



Foster & Kinship Carers
ASSOCIATION NT Incorporated



ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

OUR VISION

To be the voice of carers.

OUR PURPOSE

To strengthen the out-of-home-care sector through confident and supported carers, strong advocacy, and productive partnerships.

Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT is an independent, non-government, not-for-profit organisation supporting foster and kinship carers, and strengthening the out-of-home-care sector. We provide information on carers' rights and services, offer confidential advice, and advocate on behalf of carers.



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Cinema advertising stars Zoe, Rumsley and Caitlyn



CHAIR REPORT

It's been another great year for the Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT; we have set the organisation up for future growth allowing us to provide more services for our members.

As a board, we have enjoyed watching the evolution of the organisation to meet the ever-changing needs of the out-of-home-care sector and our carer members. It is particularly pleasing to see more proactive advocacy and connection-based activities are being undertaken, with the return and refresh of the Carer Advisory Group, Connect Groups and sector forums.

We are also inspired by the team's willingness to find new and innovative ways to connect with carers, particularly through social media, live streaming, and through their investigations into electronic voting for future meetings. This shows a true dedication to supporting and engaging with our members.

On behalf of the board, I would like to thank the team for their passionate and outcome-focussed work this year. There is so much work that goes on behind-the-scenes so the association can support, empower and elevate carers, and I know how beneficial that work is to our members and the sector.

I would also like to thank outgoing CEO Ann Owen for her eight years of service. During her tenure, Ann witnessed a number of changes

to the out-of-home-care sector and offered stable and consistent leadership through those challenging times.

Amongst other achievements, Ann led in the development of the Carers Charter of Rights. A first for the Northern Territory, the document established the rights of carers, and set the tone for how government and its child protection staff must treat our carers.

We thank Ann for her service and commitment to foster and kinship carers across the Territory and wish her the best for her retirement.

On behalf of the board, I commend this report to you, and hope you are as impressed as I am about the work done by the Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT to positively impact carers over the last 12 months.

Kay Eade
Chair



Kay Eade

CEO REPORT

I am pleased to deliver the Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT's Annual Report for 2019.

As the peak body for foster and kinship carers in the Northern Territory, our organisation has continued to grow and develop into a robust and inclusive association, Territory-wide.

Foster and kinship carers do one of the most challenging, but most rewarding jobs in our community. It is satisfying to have seen significant and continued growth in the organisation and our member base.

Our role is to champion the rights of foster and kinship carers to ensure the best interests of the child remain foremost in the carer relationship. As the year draws to a close, it has been a time for reflection, especially as I head into retirement.

My focus has always been to ensure carers are valued and recognised for the important role they provide in the community, and most importantly, to the vulnerable children in care.

It has been a privilege to have worked with so many of you over the past eight years. Your love and determination to achieve the best for the children in your care is truly inspiring. Leading a skilled team to provide advice, support, advocacy and training opportunities for carers across the Territory has been one of the proudest achievements of my career. Thank you for this opportunity.

We are proud to have a team of dedicated professionals who work closely with our foster and kinship carers. My thanks to Cheryl, who heads the operations team, to Monalisa and Rosalyn, for advocating strongly in often challenging situations, and Izzy and Martin, who do a fabulous job supporting our carer members.

It goes without saying that we could not deliver the high standard of services we do without the corporate services team. My thanks to Dani, Tracey and Sharni, who are an integral part of the team ensuring our day-to-day business runs smoothly.

Each year, our elected board members also 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 work we do today. It is with great appreciation that we thank each and every one of them.

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

The work you do changes lives forever!

Ann Owen
Chief Executive Officer (outgoing)



Ann Owen



The team embracing the festive season

OUR TEAM

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Our board of management is made up of volunteers, experienced foster and kinship carers, and professionals from across the Northern Territory. Each board member brings a unique perspective and experience to our organisation.

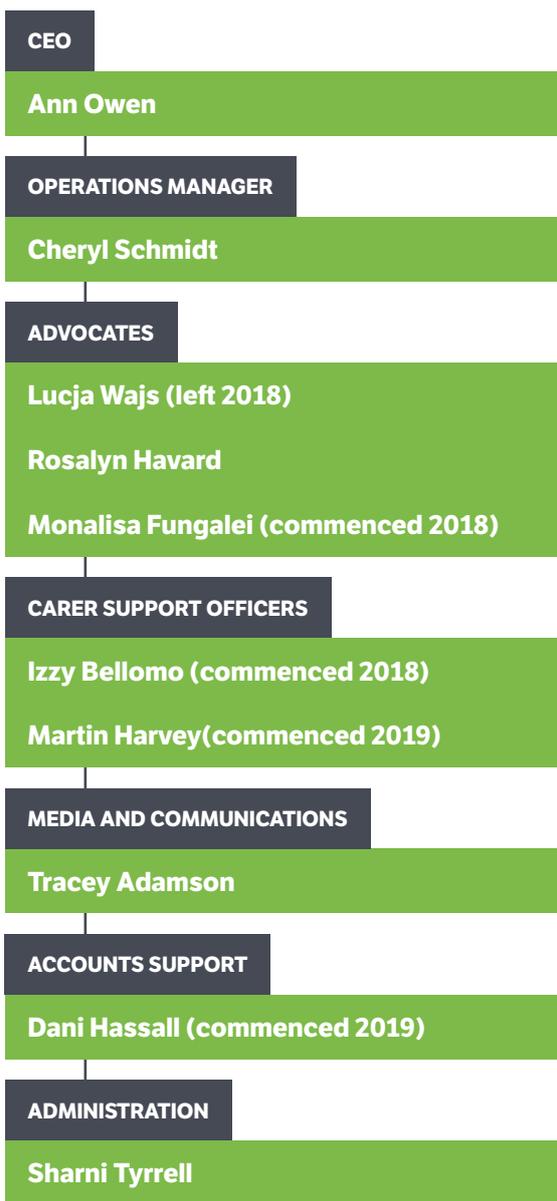
The board's focus is on the strategic direction of the organisation ensuring that everything we do is in the best interests of foster and kinship carers, the children in their care, and the broader out-of-home care sector.

Board meetings in 2018-19 were held in July, November, February and May.

STAFF

Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT is supported day-to-day by a small team of dedicated staff, working to support and advocate for our carers and the children in their care.

We have offices in Darwin and Alice Springs, and our staff frequently travel throughout the Northern Territory to meet with carers, key stakeholders and other care-based organisations.



WHAT WE DO

HOW WE SUPPORT OUR FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARERS

Being there for vulnerable children and young people isn't always an easy job; the right support can make all the difference. We are dedicated to empowering our carers giving practical advice and support and being their voice on issues that affect them every day.

We offer:

- ▶ **Guidance, support and advice** – online, telephone and in person with our Advocacy Team
- ▶ **Professional Development and training** and events tailored especially for carers
- ▶ **Personal assistance and support** when dealing with complex matters with Territory Families
- ▶ **Information and advice** on the carer recruitment and assessment process through Territory Families
- ▶ **Networking opportunities to link** experienced carers with new and potential carers
- ▶ **Referrals** to service providers and other organisations
- ▶ **Regular updates** on relevant issues affecting carers
- ▶ **A comprehensive welcome pack** filled with useful information and contacts including a copy of the Charter of Rights to ensure our carers are full informed
- ▶ **Proactive lobbying** to government on issues affecting our foster and kinship carers.

HOW WE SUPPORT THE SECTOR

We have years of experience and knowledge of the child protection out of home care system and we use that to work collaboratively with a wide variety of sector partners to improve outcomes for carers across the Territory.

We support our sector by:

- ▶ **Advertising and promoting** the benefits of being a foster or kinship carer
- ▶ **Recruiting and screening** potential foster and kinship carers
- ▶ **Mentoring and supporting** our partner and emerging sector organisations
- ▶ **Sharing expertise** with community organisations
- ▶ **Representing** our members and the sector on local and national advisory groups
- ▶ Coordinating **conferences** and **forums** to bring the latest information to the sector
- ▶ **Collecting and analysing data** on carers and placements to inform decision-making and policy development
- ▶ **Lobbying government** for sector and system reform and improvements
- ▶ **Providing informed comment** to the media and the community about key issues affecting the sector.

Nathan & Emma

“Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT provided us with expert advice and support when we needed it.”



OUT IN THE COMMUNITY



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

- Foster & Kinship Carers Association NT fundraising at the Arafura Games.
- Izzy, Ann and Monalisa at the 2018 Children's Christmas party.
- Izzy pictured with foster carer Nigel 'Tug' Wilson in the sensory calming "body sock" from the Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) training.
- Ann and Cheryl opening the inaugural Foster & Kinship Carers Sector Forum.
- Ann and Sharni with the Crewz'nBrew team who catered our inaugural Foster & Kinship Carers Sector Forum.
- Izzy representing Foster & Kinship Carers Association NT at the PossABILITIES expo held at Henbury School.

CELEBRATING OUR CARERS



Elaine is a Super Carer

ELAINE is a dedicated foster and kinship carer who has opened her heart and home to more than 20 vulnerable children and young people in the Northern Territory. She has more than 10 years experience working in the child protection and out of home care sector.

Elaine is a positive representative of the Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT, volunteering her time to help this peak body in the Territory by engaging and promoting the invaluable role of foster and kinship carers in Darwin and remote areas. As a carer, Elaine provides long-term and short-term care for children and monitors and supports other carers by providing essential respite care.

"When a child or young person comes into my home they are no longer considered foster children," she said.

"They become part of my family.

All children in my care are brothers and sisters and I treat them like my own."

Elaine strongly believes in the connection of family and the value of culture of all children coming into her care. She actively participates in the reunification and family restoration wherever possible to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are able to return to their families and communities aware of their heritage, their language to ensure their cultural identity.

Thank You

Territory Families would like to thank our foster and kinship carers for the valuable contribution they make to the lives of Territory children.



NOMINATE A SUPER CARER

FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARER Excellence Awards 2018

Choose one of five categories:

- Outstanding Contribution by a Foster Carer
- Outstanding Contribution by a Kinship Carer
- Outstanding Commitment to Foster and Kinship Care
- Outstanding Contribution by a Sibling
- Young Person Achievement Award

NOMINATIONS OPEN 10 SEPTEMBER
NOMINATIONS CLOSE 5 OCTOBER

Visit territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au for more information or to download a nomination form.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

- Melissa Loy named as the Barnardos Mother of the Year 2019 NT finalist.
- Megan Brown awarded Centralian Volunteer of the Year for her commitment to foster care and other volunteer work.
- Ann accepting an award on behalf of carer Craig Jones at the 2018 Foster & Kinship Carers Excellence Awards.
- Cassandra and kids attending the 'Instant Family' movie event held earlier in the year.
- Ann promoting the Carer Excellence Awards on radio in Alice Springs.
- Elaine encouraging others to celebrate carers in the community by nominating them for the Foster & Kinship Carers Excellence Awards.

OUR MEMBERS

As of 30 June 2019, Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT had 864 active members on our database. Of those active members, 67% of those members are female and 33% male, with 21% of our members identifying as Indigenous Australians.

20% of our board members are Indigenous, representing both northern and southern regions of the Northern Territory.

From 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, we lodged 124 expressions of interest with Territory Families for people to become registered carers, and had conversations with many more to help them start their caring journey.

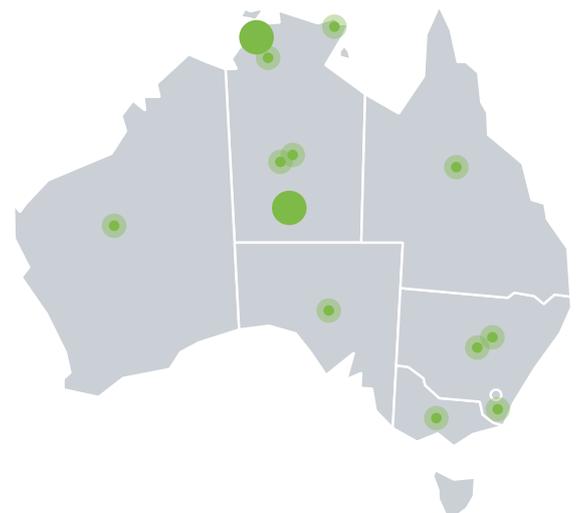
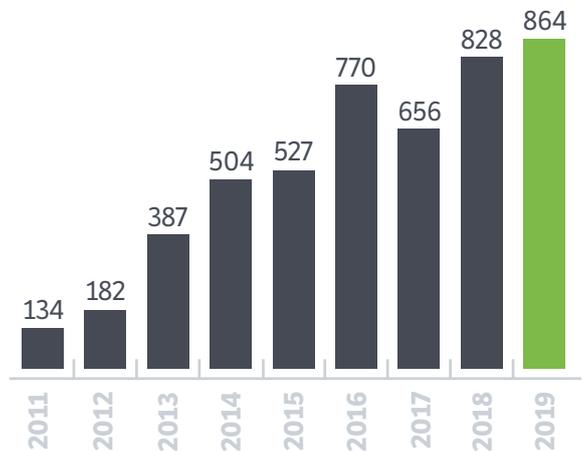
To encourage more people to become carers, in 2018-19 we commenced a 12-month cinema advertising program with Big Screen Advertising. The short video, featuring young Territorians, busted some of the myths about being a foster and kinship carer. It continues into 2019-20, and is being shown in both Alice Springs and Darwin cinemas.

WHERE OUR MEMBERS ARE LOCATED

While the vast majority of our members are located in the Northern Territory, we have an increasing number of carers located interstate. We have seen a number of approvals granted for foster and kinship carers to move interstate and retaining their connection to the Northern Territory is a priority.

To ensure we are able to deliver services to these widespread members, we are offering more technology-based opportunities to connect with our advocacy and carer support team.

Membership numbers as at June 30 2019

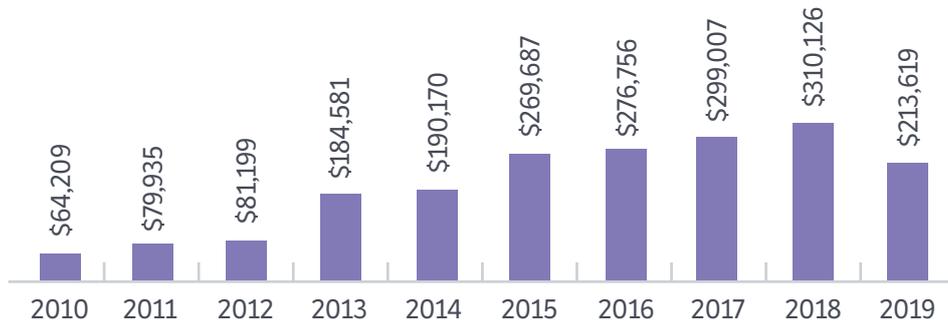


FINANCIALS

Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT Incorporated is pleased to present our audited financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2019.

The Association maintains a strong financial position with consolidated income for the 2018-19 financial year at \$933,264 carrying forward an operational deficit of \$96,507. This deficit is due to an increase in employment costs with several additional positions added to expand the services we offer to our foster and kinship carers.

COMPARATIVE EQUITY GROWTH

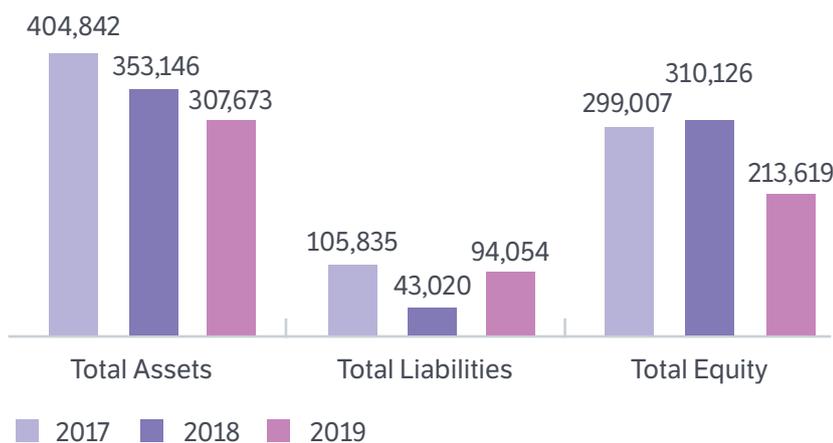


Our Balance Sheet shows a net accumulated surplus of \$213,619 as at 30 June 2019.

2019 shows members' equity down but remaining strong through retained surpluses as demonstrated with this comparative chart covering the past 9 years.

The chart below demonstrates the breakdown of members' equity between 30 June 2018 and 30 June 2019.

MEMBER EQUITY BREAKDOWN 30 JUNE 2018 vs 30 JUNE 2019



HOW WE HELP

Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT provides advocacy, support, advice and representation on behalf of our carer members. We have recently increased our capacity to support our carers with regular carer parent groups, Facebook live advocacy Q&A sessions, and the Carer Advisory Group.

These sessions and groups give carers the opportunity to raise important issues, get answers to questions, and connect with other carers in a relaxed way. We are thrilled with the positive feedback we are getting from carers and hope to engage with even more carers in the future.

ADVOCACY

One of the most important roles for the Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT is to provide advocacy and support to our members in their dealings with Territory Families.

In 2018-19, we assisted with 129 advocacy and support cases across the Northern Territory, and provided advice and information to dozens more. These cases can often be complex, challenging and emotional; and our advocates across the Territory do a fantastic job on behalf of all our carers.

TRAINING

We provide specialised information sessions, workshops and professional development opportunities for our carers throughout the year. This includes sessions for people interested in becoming carers, training for those that have become or are about to become carers, and sessions on issues of interest—particularly around the psychological and self-care needs of children and carers.

This past year, we have also trialled holding sessions at different times of the day and evening resulting in more people being able to attend.

POLICY INPUT

Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT regularly provide feedback to Territory Families and other agencies on legislation, policy and other issues that affect our carers. To help us do this, we created our Carer Advisory Group, made up of foster and kinship carers with between five and 15 years' of experience from across the Territory.

Carers on the advisory group meet regularly via video link and maintain balanced and respectful conversation, ensuring the things that matter to carers remain at the core of discussion.

The goals of the Carer Advisory Group are to:

- ▶ Provide comment and advice on policy, legislation or other matters referred by Territory Families
- ▶ Identify issues and seek solutions to influence positive change for the out-of-home-care sector
- ▶ Engage in open and transparent discussions to develop better partnerships and positive outcomes for children and young people in care

Over the past 9 months, the Carer Advisory Group has:

- ▶ Provided feedback to the Territory Families Education and Training team on a new Foster and Kinship Carer Online Training Program
- ▶ Provided feedback to Territory Families Practice Innovation and Implementation and Assurance review of the Essential Information Record, My Care Plan and Placement Agreement
- ▶ Reviewed and provided feedback on amendments to Territory Families Permanent Care Order Policy
- ▶ Participated in a working group for a Tangentyere Kinship Care Workshop
- ▶ Launched two Connect Groups for foster and kinship carers
- ▶ Participated in the Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT Strategic Planning Day
- ▶ Volunteered at the Arafura Games Foster and Kinship Carer Association NT fundraiser barbeque and at the sector forums

CONNECTION

Connect Groups have been convened for the first time in Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT history. Facilitated by experienced carers, these groups allow carers to come together, unwind and debrief, and share the wins and challenges with others who know what they are going through.

So why Connect Groups? Our facilitators say it best:

I have been a carer for 15 years and I wanted to start a Connect Group as a way to bring people together who have similar interests and stories. As a member of the Carer Advisory Group it also gives me an opportunity to share what CAG are working on and get on the ground feedback from carers.

My Connect meets once a month at different venues around Darwin. It is a way the whole family can gather together in a safe environment, unwind, debrief and share stories and advice on how to deal with challenging situations in their caring journey.

What I love most about Connect is that everyone gets something from it even if it's something as small (but just as important) as a hug.

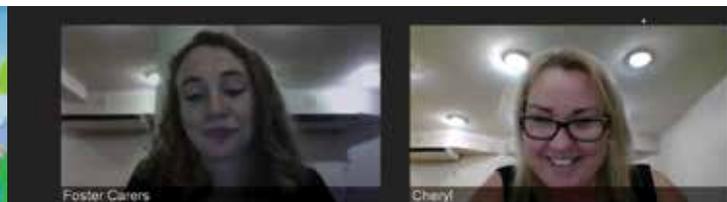
– Jennie Vallely

We have been carers for around 9 years! We became carers because we could see a huge need and knew we had something to offer. We believe in community support to raise any child and as part of the community wanted to do our part as we have received support from different communities in our own lives.

We chose to facilitate a Connect Group so we can bring awareness to carers who are working during the week and do not have access to information and support because of their work schedules. As a member of the Carer Advisory Group we are in a great position to offer that and wanted to provide a way to access it. It also provides a forum for our children to get together who are in similar situations and find a friend to play with and share stories.

We are grateful to have been able to participate in the FKCA Strategic Planning Day and bear witness to the genuine passion of the organisation to drive positive change for Foster and Kinship Carers in the Out of Home Care Sector. It was a great privilege to be able to have our voices not only heard but included.

– Sue and Ricky McElroy



Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT testing out new and traditional methods of engaging with our carers including Connect Groups, Live Advocacy Q&A sessions and workshops.

In addition to Connect groups, Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT launched peer support networks in 2019 with the commencement of a Carer Parent Group at Playshack in Palmerston. This has been a fantastic opportunity for carers in our greater Darwin community to connect and socialise once a fortnight in a regular location.

Within the first 3 months, the Carer Parent Group was hosted on seven occasions. Each fortnight we have the pleasure of bringing together carers who used to be strangers: they laugh, share struggles, wins, challenges of caring and the rollercoaster of the carer journey in the Territory. We are so proud to have been part of this development for our carer community – supporting carers to be increasingly connected, strong and appreciated.

Following on from the success of the first Carer Parent Group, Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT is looking to expand further across the Top End and into Central Australia.



Some of the great feedback we've received from carers about the Carer Advisory Group.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

As well as offering advocacy, support and advice, we also provide other great benefits to our members.

CARER DISCOUNT CARD

Members of Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT who are registered foster and kinship carers are able to enjoy a variety of discounts and special offers from participating businesses. The list of participating businesses has recently been refreshed and continues to grow across the Northern Territory.

ONLINE & PRINT RESOURCES

Our website is packed with useful resources for carers that cover many of the issues faced with raising children in the out-of-home-care system in the Northern Territory. These include information on child development, trauma, mental health, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), meeting cultural needs and child safety, as well as contacts for key legal and support services across the Territory.

REGULAR NEWSLETTER

Our monthly e-newsletter provides the latest information on Territory Families policies as well as useful advice on key stages of child development and the latest research. The newsletters are a great opportunity to share achievements, challenges and other information of interest to carers and families.

MILESTONES

2019

- ▶ Sector forums delivered in both Alice Springs and Darwin
- ▶ Carer Support Officers employed in both Darwin and Alice Springs
- ▶ Database cleansing project commenced
- ▶ Carer Advisory Group and Carer Parent Group commenced
- ▶ First ever cinema advertising campaign run in Alice Springs and Darwin

2018

- ▶ Carer Charter of Rights roadshow across the Northern Territory
- ▶ Operations Manager commences on staff
- ▶ New 3-year service agreement negotiated with Territory Families
- ▶ Charter of Rights turns 1

2017

- ▶ Launch of the Charter of Rights for Foster and Kinship Carers after consultative forums and workshops throughout the Northern Territory by Minister Dale Wakefield at Parliament House.
- ▶ Commitment by Mr Ken Davies to embed the Charter into Territory Families policy and procedures in recognition of the Charter's importance.
- ▶ Roadshow throughout the Northern Territory, partnering with Territory Families to workshop the Charter to case managers, team leaders, senior practitioners and foster and kinship carers in the first steps of change management.

2016

- ▶ Hosted the 2016 National Foster and Kinship Care Conference in Darwin
- ▶ Sponsored 53 NT foster and kinship carers to attend the National Conference in Darwin
- ▶ FCKA CEO re-elected as Chair of National Foster and Kinship Carers Partnership
- ▶ Strategic Plan 2016–2017 released

2015

- ▶ Sponsored 16 foster and kinship carers to attend 2014 National Foster and Kinship Conference
- ▶ FCKA CEO elected as Chair of National Foster and Kinship Carers Partnership
- ▶ Introduced fully sponsored first aid training for all foster and kinship carers
- ▶ Membership 531 foster and kinship carers
- ▶ Continued media to raise the profile of foster and kinship carers

2014

- ▶ Partnered with Department of Children and Families to participate in the re-write of the Carer Induction Training
- ▶ Conducted carer forums for consultation around the new Carer Handbook
- ▶ Membership doubled to 387 members since July 2011
- ▶ Training programs for Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin regions
- ▶ Sponsored 14 foster and kinship carers to attend 2014 National Foster and Kinship Carers
- ▶ FCA CEO elected as Vice-Chair of National Foster and Kinship Carers partnership
- ▶ Media plan implemented to raise the profile of foster and kinship carers in the Northern Territory

2013

- ▶ Strategic Plan 2013–2016
- ▶ Membership doubled to 387 members since July 2011
- ▶ Training programs for Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin regions
- ▶ Launched new website for foster and kinship carers
- ▶ Sponsored 15 foster and kinship carers to attend 2013 National Foster and Kinship Carers

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