



Annual Report 2016-2017



Empowering Carers through Knowledge, Support & Advocacy



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Our Vision Confident Carers

Our Purpose To empower carers through knowledge, support and advocacy

Foster Carers Association NT is an independent, non-government, not-for-profit agency supporting foster and kinship carers. We provide information on carers' rights and services, offer confidential advice and advocate on behalf of carers.

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The Chair & CEO's Report

We are pleased to present the 2017 Annual Report for Foster Carers Association NT Incorporated.

It's timely to reflect on the highlights of 2017 recognising that Foster Carers Association NT has achieved a number of key strategic goals over the past year.

We continue to play an important role empowering foster and kinship carers through knowledge, support, and advocacy. Our commitment to foster and kinship carers has always been to ensure carers have access to information, support and advocacy when they need it.

This past year we have worked closely with Territory Families to advocate for positive change to the Out-of-Home Care system and most importantly, to ensure carers are valued in their role, all culminating in the protection of our most vulnerable children.

Our work with the Northern Territory Government is important. Foster and kinship carers are always at the forefront of our discussions and we're proud to be continuously working towards an improved foster care system.

One of the important projects undertaken by our Association this past year was the development of the Foster and Kinship Carers Charter of Rights. A project which commenced at the National Conference in 2016, and continued with extensive consultation, taking part in discussion groups and forums with both foster and kinship carers throughout the Northern Territory.

In May this year, the Foster and Kinship Carer Charter of Rights was launched at Parliament House in partnership with Minister Dale Wakefield and Territory Families Deputy CEO, Jeanette Kerr.



Kathryn Howitt **CHAIR**



Ann Owen **CEO**

Mr Ken Davies, Chief Executive Officer of Territory Families has given an undertaking that this Charter would be wrapped into Territory Families policy so that every foster and kinship carer was informed, consulted, supported, felt safe and valued. We have given our commitment to this Charter and will ensure that all carers are treated fairly and with respect.

In order to raise awareness of the valuable work foster and kinship carers undertake, the Association has been driving a media campaign highlighting the importance of the work foster and kinship carers do within the Territory.

Recognised as the 'go to' agency for foster and kinship carers in the Territory, local media continues to seek comment from Foster Carers Association NT for our position on proposed legislation changes, current practice and future opportunities for Out-of-Home Care.

Our advocacy service has been under significant demand identifying the critical need for greater investment by the Northern Territory Government.

We have further developed our advocacy and support program and are proud to have such dedicated professionals as part of our hardworking team who continue to work closely with foster and kinship carers. Our ongoing appreciation to the dedication shown by our Advocate team Lucja, Catherine and Rosalyn who continue advocating strongly seeking solutions for our carers. Special thanks to Catherine and Lisa for their work during the past year.

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. Our thanks to Anne-marie, Ingrid and Visalini who are an integral part of our team. Visalini, our information specialist ensures communication lines are kept open via the monthly newsletter, Facebook and our website so that carers are kept up to date with the latest news and other important information.

We are also pleased to advise our membership has increased substantially and as at June 30, 2017 Foster Carers Association NT Incorporated has a total of 775 members.

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.

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 of our foster and kinship carers has been well recognised and is valued across the Northern Territory. The work you do, changes lives forever!

Kathryn Howitt

Kathryn Howitt
Chairperson

Ann Owen

Ann Owen
Chief Executive Officer

The Association

Foster Carers Association NT Incorporated continues to work towards the goals of the founding members and 2017 has achieved some of these important milestones.

Many changes have taken place over the past years and whilst it has often been a challenging path, it is important to recognise that the early visionaries of this Association achieved so much through persistence and dedication.

Just 6 years ago, in 2011 Foster Carers Association NT transitioned from the small 'volunteer' run organisation into the significant Association it is today.

As the Peak Body for foster and kinship carers, Foster Carers Association NT objectives continue to be focused on empowering carers through access to information, support and advocacy.

Our role has always been to seek positive change for the Out-of-Home Care sector, actively consult on policy and legislation and most importantly, advocate for the needs and interests of foster and kinship carers both systemically and individually.

The Association NT has been instrumental in working towards providing better outcomes for foster and kinship carers in the Northern Territory which have been achievable through strategic partnerships with government and other agencies.

One of our most important functions has always been to provide advocacy and individual support for foster and kinship carers on their care journey. Our

team works closely with the carer to offer confidential advice, advocate for better outcomes and ensure that ongoing supports are in place to maintain and sustain placements for the children in care.

Much of our work has been around building capacity to support foster and kinship carers and ensure they are equipped with tools to enhance their role.

Providing access to key information such as legislation, policy and other resources, identifying training needs and facilitating skills development opportunities to build and strengthen carers skills has been a focus to ensure our service delivery is carer centric.

Significant distances between major centres in the Northern Territory mean that the Foster Carers Association NT's commitment to technology will provide much needed access to all carers across the Northern Territory.

Technology has become so important to all of us and given the vast distances between our Territory centres, it's an important strategy to ensure we are able to reach our members and provide access to the resources they need to assist them in their care journey.

We are continually developing our online resource library and have committed the development of a well-resourced website and an ongoing presence on social media to keep us closely linked to foster carers. This is an integral part of our ethos to inform our carers, share information and strengthen carers' capacity enabling them to provide the best care possible for



Foster Carers Association NT Incorporated

Peak Body

Advocacy & Support

Carer Recruitment

Information & Resources

Events & Activities

- Membership
- Operational Management
- Policy & Legislation
- Funding
- Service Delivery
- Media Profile

- Advocacy
- Support
- Information
- Networking
- Referrals to other Agencies
- Resource Development

- New Carer Recruitment
- Support Existing Carers
- Advertising & Public Relations
- Volunteer Network

- Information Sessions
- Fact Sheets & Resources
- Communication
- Newsletters
- Website & Social Media

- Awards & Recognition
- Carer Networking Events
- National Conference
- Expo & Mini Conference
- Professional Development
- Training



Board of Management

The Board of Management is made up of dedicated volunteers, experienced foster and kinship carers and professionals from across the Northern Territory.

Its focus is the strategic direction of the organisation, protecting the interests of all foster and kinship carers and ensuring the best outcomes for all children in care.

Chairperson

Kathryn Howitt

Treasurer

Louisa Castle

Committee

Kay Eade

Vice Chair

Jake Quinlivan

Secretary

Sue Price

Necia Sutton

Lyndon Ross

Domenic Crea

Kathleen Wileman

Tracey Brand
Resigned 2017

Public Officer

Ann Owen
Chief Executive Officer



Back row (L to R): Jake Quinlivan, Domenic Crea, Louisa Castle, Sue Price.
Front row (L to R): Kathleen Wileman, Tracey Brand, Kathryn Howitt,
Kay Eade, Necia Sutton. Absent: Lyndon Ross.

Our Strategic Plans 2016-2019

It gives us great pleasure to present the 2017 Annual Report of Foster Carers Association NT Incorporated.



OUR ASSOCIATION

- Increase and retain our membership
- Develop & implement a carer recruitment & retention program
- Develop & implement an Indigenous Engagement Strategy
- Develop & implement a strategic marketing plan
- Effectively contribute to policy development & legislation
- Increase our profile, effectiveness & impact

OUR CARER COMMUNITY

- Provide carers with access to best practice information
- Retain carers through developing networks & support groups
- Provide relevant & accessible training for all carers
- Facilitate self, individual & systemic advocacy
- Continue to engage & develop new partnerships

OUR GOVERNANCE

- Develop a communications strategy
- Grow our funding base
- Build a dynamic, accountable governance structure
- Develop a Carer's Charter of Rights
- Build on our internal systems and capacity

Our Members

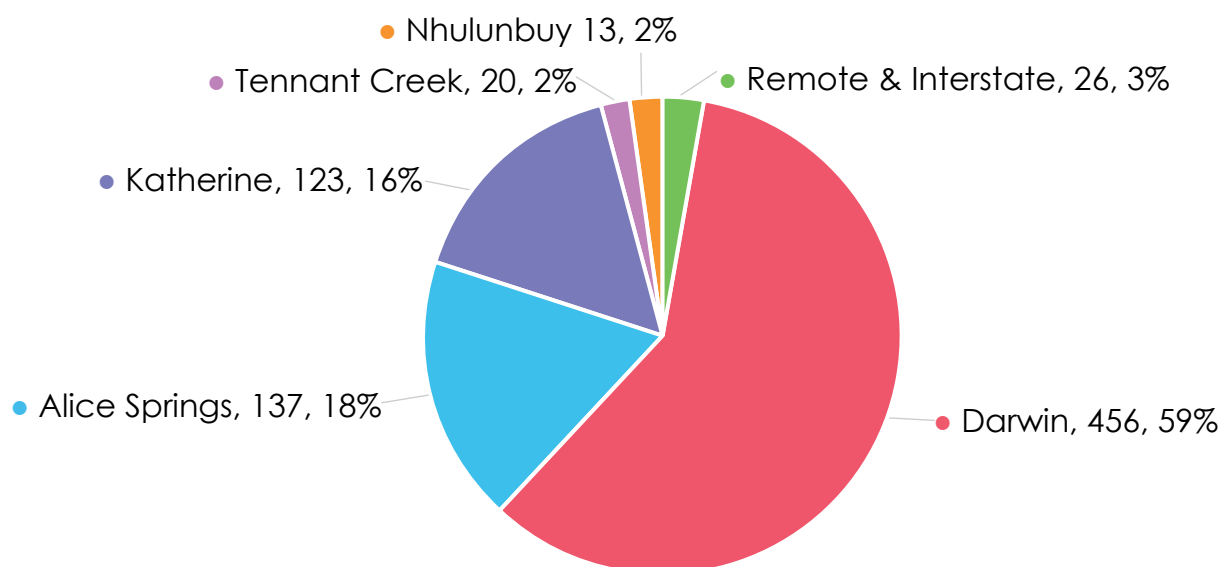
Our membership for the Association has grown substantially over the last financial year with membership reaching 775 members.

Representing a substantial 578% increase since July 2011 this rapid growth demonstrates clearly that Foster Carers Association NT continues to provide a much-needed voice for foster and kinship carers in the Northern Territory.

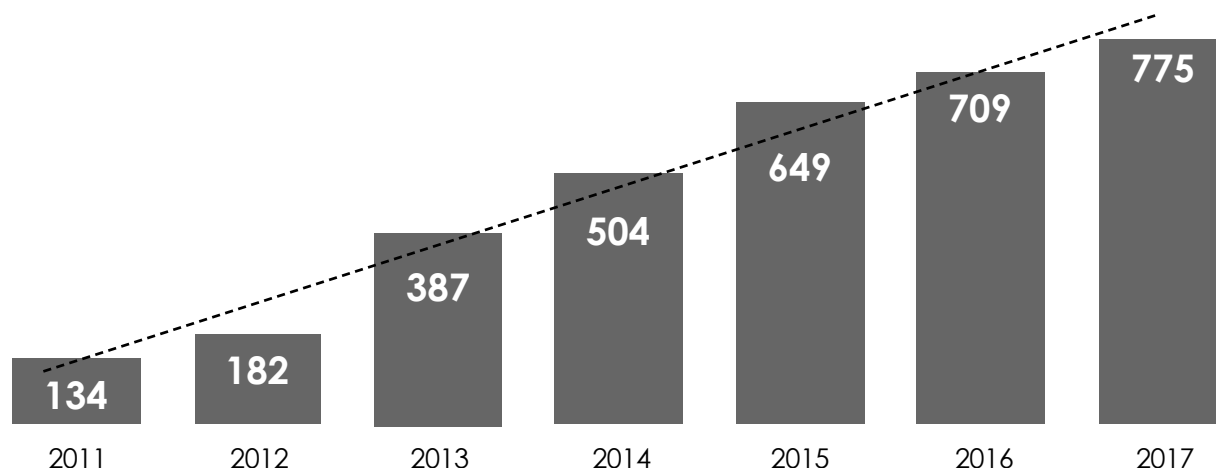
It is important to note that our members are not all active carers. Many past carers choose to remain members so they are informed of the latest changes, news and to be kept connected to the carer community. In addition, many professionals have become Associate members to maintain their interest in the sector, and keep abreast of the changes in the Northern Territory.

Territory Families continue to support our Association by ensuring that new foster and kinship carers are informed about our services and their contact details are referred directly to our membership team. We continue to sponsor carers to attend the National Conference, Expos and other key training events to build awareness, skills development and connect foster and kinship carers throughout the Territory.

Membership Status



Membership Growth



The Organisational Structure

Foster Carers Association NT Incorporated has a small but highly efficient team, the Association functions effectively with six (6) staff Territory wide.

Despite the vast distance between our offices in Alice Springs and Darwin, we work closely together, relying heavily on technology to ensure we are able to support the team and provide a seamless service to our foster and kinship carers.

Our team remains committed to ensuring services offered in Darwin are also available to carers in Alice Springs and continue to balance our service delivery so that we provide benefit to foster and kinship carers where ever they may be.

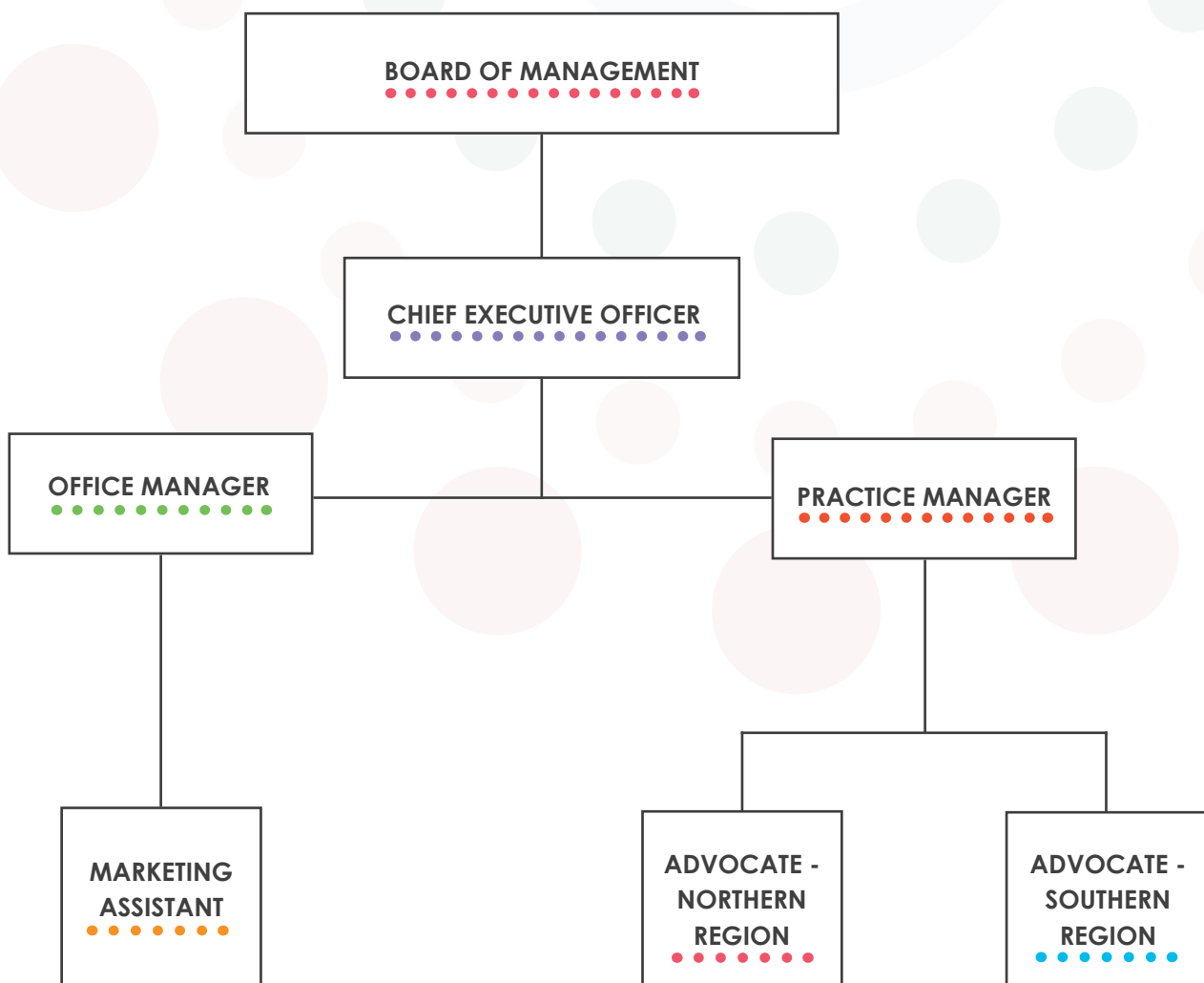
Many organisations have a team working 'behind the scenes' who are responsible for ensuring the smooth-running of the business. This is no different for Foster Carers Association NT. It's the small things that

happen that glue everything together.

In our case, Anne-marie looks after all administration support, ensuring flights are booked for travel, venues are booked for training, policy is drafted, accounts are paid and staff have the supplies they need to deliver the services we specialise in.

Ingrid and Visalini have been responsible for newsletters, developing our fact sheets and carer stories for publishing on social media and the Foster Carers Association NT website. Visalini in particular, has taken on the role of developing our branding and ensuring our brochures and other promotional material are consistent.

It is with great appreciation that we recognise the dedication and commitment of the administration team. Without your commitment we could not have delivered these services as effectively as we do!



Advocacy Program

Foster Carers Association NT's role is to champion the rights of carers and ensure the best interests of the child is foremost in the carer relationship.

The Association's core business is to provide advocacy and support to our members by ensuring foster and kinship carers are recognised for the important work they do within our community.

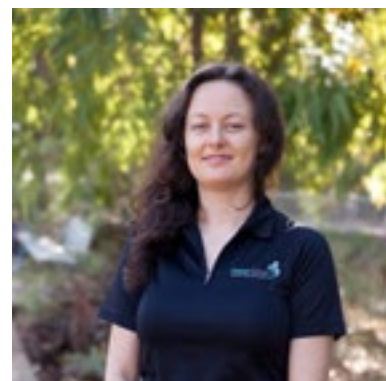
The Association plays a significant role in advocating for positive change in legislation and policy development aimed at developing an improved Out-of-Home Care system.

As a vital part of our service provision, we have developed a significant professional development program tailored for foster and kinship carers and other professionals. We are committed to providing development opportunities throughout the Territory, to ensure carers are up to date with new and relevant information.

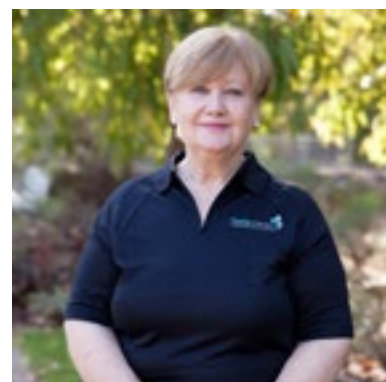
Specialty information sessions, workshops and professional development have included topics such as Volatile Substance Abuse, Neuroscience of Attachment, Vicarious Trauma and Self Care and Key Communication Skills.

Advocates, Lucja, Catherine, Lisa and Rosalyn have worked closely with our carers throughout the year, liaising with Territory Families and other agencies ensuring carers are well supported and their needs advocated for, often when they need this support the most.

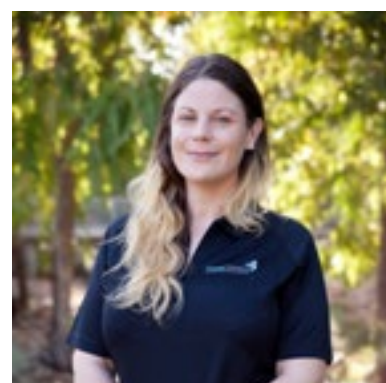
It is important to note that the complexity of casework varies in each region requiring differing strategies to effect satisfactory resolution. Our advocates are skilled professionals with considerable experience in their field and work closely with Territory Families to seek solutions on an individual basis.



Practise Manager - Lucja Wajs

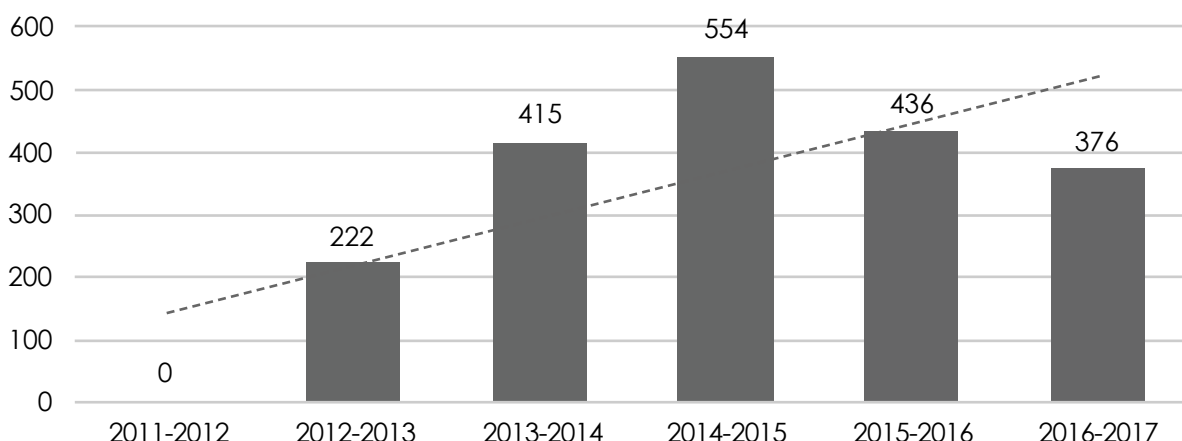


Southern Advocate - Rosalyn Havard



Northern Advocate - Catherine Collier

Advocacy Concerns raised with Territory Families



Foster and Kinship Carers Charter of Rights

We are strong advocates for the rights of foster and kinship carers and petition the department of Territory Families (TF) to bring about change and fair practice.

As such, this year we made a commitment to work with foster and kinship carers to develop a Charter of Rights for Foster and Kinship Carers. We undertook a lengthy consultation process, held forums and focus groups across the Territory and listened to foster and kinship carers.

The Foster and Kinship Carers Charter of Rights has been developed from the voices of foster and kinship carers.

In May, the Minister Dale Wakefield officially launched the Charter at Parliament House in Darwin and together with Ken Davies, Chief Executive Officer of Territory Families made a commitment to embed our eight (8) core rights into Territory Families policy.

In June and July 2017, Territory Families and Foster Carers Association NT committed to taking this Charter throughout the Territory, talking with foster and kinship carers, case managers, team leaders and managers to acknowledge the positive and valuable work that foster and kinship carers do in our community and the importance of our partnership in raising vulnerable children.

Territory Families have made the commitment to embed this Charter into policy and procedures further demonstrating their commitment to the interests of the child and ensuring greater recognition of the importance of the role foster and kinship carers provide to our community.

This is a significant milestone in Out-of-Home Care, and will create a mark in time where change is imminent. Foster Carers Association NT's vision is the principle driving our commitment to foster and kinship carers within the Northern Territory.

Foster and Kinship Carers
Charter of Rights
You have the Right to:

- 1. Be informed**
 - ▶ To have clarity around your role as a Carer
 - ▶ Information regarding the child in your care to assist in your carer role
 - ▶ Be provided with Territory Families Policy and Procedures
- 2. Be consulted**
 - ▶ Value given to your input around the children in your care
 - ▶ Be involved in care planning for the children in your care
 - ▶ Be consulted around decisions that impact on you and your family
- 3. Be respected**
 - ▶ Timely responses to carer communication
 - ▶ Respectful, courteous, and consultative communication
 - ▶ Clarity around meeting agendas and goals prior to attending
- 4. Be supported**
 - ▶ Access to respite and support to enable a sustainable placement
 - ▶ Financial and physical resources to maintain the placement
 - ▶ Access to relevant training, practical advice, resources and tools
 - ▶ Access to independent advocacy to support carers in meetings with Territory Families
- 5. Feel safe**
 - ▶ To receive information identifying risks to carers and families
 - ▶ Policies and Procedures that support carer's safety and well-being
 - ▶ Prompt and targeted response where carers recognise and raise a risk or concern regarding a child or placement
- 6. Be valued**
 - ▶ The right to say 'No'
 - ▶ To be treated with respect and dignity
 - ▶ To be valued as a member of the Care Team
 - ▶ Respectful interactions with Territory Families with consideration of culture, religion, personal values.
 - ▶ The right to respond
- 7. Be treated fairly**
 - ▶ The right to consistency and fairness in the provision of information and service delivery
 - ▶ To speak without fear of reprisal
 - ▶ To appeal or raise complaints in line with procedural fairness
- 8. Privacy and confidentiality**
 - ▶ Privacy and confidentiality of your personal information
 - ▶ To know that your personal information is treated respectfully and sensitively
 - ▶ Not to be the subject of gossip
 - ▶ The right to be protected from external risks

Events

Carers Buy Swap and Sell Markets

On Saturday 27 May 2017 we held the first Foster & Kinship Carers Buy Swap and Sell Markets. It was a fantastic afternoon with lots of activities for the kids. It was great to see families enjoying the day and mingling with our stallholders. The variety of stalls was amazing. There were some great bargains available on items such as homewares, clothing, baby clothing, essential oils and fascinators.



Charter of Rights launch at Parliament House

On Friday 26 May 2017, Minister Dale Wakefield, Minister for Territory Families officially launched The Charter of Rights at Parliament House. The event was well attended by Territory Families staff and carers from across the Territory. We are proud to have the full support of Territory Families from the CEO down, sending a strong message to foster and kinship carers throughout the Northern Territory that their work is valued by the Territory and their community.



The Treasurer's Report

Foster Carers Association NT Incorporated is pleased to present our audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2017.

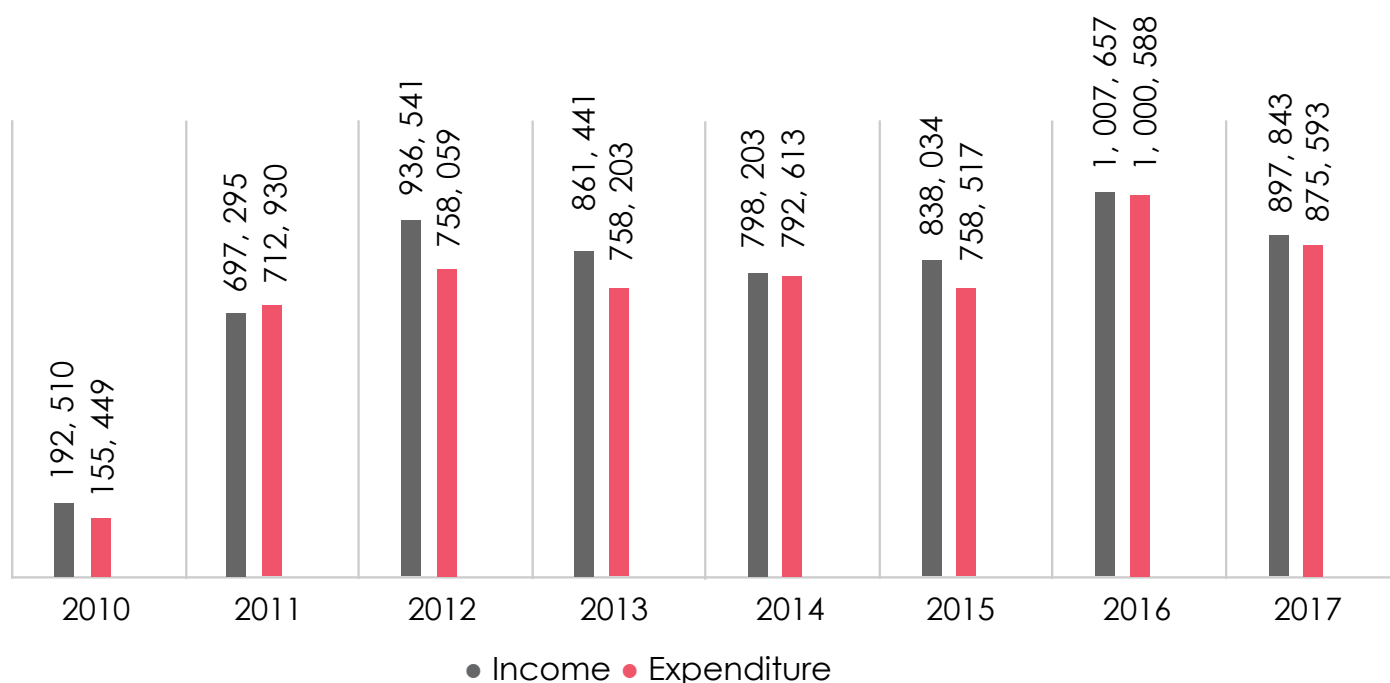
The Association continues to maintain a strong financial position with consolidated income for the 2017 financial year at \$897,843 carrying forward an operational surplus of \$22,250.

Our income for 2017 was attributed predominantly to Northern Territory Government through the Department of Territory Families recurrent funding.

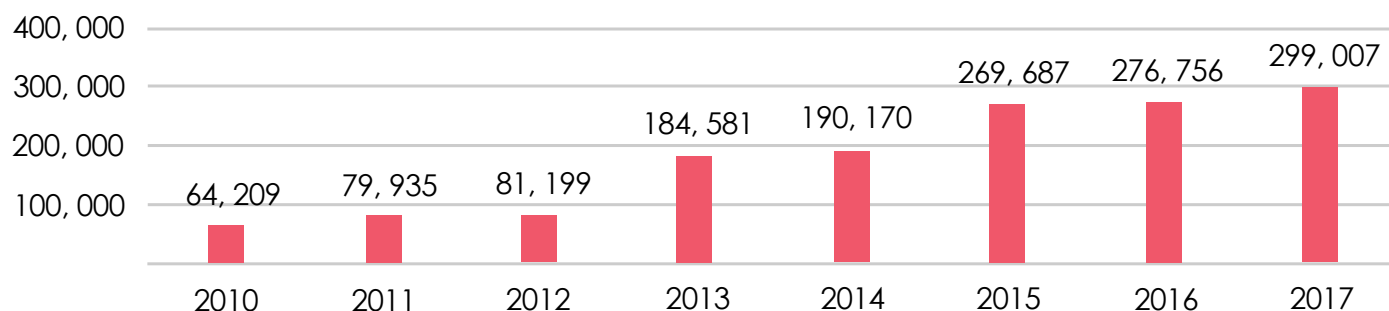
Foster Carers Association NT has been well supported by the Department of Territory Families however we note our current funding agreement terminates on June 30, 2017. We are currently in discussions regarding a new service agreement supporting the ongoing work that we do providing advocacy and support to foster and kinship carers.

We recognise the risk and limitations that financial dependence on Government funding brings, and will continue to review opportunities for ongoing sustainability as we move forward.

Annual Income & Expenditure Comparison



Comparative Equity Growth



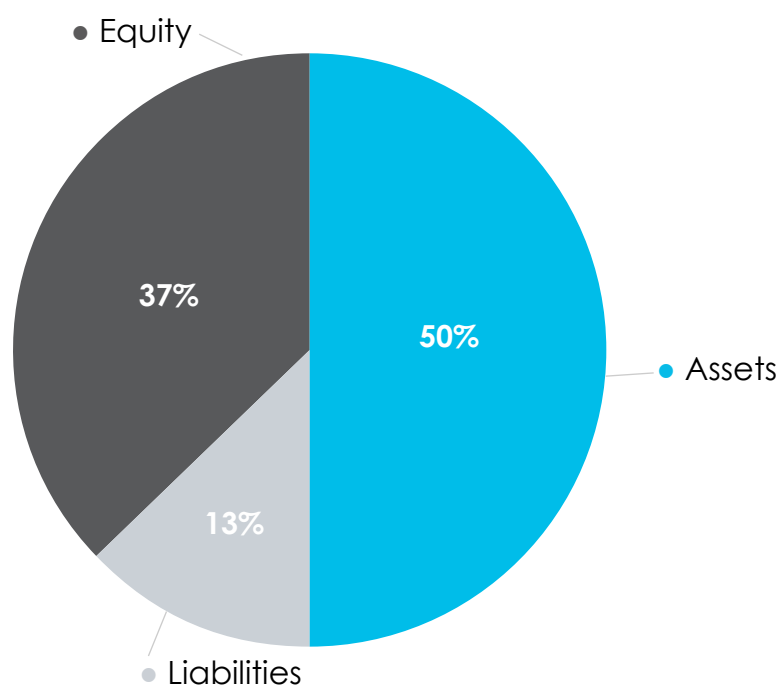
Our Balance Sheet shows a net accumulated surplus of \$299,007 as at June 30, 2017 which has been attributed to sound management practice.

2017 shows a continued growth in members' equity through retained surpluses as demonstrated with this comparative chart covering the past 8 years.

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

The chart demonstrates continued organisational growth of members' equity as at June 30, 2017 at 37%, a marginal increase from the 2016 year. This reflects a stable asset base of 50% and liability exposure at 14%.

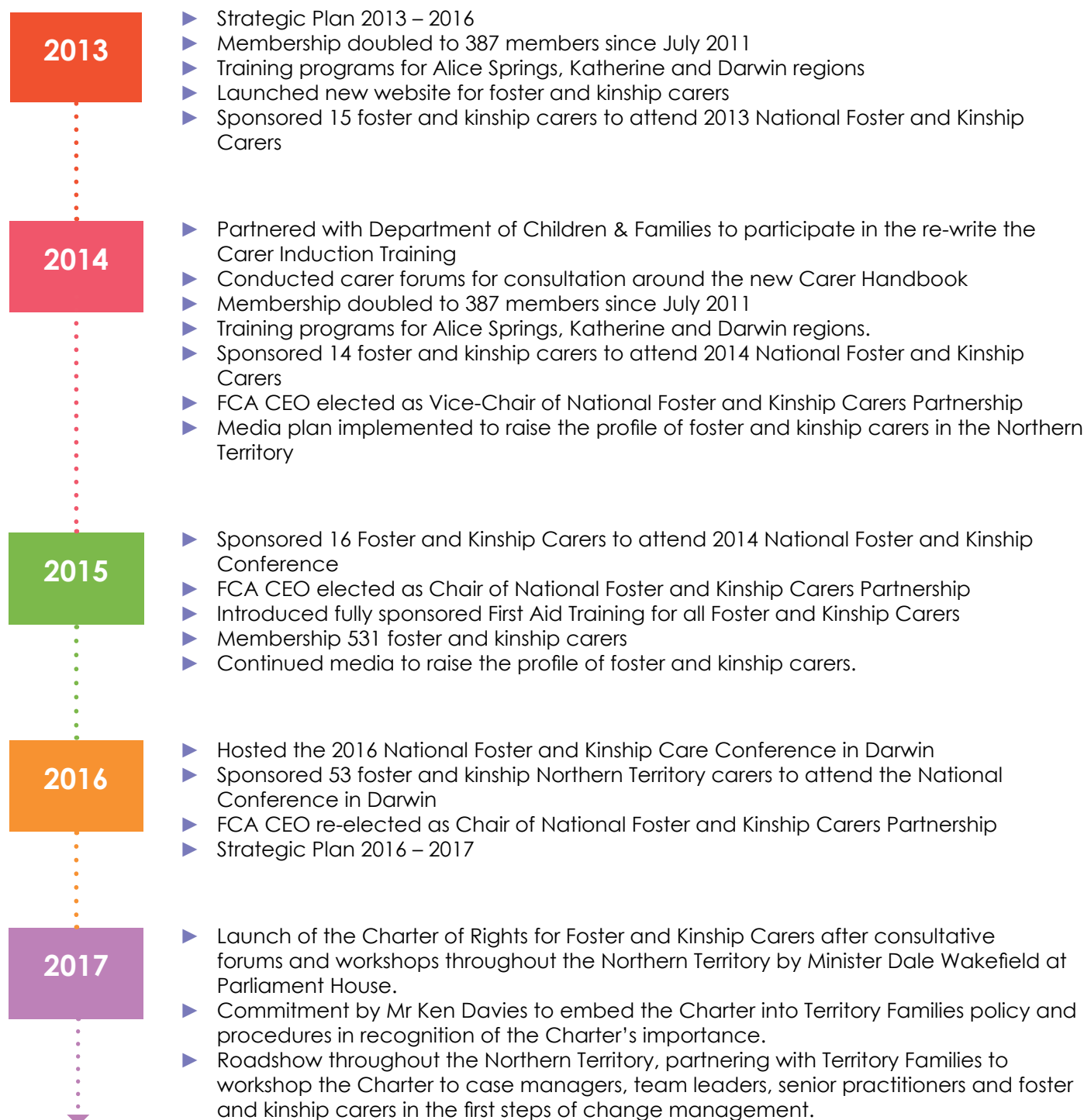
Financial Position



Milestones

Since commencing as a Peak Body in July 2011, Foster Care has worked progressively to establish the Association and develop a range of services that meet the ongoing needs of Foster and Kinship Carers in all regions across the Northern Territory.

The following is a list of Achievements to date.



Carer Discount Card

In early 2017, the Carer Discount Card was launched to recognise the hard work and dedication shown by our carers within the Northern Territory communities with businesses from Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin keen to offer savings for foster and kinship carers.

Members of Foster Carers Association NT who are registered Foster & Kinship carers are able to enjoy a variety of discounts and special offers from participating businesses.

Businesses include fashion retailers, cafés, fitness clubs and home-ware stores. The list of participating businesses continues to grow across the Northern Territory.



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Carers currently have Discount Cards across the Northern Territory.

- ▶ 5 Rivers Supermarket - Katherine
- ▶ A Home Like Alice - Alice Springs
- ▶ Baney Electrical & Air Conditioning = Alice Springs
- ▶ Beacon Lighting - Darwin
- ▶ Cafe 21, Smith Street - Darwin
- ▶ Cafe 21, Smith Street Mall - Darwin
- ▶ Casuarina Village Hair Studio - Darwin
- ▶ Cornucopia Museum Cafe - Darwin
- ▶ Country Classics - Darwin
- ▶ Darwin Mall Value Plus Pharmacy - Darwin
- ▶ Ed Harry - Alice Springs, Casuarina, Darwin & Palmerston
- ▶ Fernwood Fitness - Darwin
- ▶ Forty Winks - Darwin
- ▶ Fresh Cuisine - Darwin
- ▶ Gapview Hotel - Alice Springs
- ▶ Gillen Club - Alice Springs
- ▶ Gloria Jeans Palmerston - Darwin
- ▶ Groovycom - Darwin
- ▶ Home Timber & Hardware - Katherine

- ▶ House of Fulton Jewellery - Darwin
- ▶ Jape Furnish Superstore - Darwin
- ▶ Jones Meat Mart - Katherine
- ▶ Katherine Fresh Fruit & Veg - Katherine
- ▶ Knotts Crossing - Katherine
- ▶ Lime Hair - Darwin
- ▶ Lenards Chicken Leanyer - Darwin
- ▶ Mbantua Gallery - Alice Springs & Darwin
- ▶ Milner Meats & Seafood - Alice Springs
- ▶ OT for Kids NT - Darwin
- ▶ Reclink Australia - Darwin
- ▶ Robyn Harrison Marriage Celebrant - Darwin
- ▶ Savvas Footwear - Darwin
- ▶ Silver Screen Cafe - Katherine
- ▶ Stepping Stones in Life - Darwin
- ▶ Summer Palace Woman's Clothing - Darwin
- ▶ Swank Shoes - Darwin & Alice Springs
- ▶ Tactile Arts - Darwin
- ▶ The Bookshop Darwin - Darwin
- ▶ The Watertank Cafe - Alice Springs
- ▶ Top Coat Painters - Alice Springs

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 Convention Centre
- ▶ Alice Springs Desert Park
- ▶ Apex Central Australia
- ▶ Beautify Me
- ▶ CAAMA studios
- ▶ CALYUS
- ▶ Centrecorp Foundation – Alice Springs
- ▶ Centrelink Grandparent Advisor - Andrew Eaton
- ▶ CGee's Mirror on the Wall
- ▶ Child Education & Psychology Centre Darwin – Dr Diane Szarkowicz
- ▶ City of Darwin
- ▶ CREATE Foundation
- ▶ Darwin Castles
- ▶ EASA
- ▶ Henbury School - Crewz'n Brew
- ▶ Hot 100 – Black Betty
- ▶ Karen Sheldon Catering Tennant Creek
- ▶ Lions Club
- ▶ Lorraine Lea
- ▶ Mothers of Pre-schoolers (MOPS) Palmerston
- ▶ NAPCAN – National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect
- ▶ NT Friendship & Support - Katherine
- ▶ NT Legal Aid Commission
- ▶ NT Police – Neighbourhood Watch & Safety House program
- ▶ NTCOSS – Northern Territory Council of Social Services
- ▶ Office of the Children's Commissioner NT
- ▶ OT for Kids NT
- ▶ Relationships Australia NT
- ▶ SARC
- ▶ St John's Ambulance
- ▶ St Johns Community Educator – Regina Sellar
- ▶ Tenneil Ross
- ▶ Territory Families – Northern Territory Government
- ▶ Tropical Blends Essential Oils
- ▶ Uncle Edy's Ice Cream



