



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

*fka* Children's Services  
acknowledges the Traditional  
Owners of Country throughout  
Australia and their continuing  
connection to the land, skies  
and waterways. We pay our  
respects to Elders past and  
present, and acknowledge the  
strength and resilience of all  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander people, families and  
communities.

# President's Message

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I acknowledge the quality and breadth of work undertaken by the team at *fka* Children's Services. As the early years' sector continued to face challenges the professional and expert support provided by *fkaCS* has been highly valued and in demand.

To ensure our people are supported, a review of the organisations' structure was undertaken resulting in the establishment of a leadership team to ensure work is distributed across teams. This restructure also provides a career pathway and the opportunity to broaden our leadership capabilities. To every team member thank you sincerely for your continued commitment and professionalism.

Building on initiatives undertaken by the Board in 2022 and in line with our commitment to continuous improvement and ethical governance several key policies have been developed including our commitment to Child Safety Standards, Ethical Fundraising as well as the annual Board Skills Audit and Board Evaluation framework.

A review of the Strategic Plan has been a large piece of work undertaken to ensure the Plan is clear, concise and delegates the responsibility of operationalising the Plan to the leadership team.

The establishment of a Board Portal as the central repository for governance documents ensures high level documents are securely stored and accessible by the Board members.

To enhance the financial literacy of the Board, a comprehensive professional development session was facilitated by the external financial consultant, Robert Pisano. This session highlighted the importance

of due diligence in respect of financial management and equipped the Board with information to encourage analysis and support decision making. The establishment of a Finance Sub Committee with clear terms of reference was another strategy to support the Boards financial management.

I must acknowledge the work of the external consultant Robert Pasino who provided timely and professional financial reports to the Board as well as support to the Executive Director in respect of financial management. Whilst a small organisation, the financial reporting is complex due to the respective service agreements, Fee for Service work, contracts, and subcontracting arrangements.

To the Victorian Department of Education and other partners a sincere thank you for your continued support. A small organisation with a can-do attitude has resulted in *fkaCS* ably supporting the early years sector in Victoria through a range of initiatives.

The Board are acknowledged for their individual and collective contribution to the governance of *fka* Children's Services. The proverb "if you want something done, ask a busy person" is so true in respect of the Board Directors. So, thank you sincerely.

Finally, to the Executive Director Melodie Davies – being a leader of an organisation can be a lonely job at times, and I truly appreciate your openness and willingness to share the successes, challenges, and learnings. Thank you for your strong leadership of *fkaCS* and the broader commitment to children's rights to high-quality early education and care.

**Ros Cornish**  
President

# Operational Report

It seems that every year we mention the complexities that the sector endures on a day-to-day basis and this year has been no different. The challenges associated with the recruitment and supply of early childhood teachers and educators has meant that *fkaCS* support has once again needed to be flexible and responsive to the daily realities of the Victorian Early Childhood Education and Care services that we work with.

As always, the team at *fkaCS* has responded creatively and flexibly providing support both onsite and remotely, in program and after-hours to Victorian early years professionals.

Some highlights for 2023 include:

The Fee for Service Cultural Inclusion programs of support, delivered via The School Readiness Funding Menu of Evidence-Informed Practice: This year saw an increase in support with *fkaCS* delivering over 1770 hours of place-based, individually designed support.

The extension of the End-to-End Career Support and Early Years Learning Networks program and the broadening of eligibility to include diploma-qualified educators in the Coaching and Communities of Practice component of the program provided continuity of delivery, and increased access and participation for qualified early childhood professionals new to working in Victorian kindergartens.

The Early Childhood Language Program: Quality Support Program delivered individual mentoring and provided networking opportunities and Professional Learning sessions to over 200 Victorian kindergartens, teaching in over 20 unique languages other than English.

The Kindergarten Quality Improvement Program continued to provide in-depth onsite support to invited kindergartens at both the leadership and teaching levels to improve outcomes for children and families.

Internally our focus has been on shifting our thinking from inclusion to social cohesion.

Evidence indicates that promoting social cohesion in ECEC not only benefits individual children but also lays the foundation for more inclusive and resilient societies in the future.

Social cohesion is essential for the overall well-being and functioning of societies, contributing to stability, prosperity, health, equality, and democratic governance. By fostering a sense of connectedness, trust, and cooperation among members of society, social cohesion strengthens the social fabric and enables communities to thrive and prosper.

Whilst Victoria generally enjoys a high level of social cohesion compared to many other parts of the world, we are not immune to worldwide views and actions that threaten our sense of belonging and cohesion.

Moving from an inclusion mindset to a rights-based social cohesion mindset involves shifting the focus from merely integrating children and families into the early educational environment, to creating a sense of belonging and unity among all children, regardless of their backgrounds, cultural heritage, language, abilities, or gender.

This paradigm shift requires a deeper commitment to creating inclusive, supportive, and equitable learning environments where all children can develop a sense of belonging, connection, and community.

In today's increasingly diverse society, promoting social cohesion in early childhood settings prepares children to navigate and thrive in emerging and diverse situations and environments. By supporting children to engage in different perspectives, cultures, and identities from an early age, we support the development of skills and attitudes needed to engage respectfully and effectively throughout their lives.

The role of early childhood teachers and educators in fostering social cohesion in the early years cannot be overstated. By modelling inclusive behaviours, facilitating positive interactions, and celebrating diversity, we help lay the groundwork for a more cohesive society.

*fkaCS* would not be able to deliver the quality, breadth and reach of our programs without our dedicated team of Pedagogy and Practice Consultants, Project Leaders and skilled operational team members who once again have flexibly designed and delivered programs to support Victorian early childhood services. We thank them all for their ongoing commitment to the organisation, to the early years profession and to Victorian children and families.

Thank you to our partners, Semann and Slattery for continuing to work with us on the delivery of both the Kindergarten Quality Improvement Program and the End-to-End Career Support and Early Years Learning Networks and for supporting the Early Childhood Language Program: Quality Support Program.

Thank you to all the teachers and early childhood professionals who go above and beyond every day despite some ongoing

workforce challenges to ensure the highest quality education and care is available to Victorian children and families.

To the members of the *fkaCS* Board for your ongoing commitment and governance of the Association, it can be challenging for any Board to fit their voluntary work in-between their professional and personal commitments. On behalf of the team and myself, thank you for making time. To President Ros Cornish, thank you for your guidance and support over the last year.

Finally, thank you to the Victorian Department of Education for their ongoing commitment to Victorian children under the Best Start Best Life Pre-Prep reform. Thank you for recognising and supporting the early years professional workforce and providing the resources required to support the sector through this reform.

**Melodie Davies**  
**Executive Director**

# Acknowledgements

## Thank you to...

The **Victorian Department of Education** for their commitment to Victorian early years services and children's cultural and linguistic rights.

The **Early Childhood Language Program (ECLP) Quality Support Program Steering Committee** supports the delivery of the ECLP Quality Support Program and provides us with valuable expertise and guidance in the delivery of our support to kindergartens teaching in a language other than English:

**Vaso Elefsiniotis**

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI)

**Jo Weeden**

Expression Australia

**Dr Anne Kennedy**

Early Childhood Education Consultant

**Dr Yvette Slaughter**

The University of Melbourne

**Anthony Semann**

Semann & Slattery

**Colin Slattery**

Semann & Slattery

**Kylie Farmer**

Modern Languages Teachers Association of Victoria (MLTAV)

## Board of Management

**Ros Cornish**

President

**Rakhi Khanna**

Treasurer

**Karla Coombes**

Board Member

**Vanessa Field**

Vice President

**Melinda Ackerman**

Board Member

**Hodan Abi**

Board Member

**Julie Brooks**

Secretary

**Dr Wendy Roberts**

Board Member

## Subcontractors & Consultants

We thank the following subcontractors and consultants who supported *fkaCS* in our work:

**Dr Anne Kennedy**

**Fay Muir**

ECLP Quality Support Program Mentor

**Heather Barnes OAM**

**Kylie Farmer**

ECLP Quality Support Program Mentor

**Semann & Slattery**

**Dr Sue Atkinson Lopez AM**

## Staff

**Melodie Davies**  
Executive Director

**Allison Jackson**  
Finance Officer

**Angela Ditchmen**  
Professional Learning & Mentoring Lead

**Ashley Howden**  
Manager Social Inclusion Pedagogy & Practice

**Barbara Lew**  
Librarian

**Bharti Gautam**  
Pedagogy & Practice Consultant / Mentor

**Caroline Woods**  
Operations & Executive Support Manager

**Casey Howden**  
Project Manager

**Emma McGrath**  
Manager Partnerships and Projects

**Jennifer Nicholls**  
Senior Project Manager

**Kath Hillier**  
Senior Pedagogy & Practice Consultant / Mentor

**Kristen Roberts**  
Pedagogy & Practice Consultant / Mentor

**Rajni Bala**  
ECLP Quality Support Program Mentor

**Samantha Gould**  
Pedagogy & Practice Consultant

**Dr Siobhan Hannan**  
ECLP Quality Support Program Mentor

**Victoria Ostrowski**  
Program Support Officer

## Community Language Support Workers

Thank you to those who provided language support in 2023:

**Adeebullah Nawim**

**Humaira Hussaini**

**Sohaila Mazoori**

**Anisa Abdul Sattar**

**Naseema Syed**

**Tong Zhao**

**Habiba Fatima**

**Nazia Raza**

## Life Members

**Ms B Romeril**

**Mrs K Coombes**

**Mr T Rush**

**Ms B Pasqua**

**Mr and Mrs G Kelso**

**Mrs G Johnson**

**Ms D Rundle**

**Mr I Renard**

**Mrs P Montgomery**

**Dr A Kennedy**

**Mr J Emerson**

**Dr P Clarke OAM**

**Mr L Cox**

## Donors & Friends

*fkaCS* would like to thank donors and friends for their ongoing generosity and support.



The program [that] one service engaged in has brought consideration of identity and culture to the forefront of their pedagogy and practice and have returned to *fkaCS* for deeper explorations and practical planning in 2024.



Our *fkaCS* consultant was able to support our practice with their wealth of knowledge. Through our online sessions our consultant was able to create an authentic connection with our team which allowed us to openly reflect on our practice and learning environment without feeling judged. Our consultant lead with a strength based approach and supported us to reflect on how we could improve further... Working with *fkaCS* enhanced my professional skills and confidence of creating authentically culturally inclusive environments and moments of learning for all children.



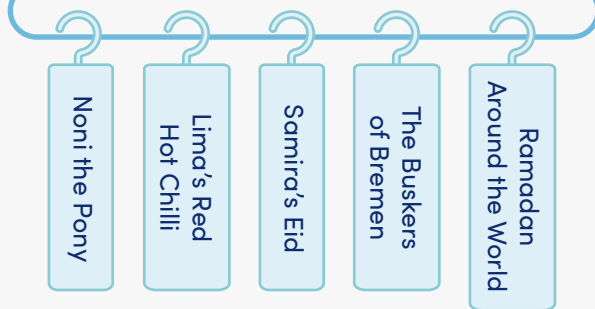
“ “ The service has built strong relationships through language. Children have become confident talking in home languages in the kindergarten environment and have developed confidence in discussing their values and faith of their family. Children are now talking with teachers in language now that teachers are confident in using language. Through this process the team have become very confident in sharing culture, both within the team and with families. The development of an inclusive lens has strengthened the teaching practices and approaches at the service.



A provisionally registered teacher held the value of the *fkaCS* Support Program so highly that they used one of *fkaCS*' critical reflections as their VIT Inquiry question.

## Multicultural Resource Centre

### MOST POPULAR STORY BAGS



**660** ★   
RESOURCES  
ADDED TO THE MRC

 **TOP 5 BOOKS**

- 1 My Emotions [Auslan]
- 2 Talking About Feelings
- 3 ABC of Body Safety and Consent
- 4 The Buskers of Bremen [Italian]
- 5 All Kinds of Feelings [Cantonese]

**36**  
OUTREACH  
PARCELS  
SENT



**1558**   
RESOURCES  
BORROWED

## Community Language Support



**35** COMMUNITY LANGUAGE  
WORKERS EMPLOYED\*  
\*At 31 December 2023



**349** HOURS OF  
SUPPORT PROVIDED  
ACROSS **9** SITES

## Membership



**535**  
MEMBERS  
IN 2023-24

- 194 MULTI-SITES
- 144 SINGLE SITES
- 179 INDIVIDUALS\*
- 3 STUDENTS
- 2 OTHER ORGANISATIONS
- 13 LIFE MEMBERS



\*Incl. 160 complimentary memberships as part of the Early Childhood Language Program Quality Support Program.

## Online Engagement



**INSTAGRAM**  
126 Followers  
360 Reached



**FACEBOOK**  
1.3k Followers  
7.8k Reached

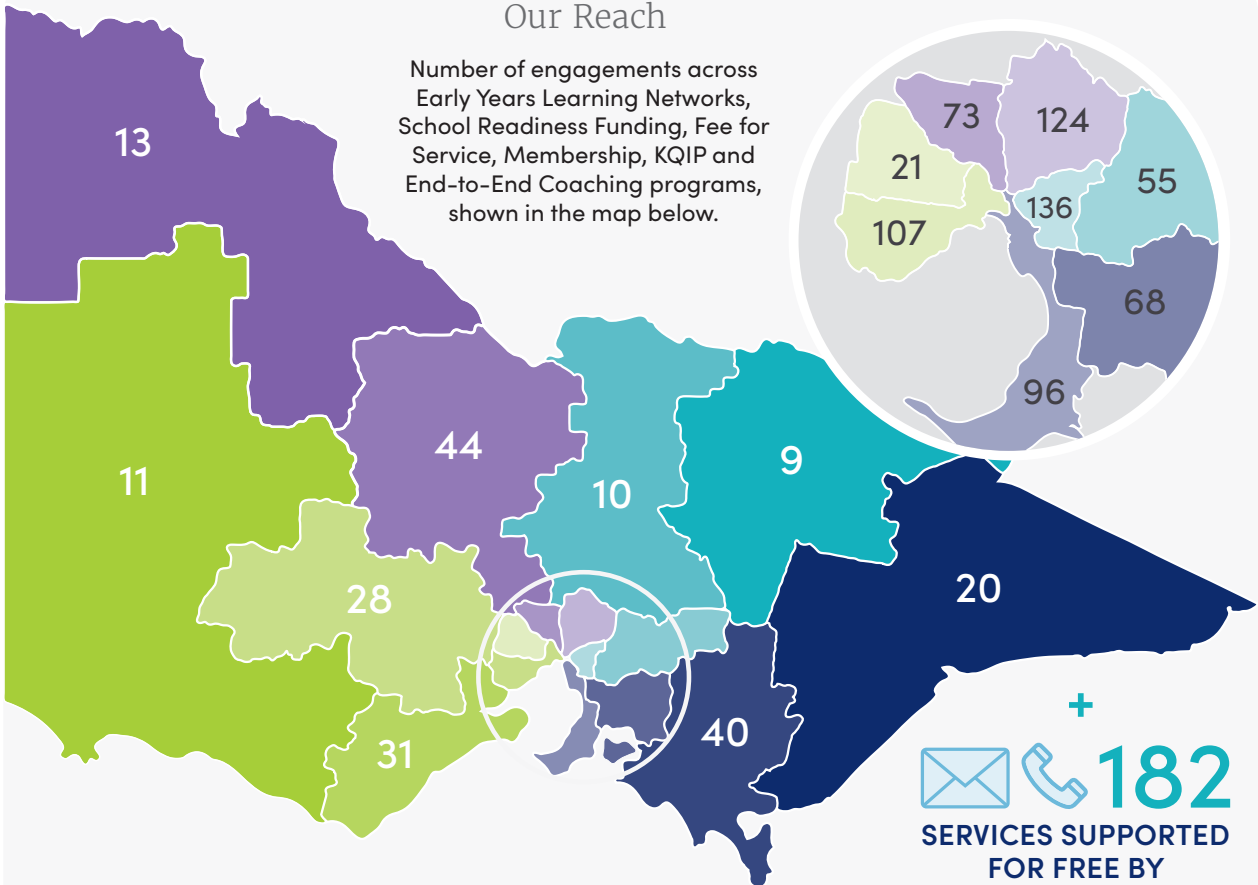


**9,964**  
WEBSITE +  
SOCIAL VISITS

*“Our fkaCS consultant has been a great breath of fresh air this year in supporting my team with cultural inclusion and reflecting on everyone’s practices. They listened to each teacher and supported their individual goals along with the service goals. They questioned and reflected on practices and gave lots of easy, practical strategies to ponder and implement.”*

## Our Reach

Number of engagements across Early Years Learning Networks, School Readiness Funding, Fee for Service, Membership, KQIP and End-to-End Coaching programs, shown in the map below.



+  
  **182**  
 SERVICES SUPPORTED FOR FREE BY EMAIL + PHONE

““ Our fkaCS Consultants were very engaging and motivational. I enjoyed the reflective conversations, tips and advice provided. The most rewarding aspect of the program was to observe educator confidence in sharing their own knowledge. This opened the door for robust conversations, shared stories and learning with colleagues, children and families.

## Early Childhood Language Program Quality Support Program

 **753**  
SUPPORT EMAILS

 **1 ANNUAL FORUM**  
+ **30** NETWORK MEETINGS

 **244**  
SUPPORT CALLS

**1** ONLINE HUB REPOSITORY 

 **403** HOURS OF MENTOR SUPPORT

 **4**  
NEWSLETTERS

““ I feel energised after our meeting to go and advocate for learning languages and let everybody know how beneficial it is.

 **38**  
SURVEYS

# Treasurer's Report 2023

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

**Important notice:** Information used in the following table is highly summarised and extracted from the full detailed financial statements of *fka* Children's Services Inc. ("*fkaCS*") for the year ended 31 December 2023. For a complete understanding of the financial performance, position and cash flows of *fkaCS*, the full financial statements should be referred to. The full statements also include a description of the accounting policies adopted by *fkaCS*, explanatory notes and the independent auditor's report. The full financial report is available for download at [www.fka.org.au](http://www.fka.org.au) or on request from *fkaCS*.

Financial Summary	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>Financial performance for the year</b>		
Income	3,157,257	3,335,772
Expenditure	(2,872,015)	(3,102,152)
<b>Net income</b>	<b>285,242</b>	<b>233,620</b>
Other comprehensive income (expense)	8,112	9,667
<b>Total comprehensive income</b>	<b>293,354</b>	<b>243,287</b>
<b>Financial position at end of period</b>		
Assets	3,277,945	2,882,842
Liabilities	(1,838,464)	(1,736,715)
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>1,439,481</b>	<b>1,146,127</b>
Reserves	535,872	527,760
Retained surplus	903,609	618,367
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>1,439,481</b>	<b>1,146,127</b>
<b>Cash flows for the period</b>		
Net cash flow from operations	815,624	(150,027)
Net cash flow from investing and financing activities	(148,551)	(88,307)
<b>Net change in cash held</b>	<b>667,073</b>	<b>(238,334)</b>
<b>Cash available at beginning</b>	<b>1,948,545</b>	<b>2,186,879</b>
<b>Cash available at end</b>	<b>2,615,618</b>	<b>1,948,545</b>

*fkaCS'* financial year to 31 December 2023, like the previous year, saw the continued impact of expanded activity levels, in response to increased State government focus and investment in early childhood sector support and the continued strong demand for our support and training services.

*fkaCS* recorded income of \$3.16 million and expenditure of \$2.87 million for the year, resulting in an annual net operating surplus of \$285k. This was another positive result for the association and reflected the significant scale of work successfully undertaken throughout the year.

The largest sources of income for the year again came from contracts with the Department of Education (Victoria), mainly in relation to the Early Childhood Teacher End-to-End Career Supports and Early Years Learning Networks and Early Childhood Language Program: Quality Support Program initiatives, plus the Community Development and Assistance Program, and revenue from fee for service activity including School Readiness / Cultural Inclusion Support programs and Kindergarten Quality Improvement Programs.

Expenditure for the year reflected the higher levels of spending associated with the existing service delivery commitments, including planned sub-contractor costs and necessary investment in staffing to support expanded delivery and organisational needs. We also invested in capital expenditure / long-term office assets, including soundproof office pods, and new website work-in-progress, to improve organisational effectiveness.

The operating result for the year consolidated *fkaCS'* financial position at year-end. Total assets stood at \$3.28 million and offsetting liabilities were \$1.84 million, resulting in a net assets / total equity position at 31 December 2023 of \$1.44 million.

Cash holdings comprised *fkaCS'* biggest asset as expected, at \$2.6 million. Cash remained relatively high due to significant prepaid government funds held totalling \$1.4 million. These funds are tied to specific deliverables and recorded as liabilities in the balance sheet until the activities occur (and were *fkaCS'* biggest liability at year-end).

Over the next twelve months we expect to see a continuation of expanded activity levels, aligned with the requirements of our existing government agreements and service program, as well as further investment in internal resourcing to position the organisation to respond to future needs. Beyond that time, some uncertainty remains around funding streams, particularly as significant government contracts are due to expire, and so we will continue to monitor our funding pipeline and plan for possible adjustments to activity. To this extent, the health of *fkaCS'* current financial position and operational circumstances are critical in providing the association with the appropriate capacity to meet existing program objectives and underwrite future operations and activities.

On behalf of the board, I wish to sincerely thank our Executive Director Melodie Davies and the *fkaCS* team for their continued dedication and unwavering efforts in supporting our community and meeting the needs of our sector. We further extend our gratitude to our partners and members for their ongoing support and commitment in working with us to achieve the best possible life outcomes for children and families.

**Rakhi Khanna**  
Treasurer

**“Social cohesion is the willingness of members of society to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper”.**

- Dick Stanley

Social cohesion in early childhood education and care is the foundation upon which we build inclusive and resilient societies. It is not just about teaching children to get along or about what happens within the classroom, nor is it just a byproduct; it's an intentional outcome.

Social cohesion is about:

- fostering a sense of belonging, empathy, and respect for diversity from an early age.
- creating environments where every child feels valued, respected, and supported to thrive.
- intentionally teaching children the skills needed to navigate relationships, resolve conflicts, and build a sense of community.
- proactively forging connections with families, communities, and the wider world to create a sense of belonging and solidarity.

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*Supporting children's cultural and linguistic rights...*