



ANNUAL REPORT



2022

FROM OUR FOUNDER



I continue to be amazed at the community that surrounds A Better Life For Foster Kids, within Gippsland and well beyond. Our Facebook photos show the amount of beautiful donations that arrive every week from supporters across Australia. Lovely hand knitted blankets get packed alongside brand new pajamas, all providing supplies for our core program - Crisis Cases.

The number of crisis cases being requested, since the covid restrictions were lifted in 2021, has increased each month. As Victoria started to return to some kind of normality, we have seen case workers making community visits again, with a correlating increase in child removal. We distributed around 700 cases over the course of the year and are on track to be back to pre-covid numbers into 2023.

Crisis Cases as our core activity, reaching children entering emergency out of home care placements, was challenged by the rising costs of living in 2022. It is only thanks to our generous regular donors, grants, sponsorships and local support that we can continue the vital work of Crisis Cases.

We had two camps over this past year, likewise to Crisis Cases, the number of campers was less than previous years, mainly due to the ongoing risk of covid among vulnerable community members. The carers and children that attended thoroughly enjoyed themselves and cannot wait until the next camp.

Thanks to Australia Post funding, we held a Carers Luncheon at Costello's in Pakenham and had a wonderful turnout, gathering together local carers. The meal was an all you can eat smorgasbord, which the children in attendance thought was heaven.

We have had a very busy time at Sale with getting settled fully back into our premises and getting everything organised. The Sale volunteers have all had first aid training, and we have a new defibrillator on site. We have welcomed five new volunteers over 2022 bringing our total to nine.

We had a full Christmas season this last year with lots of new families receiving presents and also new Giving Tree locations, where donations were very generous. Throughout the year, we galvanized community support and resources to set up 10 homes with the varied furniture and supplies needed for children to thrive in new settings.

Personally, it has been a very trying year given my health, but thankfully I have such an amazing band of volunteers who make the magic happen. My time spent recuperating has had minimal affect on operations, meaning that every year we are reaching so many more children and carers.

In terms of advocacy, we still have along way to go before we can make any impact on changing the system but we keep going into bat for the state's most vulnerable children and their carers.

Sincerely,
Heather Baird,
Founder/Coordinator,
A Better Life For Foster Kids



KEY ACTIVITIES

Our key programs In 2022

- 3534 gifts delivered to 1178 kids at Christmas.
- 700 Crisis Cases delivered.
- Magenta camp ran for 49 kids and 32 carers.
- Boys camp ran for 17 kids.
- Advice and advocacy support provided to approximately 4-6 carers who called per week.
- One carers dinner for 48 people.
- 10 home set ups with everything from furniture, clothing, pantry and infant safety items such as car seats and cots.
- 7 children provided with Others Do Care Fund sponsorship for activities.



Corporate Donations

VivCourt Trading, ACMENA and Providence Philanthropic Foundation have generously provided donations towards the work we are doing.

Loy Yang B continues to be a strong local supporter, providing people-power on the ground at Sale Memorial Hall at a working bee and essential funds for Crisis Cases along with funding for our Youth Camps.

Another integral local supporter **ExxonMobil Australia** who funded places for Youth Camps and the videography for Gippsland's Biggest PJ Day in 2022.

Thanks to a donation from a **CAF America** donor, A Better Life For Foster Kids was invited to establish a profile on **Good2Give Australia** and we have since established a small line of regular corporate donations from this platform.

We had two excellent local fundraising efforts in 2022 thanks to the **Sale Greyhound Club**, we had individual businesses sponsor a race for us along with a raffle on the night.

Media and awareness raising

Heather spoke on podcasts, with local media and radio programs last year to raise awareness of the needs of kids in care and to talk about her own experience as a ward of the state. Including talking to Kerryn Vaughan at Get Off The Bench and the Gippsland Times.

WALL OF GRATITUDE



We want to thank everyone who donated or supported us with volunteering, item drop offs, gift wrapping, hosting a Christmas tree and attending our fundraising events in 2022.

Thank you to our Major Donors and Funders

Tucker Foundation funded the week to week work of transporting second-hand infant safety care items, e.g. a double pram, urgently needed for a new out-of-home-care placement.

Stronger Communities Grants through MP Darren Chester's office provided us with funding for air-conditioning for the volunteers working from Sale Memorial Hall.

Wellington Shire Council Community Grants allowed us to purchase a covered in trailer to double the efficiency of our time spent collecting and distributing donated goods.

William Angliss Charitable Foundation supported Crisis Cases production from our Koo Wee Rup location.

Nutrien Ag Solutions Community Grant, Tobin Brothers Foundation and **Community Underwriting** all contributed vital funds to our core program, Crisis Cases, providing for project locations across Victoria.

IMB Bank provided the funds to establish a new Crisis Cases Depot in metropolitan Melbourne.

AusPost funded a carers dinner in 2022, fostering connection and community.

The Grants Hub funded Colour My Story books, which are important trauma-informed resources for children aged 5 - 16.

Sisters of Charity have extended the timeline for our Mental Health pilot program, to provide financial support for gap fees for mental health treatment of kids in care for carers who are experiencing financial hardship. During 2022 we have learnt that the need for carers to access this program extends beyond the first 6 months of a new care placement.

To the hundreds of **individuals** who donated time, money, presents, gently loved clothes and infant items - thank you!

Gippsland's Biggest P.J. Day



Gippsland's Biggest P.J. Day is a partnership between a group of participants in the Gippsland Community Leadership Program and ABLFFK. Thank you so much to the schools from the 2022 Gippsland's Biggest PJ Day for your generous donations:

Bass Coast Specialist School, Newhaven Primary School, Wonthaggi Primary School, Nilma Primary School, St Paul's Anglican Grammar School, St Angela of the Cross Primary School, Neerim South Primary School, Albert Street Primary School, Moe, Churchill North Primary School, Newborough East Primary School, Toongabbie Primary School, Yallourn North Primary School, Yinnar South Primary School, Morwell Central Primary School, Fish Creek & District Primary Parents, Foster Primary-School, Kongwak Primary School, St Josephs Primary School, Korumburra, Mirboo North Primary School, Welshpool and District Primary School, Gippsland Grammar, St Annes Primary School, Maffra Primary School, Stratford Primary School, Nambrok Denison Primary, Sale Primary School, Seaspray Primary School, St Mary's Primary School (Sale), St Michael's Primary School (Heyfield), St Patrick's Primary School (Stratford), St Thomas Primary School (Sale), Woodside Primary School, Omeo Primary School, Swifts Creek, Newmerella Primary School, Nungurner Primary School, Lakes Entrance Primary School, Marlo Primary School, East Gippsland Specialist School, Swifts Creek Child Care Centre, Meeniyan Primary School.

The day raised a total of \$15,400 in funds, along with the donation of over \$3,000 worth of new pyjamas and clothes. Thank you to the wonderful **Gippsland Leadership Group** for organising such an amazing fundraiser! **Rebecca Matthews, Desley Tulloch, Tessa Beth Jenkins, Michelle Murphy Shaw, David Chun, Andrew Williamson** and helpers.

Thank you to the businesses, MP's and local supporters who made the day a success. **Esso Australia, SkyPhoto Gippsland, TRFM and GOLD 1242 studios, Bairnsdale Horse Centre, DMG Financial & DMG Financial Planning, TerryWhite Chemmart Leongatha, Payless Promotions, The Jolly Dolly Takeaway (Sale), Red Annex Café (Traralgon), Orange Door (Gippsland), Sale Post Office, Kemp Aquatics (Maffra), Foster MYLI Library. Melina Bath MP, Martin Cameron MP, Darren Chester MP. Scott Pendlebury and Mick Harrington. The ABLFFK volunteers and board.**

Save the date

Gippsland's Biggest
P.J. DAY

September 8th 2023



CAMP HIGHLIGHTS



What was the best thing about camp?

"It was fantastic, it's so important to sit and chat with other carers, reminds you that you are not alone in your struggles, and reminding me that there are so many carers doing it harder than me. I commented to Heather that I was really in awe of all the kiddos, they care about each other so much, it was heart warming."

"A special thank you to you all for showing my kids so much love and helping me, I really appreciated it."

"We had a lovely time, Thank you for everything you did Heather, the kids had a ball and it was lovely to meet other carers. We cannot wait until the next one."

"It was lovely talking to the staff that worked with the kids today. They all commented on how awesome a group they were and how every child had the best of manners and were all happy to wait their turn with a smile."



Spotlight On Koo Wee Rup

The location at Koo Wee Rup has drawn in the local community. Awareness has come from having the location, on the main street - people pop in and ask what we are doing and how they can help. Donors travel from Wonthaggi, Pakenham, Cranbourne - Koo Wee Rup is a gateway area in the southern suburbs. Taking donations - especially at Christmas with new toys. We are embarking on a new way of operating at our Koo Wee Rup depot heading into 2023 - we have turned it into a Depot where Carers can actually come and choose what they need for their foster children alongside picking up any needed Crisis Cases. We are hoping this will allow us to help with the distribution of unique items needed for placements that cannot go into cases. For example, in order to take on the care of a toddler a carer may need a carseat, a pram, a high chair, a cot and a cot mattress. By having two access points for drop off and pick up of large items, we can increase the reach of A Better Life For Foster Kids.