



annual report 2014



president's report

Nicole Misurelli

“While the passion, generosity and strength offered by carers is inspiring, their frustration with an often unfriendly system is driving the FCAV to campaign for improvements.”



Taking over as President of the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) has provided a fascinating insight into the foster care system and broader community sector.

While the passion, generosity and strength offered by carers is inspiring, their frustration with an often unfriendly system is driving the FCAV to campaign for improvements.

Sharing the day-to-day foster care experience with politicians and public servants has been revealing. Fortunately, most members of parliament we have met have shown great concern about the lack of support for volunteer carers, but there remains little commitment to definitive action to address systemic issues.

The FCAV will continue to push for a range of desperately needed reforms in the lead-up to the 2014 state election. There is enormous support for foster carers in the community, so we will continue to share your stories and work towards achieving a sustainable and robust care system.

In the meantime, I look forward to continuing to meet with members at future events.

Thank you to our hard-working Board of Directors, Katie and her team of staff, and former President Josh Fergeus, from whom I took over in February 2014.

chief executive officer report

Katie Hooper

“...the Foster Care Association of Victoria’s membership has reached record levels and [members] have engaged with the push for systemic improvements.”



In a foster care landscape facing growing challenges, the Foster Care Association of Victoria’s (FCAV) membership has reached record levels. Over the past year, more carers than ever before have attended our training workshops, participated in working groups, and engaged with the push for systemic improvements.

While the uncertain future is concerning, your dedication to the children in your care is our inspiration. You deserve to have your contribution respected and recognised, and we are determined to keep fighting for reforms over the months and years ahead.

Thank you also to the FCAV team, who along with our Board of Directors have continued to grow the effectiveness and influence of the organisation. Our new President, Nicole Misurelli, has hit the ground running, leading from the front with inspiring determination to improve conditions for carers.

Harnessing the insights, power and vision of Victorian carers will be vital to improving the system, and ensuring that our advocacy cuts through a complex and bureaucratic system. We look forward to working with our members to deliver improvements by ensuring that individual carer voices are heard loudly and clearly by policy makers and politicians.

membership

“It’s great to have the FCAV available to confidentially discuss concerns or questions I have regarding the foster care system. I’ve been able to solve several issues with the FCAV’s advice and support.”



Membership

The Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) is pleased to welcome the 893 new members who joined in the past year, bringing our total membership to 4197. This increase in membership is significant in the light of continuing issues facing the foster care sector. As membership grows, the FCAV is broadened in its scope, enhancing our understanding of the range of issues impacting Victorian carers. It is this understanding that feeds into focusing and strengthening our capacity for advocacy.

Carer Snapshot

The FCAV undertakes an annual audit of foster care households which, this year, showed a dramatic increase in numbers of ‘non-active’ carers and a reduction in the number of potential carers undertaking accreditation. The key challenge for Victoria is retaining those within the system. Improving conditions for those already active foster carers is vital to grow a sustainable pool of households that are able to meet the needs of children requiring care.

2014	Active Carers	Non-Active Carers	In Accreditation
Total carer households (Vic)	1702	428	281

carer development

Gabrielle Dalsasso

“We have become familiar with local challenges and inconsistent practices across the different regions.”



During 2013-14 the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) worked to engage carers across the state. Hundreds of carers and workers attended our training workshops in Geelong, Horsham, Bendigo, Shepparton and Melbourne's northern and southern suburbs.

Additionally, our staff attended numerous events, carer consultations and meetings with local members of parliament across Gippsland, the Mornington Peninsula and the Mallee, as well as Warrnambool, Mildura and Ballarat.

We have become familiar with local challenges and inconsistent practices across the different regions, which are impacting carers and the wider system. This knowledge is relayed back to DHS head office, politicians and other sector leaders, and incorporated into the FCAV's advocacy.

During the year ahead we will host carer development sessions in 12 locations across the state. Three sessions will be staged in the Melbourne metropolitan areas, and 8 sessions will be held regionally in Ballarat, Bendigo, Horsham, Mildura, Morwell, Shepparton, Warrnambool, and Wodonga. For more information visit our Calendar of Events or notices in the FCAV newsletter.

carer information and support

Leigh Hillman

“...Thank you so much for your amazing support over the past 14 months. You guys made such a difference to not only our lives but to the lives of many carers. Your work is awesome.”



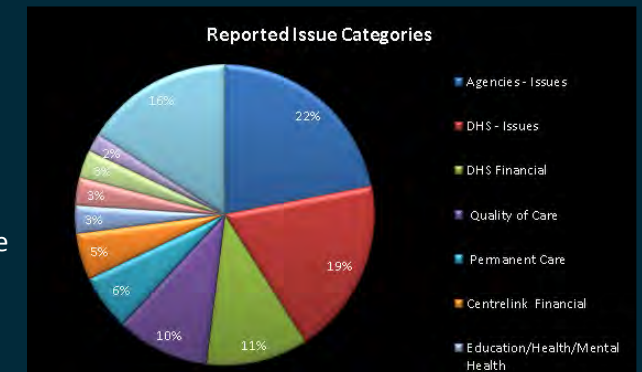
Testimonial

“...I contacted FCAV to find out more about care team meetings and my Centrelink entitlements especially with regards to child care. Leigh from FCAV called me back promptly, she gave me answers to my questions over the phone then followed up by sending me some information sheets on these subjects. I was very pleased with the service given and will contact FCAV again if I need any further help.”

With a growing membership and mounting challenges, it was no surprise that calls to the Foster Care Association of Victoria's (FCAV) Carer Information and Support Service (CISS) grew throughout 2013-14.

The total number of requests for support and information increased by 18%, while the team addressed 31% more individual issues than in the preceding year. This included 23% more inquiries from foster carers alongside an increase of 32% in numbers of questions from workers.

Inquiries related specifically to foster care comprised 508 contacts or 84% of all inquiries - a 23% increase from 2012/13. CISS identified 792 issues of concern regarding foster care, constituting 75% of all issues raised by contacts to the service - a 34% increase from 2012/13.



voice of carers

“The FCAV’s ‘Voice of Carers’ report ...has been shared with representatives from all sides of politics, agencies, DHS staff and other carers.”



Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) members regularly express frustration that their voices aren’t heard clearly by those that make decisions impacting the children in their care. We believe that your expertise should be heard by agencies, politicians and DHS staff, so this year the Association set out to promote it in a range of new ways.

At our last Annual General Meeting, carers were invited to leave suggestions for system improvements on the ‘Voice of Carers’ tree. These suggestions were then compiled into the ‘Voice of Carers’ report, which has been shared with representatives from all sides of politics, agencies, DHS staff and other carers. At FCAV training events, carers were asked to share the core elements of their ‘dream’ placement. These included heartbreakingly simple reforms, like ‘telling children in an age-appropriate way why they are not at home with their parents’. These ideas formed the ‘Perfect Placement’ report, which has been passed onto agencies, DHS staff and used to start many conversations with other carers.

These reports are available on www.fcav.org.au.

This year the FCAV has engaged carers and interested members of the community through social media. Please follow us online through Twitter [@vicfostercare](https://twitter.com/vicfostercare) or on Facebook/Foster Care (Victoria) to join in the conversation and receive opportunities to participate in carer events and activities.



@vicfostercare



fostercarevictoria

advocacy

“Through extensive consultations with our membership, it became clear that financial pressures on carers are greater than ever.”



The Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) has ramped up advocacy efforts over the past year in response to growing concerns amongst Victorian foster carers. As well as participating in a range of working groups and advisory committees, we have formed a coalition of foster care agencies to campaign for specific improvements.

Through extensive consultations with our membership, it has become clear that financial pressures on carers are greater than ever. This, combined with diminishing respect, recognition and support, were the primary factors driving carers away from the system, while discouraging new volunteers.

While we will continue to advocate for a wide range of reforms, our focus for the 2014 state election will be on five core issues. We are asking for a commitment from all political parties and parliamentarians to:

1. Increase foster care reimbursements to meet the true costs of caring for children.
2. Ensure the education, medical, allied health and recreational expenses for children in foster care are met by the state not the carer.
3. Implement and fund a coordinated, state-wide foster care recruitment and retention program.
4. Improve state-wide access to ongoing training, practical support and regular respite for carers.
5. Support calls for the Commonwealth to remove income tests from carers' access to benefits for children in foster care.

community engagement

“As a small not-for-profit organisation, the FCAV relies strongly on volunteers.”



Thank you to our partners and individuals within the community who have contributed to the Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) over the past 12 months, offering members throughout Victoria free learning and development, holidays and other prizes.

During Foster Care Week 2013, L’Oreal Australia partnered with the FCAV to help transform the homes of nine carers across Melbourne’s west, while a further 40 carers took part in a pampering session at L’Oreal’s St Kilda Road headquarters.

The CREATE Christmas Party is an annual highlight for many of our member families. Staff and Directors were pleased to be there and meet with carers escaping for a cuppa in the FCAV pavilion.

The FCAV was represented by Director Nicole Misurelli at the National Foster and Kinship Care Conference in Sydney, while CEO Katie Hooper attended the International Foster Care Organisation World Conference in Japan.

The FCAV would like to acknowledge the free learning and development opportunities donated by partners including the ACT Group, the Good Childhood Foundation, Berry Street, and the Australian Childhood Foundation.

As a small not-for-profit organisation, the FCAV relies strongly on volunteers. We would particularly like to acknowledge the many person-hours donated by the National Australia Bank, and the professional editing services donated by FCAV member, Kate Gray.

treasurer's report

Mohamed Elmasri

“...this financial achievement is even more pronounced when you take into account the number of things that the FCAV has managed to do throughout this year.”



The Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) continues to maintain a strong financial position reporting an operating loss of \$2,781 for the financial year ending 2013/14, beating budget expectations by 80%.

This deficit means that the FCAV has performed better than our budget expectation which was predicting an operating loss to the value of \$13,961. Profits carried forward from previous years were used to fund the deficit.

It is important to note that this financial achievement is even more pronounced when you take into account the number of things that the FCAV has managed to do throughout this year.

This was all done along with our regular activities which included the production and distribution of the FCAV Carers' newsletter, responding to calls made to the Foster Care Helpline, and liaising with local and regional support groups in relation to training.

A cash balance at the end of June 2014 of \$137,206 was held. Funds continue to be closely monitored.

My role as treasurer has been enjoyable, largely due to the wonderful ability of our CEO to work within the organisation's budget. I would also like to thank Andrew Mamalis for the great job that he does as FCAV's bookkeeper.

audit/finance report

Balance Sheet as at June 2014	2014	2013
Assets	\$	\$
Current Assets	149,585	140,141
Fixed Assets (Plant and Equipment)	24,311	34,876
Total Assets	173,896	175,016
Total Liabilities	72,903	71,243
Net Assets	100,993	103,774
Total Equity (Retained Profits)	100,993	103,774

Profit and Loss Statement for the year ended June 30 2014	2014
	\$
Income	513,018
Less expenditure	515,799
Net operating profit (loss)	(2,781)
Retained profits at the beginning of the year	103,774
Total available for appropriation	100,993
Retained profits at the end of the financial year	100,993

Please see website for detailed figures:
www.fcav.org.au

Board of Directors' Statement

STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

In the opinion of the board of directors the financial statement:

1. Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Foster Care Association of Victoria as at 30 June 2014 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Foster Care Association of Victoria will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the board of directors and is signed for and on behalf of the board of directors by:

President:



Nicole Misurelli

Treasurer:



Mohamed Elmasri

9 August 2014

INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INC.

I have audited the financial statements of Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc. for the year ended 30 June 2014.

The Treasurer of the governing body is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and information contained therein. I have conducted an independent audit of the financial statements in order to express an opinion on them to the Board of Directors.

My audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards to provide reasonable assurance as to whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

My procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial statements, and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates.

These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion as to whether, in all material respects, the financial report presents a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements which is consistent with my understanding of Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc's financial position, the results of its operations and its cash flows.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Audit opinion:

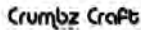
In my opinion, the financial statements present a true and fair view of the financial position of Foster Care Association of Victoria Inc. as at 30 June 2014 and the results of its operations and cash flows for the year, in accordance with the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 and the Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements.



Kylie Ryan CA (Member no. 43470)

Director: Supertix Auditing Services

acknowledgements



The Board:

Tracey Cocks
Karen Dobby (retired)
Mohamed Elmasri
Josh Fergeus (retired)
Lindy Fergeus
Joan Graham (retired)
Julianna Marshall (retired)
Sophie McNamara (retired)
Nicole Misurelli
Krysia Rozanska
Catherine Young
Gail Walton
Debra Winter
Jing Zhu

Staff:

Tallulah Bourke
Gabrielle Dalsasso
Biba Dickson
Leigh Hillman
Katie Hooper
Andrea James
Sarah McCall
Andrew Mamalis
Kristen Mercieca
Meagan Muller
Alistair Perkins
Melissa Ristrom
Anna Viola

The Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) would like to thank the above organisations for their sponsorship and/or donations in 2014.

We'd also like to acknowledge the people who put in many hours of voluntary professional work to ensure smooth operations across all aspects of FCAV's work over the last 12 months.

Our thanks to the following Community Service Organisations who have shown their support through formal subscription to the FCAV in 2014



WE
LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS
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