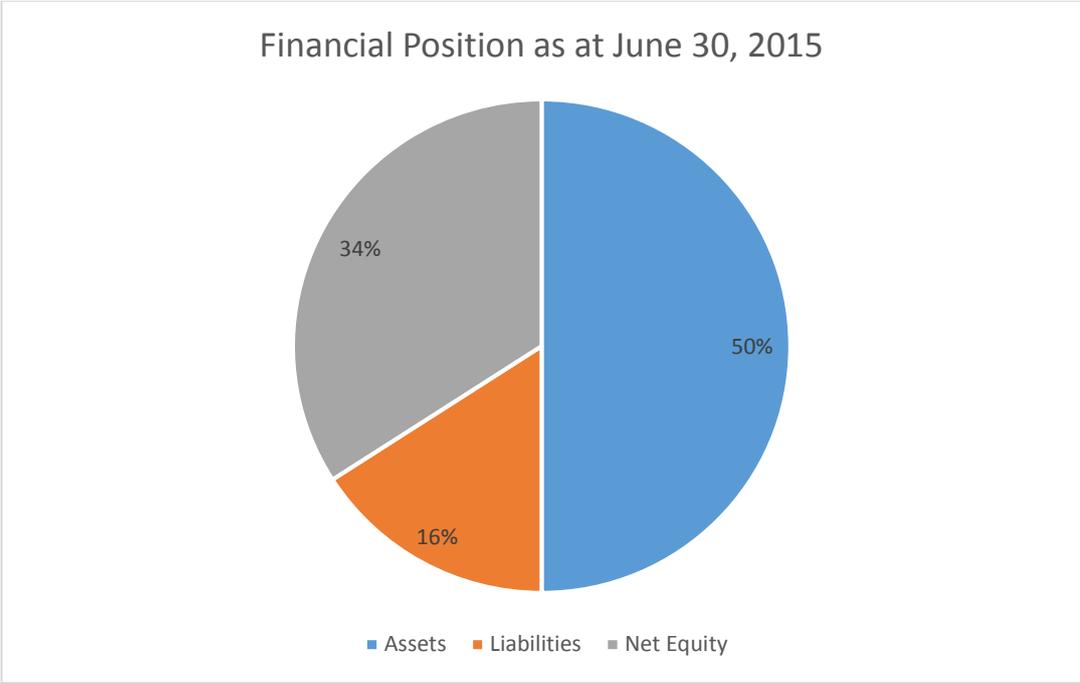


Our balance sheet shows a net accumulated surplus of \$269,686.86 as at June 30, 2015 which has been attributed to sound management practices.

2015 shows a significant increase in members' equity through surpluses retained as demonstrated with this comparative chart covering the past six (6) years.



The chart below demonstrates a summary of the financial position of Foster Carers Association NT relating to the Assets and Liabilities with the resulting increase in members' equity for the Association.



The figures show strong organisational growth of members' equity at 2015 year end to 34% reflecting a stable asset base of 50% and liabilities at 16%.

Acknowledgements

Foster Carers Association NT is ever grateful for those we have worked closely with during the year.

Without your support we could not achieve all that we do for foster and kinship carers in the Northern Territory.

Our heartfelt thank you!

- ▶ Alice Springs Desert Park
- ▶ Alice Springs Library
- ▶ Alice Springs Toy Library
- ▶ Anglicare NT
- ▶ Anyinginya Aboriginal Health Corporation
- ▶ Australian Childhood Foundation
- ▶ Australian Football League NT – Keli Zaleski
- ▶ Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
- ▶ Barkly Arts | Winjanjikkari Music Centre
- ▶ Bronwyn Clee
- ▶ Carers NT
- ▶ Catholic Care NT
- ▶ CDU Living Archive of Aboriginal Language
- ▶ Central Australian Community Toy Library
- ▶ Central Australian Womans Legal Service (CAWLS)
- ▶ Centrecorp Foundation
- ▶ Child Education & Psychology Centre Darwin – Dr Diane Szarkowicz
- ▶ Christine Kipps Clinical Psychologist NT Department of Health, Child & Youth Mental Health
- ▶ City of Darwin
- ▶ CREATE Foundation
- ▶ DCF – Department of Children & Families – Northern Territory Government
- ▶ EASA – Employee Assistance Service
- ▶ Healthy Living NT – Mary Woolcock
- ▶ Honey Ants Readers
- ▶ KidsSafe NT
- ▶ Lesley Taylor “Face-painter Extraordinaire”
- ▶ Mental Illness Fellowship Australia NT
- ▶ Metaphorically Speaking – Lucy Van Sambeek
- ▶ NAPCAN – National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect
- ▶ NTCOSS – Northern Territory Council of Social Services
- ▶ NT Legal Aid Commission
- ▶ NT Police – Neighbourhood Watch & Safety House program
- ▶ Office of the Children’s Commissioner NT
- ▶ OT for Kids NT
- ▶ Relationships Australia NT
- ▶ Rotary Club of Stuart
- ▶ SNAICC – Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
- ▶ Sexual Assault Resource Centre
- ▶ St John’s Ambulance



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