Annual Report

2025

Supporting children's identity, wellbeing and belonging

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, it is with great pleasure that I present the *fka* Children's Services Annual Report, sharing the milestones, challenges, and achievements that have shaped our journey over the past twelve months.

The contribution of our staff has been central to our work and stands as a testament to their ongoing commitment and dedication to advancing our purpose. Under the capable leadership of the Executive Director, Melodie Davies, *fka* Children's Services has navigated the uncertainty associated with changing project landscapes and funding arrangements, while continuing to operate as a viable and sustainable organisation. This is a significant achievement for a small, community-owned not-for-profit agency.

In a year marked by considerable change across the early childhood education and care sector, the data and information presented in this report reflect the resilience and adaptability of the organisation, while maintaining a clear and unwavering focus on our purpose.

Governance remains a key strength of the organisation, further enhanced this year by the appointment of two new Board Directors, Marie Howard and Marlene Fox. Both bring valuable lived experience and leadership expertise in the education and care sector.

The Board of Directors has generously contributed its time, expertise, and energy in support of the organisation. Each Director brings a diverse range of skills and knowledge that strengthens governance and supports operations. Their passion and professionalism are deeply appreciated and highly valued.

While all Board Directors share responsibility for the financial health of the organisation, the Finance Subcommittee continues to provide detailed, timely, and strategic advice to the Board. The Subcommittee is chaired by Treasurer Rhaki Khanna and supported by Vice President Vanessa Field. The Executive Director and our valued external consultant, Robert Pisano, are also key contributors. Their diligent work has supported the engagement of an external investment manager to ensure that organisational funds are managed ethically and strategically to optimise returns.

Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to the Executive Director, Melodie Davies, for her ongoing leadership, loyalty, and commitment to inclusion, diversity, and collaboration. Her strong advocacy for young children continues to shape not only the work of *fka* Children's Services but also contributes to broader sector reform.

On a personal note, I value the openness and transparency of our working relationship, where discussions are consistently grounded in ensuring the rights and wellbeing of children and young people remain central to all that we do.

Thank you.

Ros Cornish AM
President

OPERATIONAL REPORT

In 2025, *fka* Children's Services continued to provide leadership across the early childhood education and care sector during a period of significant reform, reflection, and renewed focus on child safety, wellbeing, and quality practice.

At the centre of our work remains a clear and non-negotiable commitment: **to uphold the safety, dignity, and rights of every child.**

The events and reviews of the past year have reinforced a fundamental truth—these concepts can only be realised when **children are safe, when relationships are strong, and when systems consistently support high-quality practice.**

Child safety is not an isolated responsibility, nor is it secured through policy alone. It exists at the intersection of **systems, culture, practice, and relationships,** requiring deliberate and sustained attention across all levels of the early childhood system.

This work can be complex. The Victorian ECEC sector is shaped by diverse provider types, differing governance structures, and competing pressures. Sector-wide reflection confirms that child safety breaches do not arise from isolated incidents. Rather, they occur when multiple gaps and system failures align.

While regulatory frameworks provide an essential foundation, the past year has clearly demonstrated that **compliance alone is insufficient.**

A key insight from this period has been the importance of **organisational culture as a driver of safety.** Equally critical is the presence of **psychological safety** within services. Where educators, families, and communities feel confident to raise concerns, risks can be addressed proactively. When this is absent, issues remain unchallenged and escalate over time.

Mixed market models have supported access and growth, but have also introduced tensions where financial sustainability, workforce capacity, and quality expectations need to be carefully balanced.

In some settings, these pressures can influence decision-making related to staffing, supervision, and operational priorities. This underscores the importance of ensuring that **market-driven conditions do not compromise child safety, educator wellbeing, or the integrity of practice.**

> The experiences of 2025 have also reinforced the role of relational pedagogy as a protective factor in early childhood settings.

When relationships are strong, learning environments become more responsive, inclusive, and connected. Conversely, where relationships are weak or transactional, opportunities to identify and respond to risk are reduced.

Relational pedagogy is not an additional element of quality practice—it is central to both **learning and safeguarding.**

At the same time, ongoing workforce challenges continued to shape the sector. Workforce shortages, increasing demand, and the growing complexity of children's needs placed pressure on educators and leaders.

These conditions impacted the sector's capacity to consistently provide high-quality, child-centred, responsive, and relational engagement. This reinforces the need for sustained investment in a **stable, supported, and professionally recognised workforce** as a critical condition for child safety.

Over the past year, we have worked closely with services, educators, and sector partners to support a shift in focus:

- from **compliance to culture**
- from **policy to practice integrity**
- from **process to relationships**
- from **individual responsibility to collective accountability**

Our work has included the provision of professional learning, sector engagement, and advocacy that supports educators and leaders to critically reflect on practice, strengthen relational approaches, and embed equitable child-safe principles into everyday decision-making.

Looking ahead, we will continue to work with government, sector partners, and communities to:

- advocate for system settings that support safe, high-quality, and sustainable service delivery
- strengthen sector capability in relational and culturally responsive practice
- support leaders to embed consistent, equitable, child-safe cultures
- promote environments where concerns are raised and addressed early
- reinforce the connection between quality, equity, and child safety

The reflections of 2025 have provided us all with both a challenge and a clarity. They have reinforced that child safety depends not on any single element, but on the alignment of **strong systems, effective leadership, supported educators, and authentic relationships.**

Together, these form the foundation of an early childhood system where every child is safe, valued, and able to thrive.

We thank the Victorian Government for their commitment to safeguarding children and responding quicky to the challenges and events of 2025.

We also thank our valued partners for their ongoing support and commitment to improving outcomes for children, and those that work with them.

We acknowledge with sincere appreciation the Board of Management for your continued leadership, guidance, and commitment to this work.

We also extend our gratitude to our dedicated team of early childhood professionals for their ongoing contribution and steadfast commitment to advancing children's cultural and linguistic rights and safety across the sector.

Together, we continue to build an early childhood system where the safety, rights, and wellbeing of every child remain paramount.

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 Yvette Slaughter
The University of Melbourne

Anthony Semann
Semann & Slattery

Colin Slattery
Semann & Slattery

Kylie Farmer
Languages Teachers Victoria (LTV)

Board of Management

Ros Cornish
President

Vanessa Field
Vice President

Julie Brooks
Secretary

Rakhi Khanna
Treasurer

Dr Wendy Roberts
Board Member

Karla Coombes
Board Member

Melinda Ackerman
Outgoing Board Member

Hodan Abi
Outgoing Board Member

Marie Howard
Incoming Board Member

Marlene Fox
Incoming Board Member

Subcontractors & Consultants

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

Fay Muir
ECLP Quality Support Program Mentor

Kylie Farmer
ECLP Quality Support Program Mentor

Linton Roe
ECLP Quality Support Program Mentor

Dr William Forshaw
ECLP Quality Support Program Mentor

Dr Sue Atkinson-Lopez AM

Dr Anne Kennedy AM

Heather Barnes OAM

Semann & Slattery

Phillip Ripley
Digital Consultant

Staff

Melodie Davies
Executive Director

Allison Jackson
Finance Officer

Andrea Del Rio
Pedagogy & Quality Practice Lead

Angela Ditchmen
Professional Learning & Mentoring Lead

Angie Bromley
Pedagogy & Practice Consultant

Ashlea Hogg
Communications & Engagement Officer

Ashley Howden
Manager Social Inclusion Pedagogy & Practice

Barbara Lew
Librarian

Bharti Gautam
Pedagogy & Practice Consultant / Mentor

Caroline Woods
Operations & Executive Support Manager

Charlie Carey
Administration Officer

Emily Dolman
Program Support Officer

Emma McGrath
Manager Partnerships & Projects

Jennifer Nicholls
Senior Project Manager

Kara McGuinness
Pedagogy & Practice Coach

Kath Hillier
Senior Pedagogy & Practice Consultant / Mentor

Kristen Roberts
Pedagogy & Practice Consultant / Mentor

Nidhi Singh
Senior Pedagogy & Practice Consultant / Mentor

Samantha Gould
Pedagogy & Practice Consultant

Wenona Moss
Program Support Officer

Dr Siobhan Hannan
ECLP Quality Support Program Mentor

Community Language Support Workers

*fka*CS would like to extend our sincere thanks to our Community Language Support Workers for providing language support to early childhood services throughout 2025.

Life Members

Ms B Romeril

Ms B Pasqua

Ms D Rundle

Dr A Kennedy AM

Dr P Clarke OAM

Mrs K Coombes

Mr and Mrs G Kelso

Mr I Renard

Mr J Emerson

Mr L Cox

Mr T Rush

Mrs G Johnson

Mrs P Montgomery

Donors & Friends

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

2025 SNAPSHOT

Multicultural Resource Centre

134 VISITORS

44 OUTREACH PARCELS SENT

TOP 3 BOOKS

1. A Visit to the Zoo [Auslan] by Jen Blyth & Kerrie Taylor
2. Talking About Feelings by Jayneen Sanders
3. The Rainbow Fish [Mandarin] by Marcus Pfister

MOST POPULAR STORY BAGS

- We're Going on a Bear Hunt
- Ocean Life
- A Home for Bilby

1964 RESOURCES BORROWED

37 RESOURCES ADDED TO THE MRC

Community Language Support

23 COMMUNITY LANGUAGE WORKERS EMPLOYED*

*At 31 December 2025

135 HOURS OF SUPPORT PROVIDED

Membership

654 MEMBERS*

- 229 Multi-Sites
- 160 Single Sites
- 237 Individuals^
- 12 Students
- 3 Other Organisations
- 13 Life Members

*Active memberships between 01/01/25 and 31/12/25 (across two membership years).

^Incl. 209 complimentary memberships as part of the Early Childhood Language Program Quality Support Program.

Online Engagement

63,770 WEBSITE VISITS

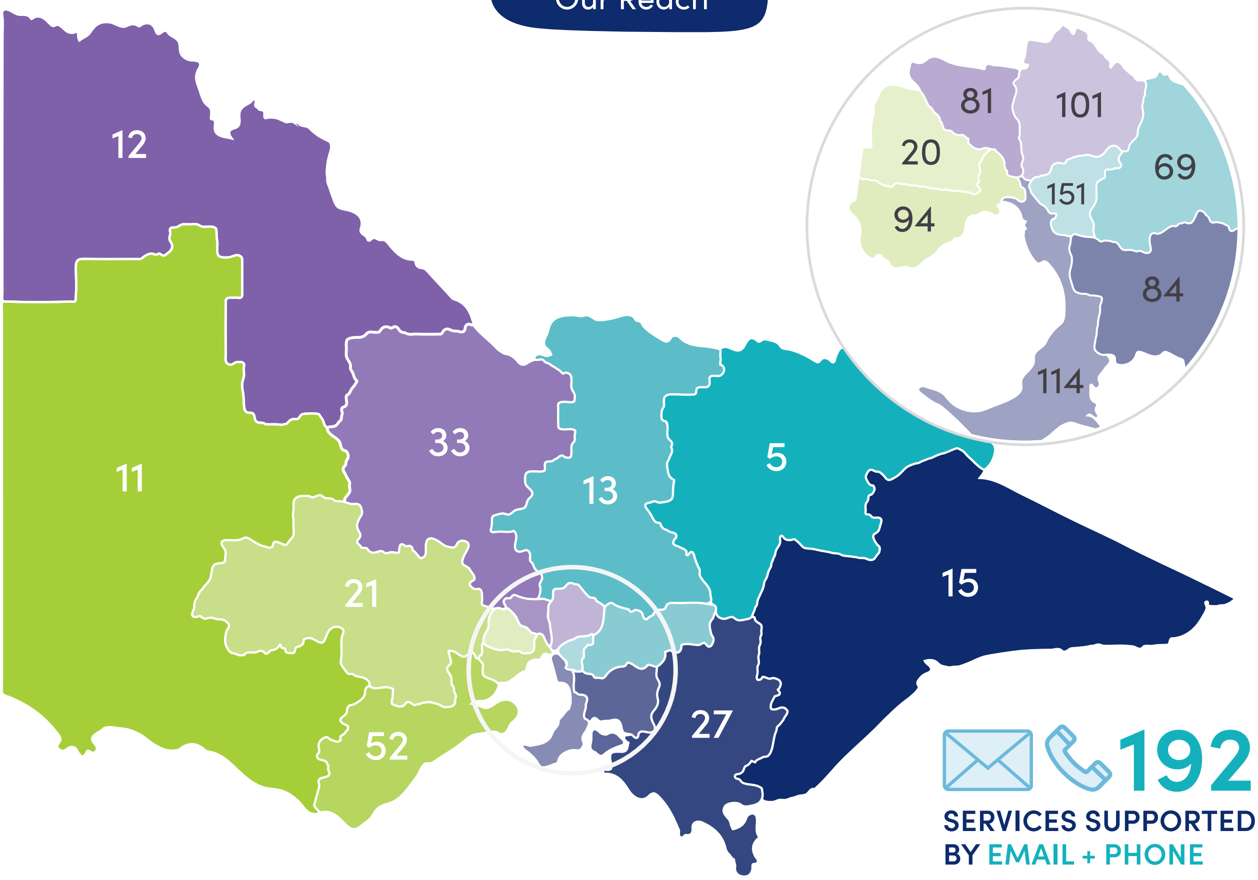
1,315 NEW WEBSITE VISITORS

e-Learning Module: Engaging with Multilingual Families about Kindergarten

1,875 VIEWS

SOCIAL MEDIA	Instagram	Facebook	LinkedIn
Followers	295	1.4k	359
Reach	17.4k	93.4k	17.7k

Our Reach⁺



192
SERVICES SUPPORTED BY EMAIL + PHONE

⁺ Number of engagements across School Readiness Funding, Fee for Service, Membership, KQIP and End-to-End Coaching programs.

Early Childhood Language Program Quality Support Program

922 SUPPORT EMAILS

331 SUPPORT CALLS

4 NEWSLETTERS

14 SURVEYS

1 ONLINE HUB REPOSITORY

595.5 HOURS OF MENTOR SUPPORT

1 ANNUAL FORUM

30 NETWORK MEETINGS

5 BESPOKE WORKSHOPS

4 SERVICE WALKTHROUGH EXCHANGE VISITS

TREASURER'S REPORT

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

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. ("*fka*CS") for the year ended 31 December 2025. For a complete understanding of the financial performance, position and cash flows of *fka*CS, the full financial statements should be referred to. The full statements also include a description of the accounting policies adopted by *fka*CS, explanatory notes and the independent auditor's report. The full financial report is available for download at www.fka.org.au or on request from *fka*CS.

Financial Summary	**2025 $**	**2024 $**
Financial performance for the year		
Income	2,914,709	3,629,271
Expenditure	(2,731,610)	(3,450,503)
Net income	**183,099**	**178,768**
Other comprehensive income (expense)	16,183	5,528
Total comprehensive income	**199,282**	**184,296**
Financial position at end of period		
Assets	2,752,416	2,654,734
Liabilities	(929,357)	(1,030,957)
Net assets	**1,823,059**	**1,623,777**
Reserves	557,583	541,400
Retained surplus	1,265,476	1,082,377
Total equity	**1,823,059**	**1,623,777**
Cash flows for the period		
Net cash flow from operations	(521,635)	(230,495)
Net cash flow from investing and financing activities	(96,845)	(148,194)
Net change in cash held	**(618,480)**	**(378,689)**
Cash available at beginning	**2,236,929**	**2,615,618**
Cash available at end	**1,618,449**	**2,236,929**

The financial year ending 31 December 2025 continued to reflect the expanded scale of *fka* Children Services (*fka*CS) operations in recent years, driven by ongoing Victorian Government investment in the early childhood sector and continued strong demand for our support and training services.

The association recorded income of $2.9 million and expenditure of $2.7 million, resulting in an annual operating surplus of $183,000. The result reflects both the extent and impact of *fka*CS' overall activities, together with the association's ongoing focus on maintaining long-term financial sustainability.

Consistent with prior years, the majority of income was derived from Victorian Government service agreements and grant-funded programs – including the final year of the multi-year Early Childhood Teacher End-to-End Career Supports Program, the continued Early Childhood Language Program Quality Support Program and Cultural Inclusion Support – supplemented by direct fee-for-service training and support activities (School Readiness / Cultural Inclusion and Kindergarten Quality Improvement programs).

While membership fees represent a relatively modest share of total income, member engagement remains a core part of the association's purposes. The association continues to invest in services and support that deliver value to members and contribute to the strength of the broader sector.

Expenditure continued to support the delivery of contracted programs and services and respond to ongoing demand across the sector. The association also invested in organisational capability, including improvements to systems, technology and learning resources, to strengthen service delivery and support future sustainability. This work is expected to continue throughout 2026.

In terms of *fka*CS' financial position, as of 31 December 2025, total assets stood at $2.75 million, with liabilities at $0.93 million, resulting in net assets of $1.8 million. Most assets were held in cash ($1.6 million), a decrease of $618,000 from the previous year, primarily reflecting the utilisation of funding received in advance in prior periods to support completion of program delivery in 2025. *fka*CS' net asset base provides an important financial buffer to support future planning and organisational sustainability, particularly given the variable nature of much of our funding streams.

Looking ahead, the multi-year contract for the Early Childhood Teacher End-to-End Career Supports Program concluded at the end of 2025. While variable government contracts form an ongoing part of the association's normal operating activities, the size of the expired contract is significant, and its conclusion is expected to result in a material reduction in revenue and associated delivery costs from 2026. This will require the association to continue reviewing its activities and cost structures to ensure expenditure remains aligned with expected income and overall financial objectives.

While the operating environment continues to evolve, *fka*CS enters 2026 with a strong financial foundation and is well placed to respond to both the challenges and opportunities in the years ahead and remains focused on meeting the needs of the sector.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to Executive Director Melodie Davies and the entire *fka*CS team for their dedication and tireless work supporting our members and meeting the needs of the sector. We also wish to thank our external consultant, Robert Pisano, for delivering timely and professional financial reports that support informed planning and decision-making for the organisation. We are equally grateful to our partners and members for their ongoing trust and commitment as we work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families.

Rakhi Khanna
Treasurer

As the sector continues to evolve alongside reform agendas, including ongoing government investment and structural changes, there is a clear opportunity—and responsibility—to ensure that child safety remains central to all aspects of early years provision.

This requires sustained, system-wide attention to:

- embedding relational pedagogy
- ensuring equitable, culturally safe practice
- strengthening leadership and advocacy not just management capability
- supporting workforce wellbeing and retention
- and aligning market conditions with quality and safety priorities

Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Country
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