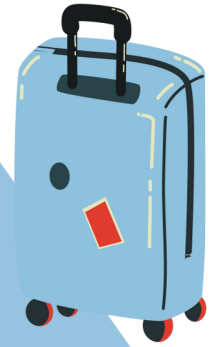


A Better Life FOR FOSTER KIDS



ANNUAL REPORT

2024



FROM OUR FOUNDER



What a year it's been! It's been a rollercoaster ride with so many demands on our crisis cases and support services that we've had to pull out all stops to keep up. Thankfully, we've been fortunate to receive some wonderful recognition this year, and the generosity of our funders has made so much possible.

Lately, I've been spending more and more time advocating for carers and the children they support. It's clear that our system continues to let down these incredible volunteers and the traumatised kids they care for. Speaking at the Kinship Carers Conference in Melbourne this August really drove this home for me. Listening to the carers' stories was both heartbreaking and inspiring. It reminded me that every single one of us has a responsibility to ensure these children are given every chance for a happy and healthy life. It's time we collectively raise our voices and say a resounding NO to child abuse and neglect. Alone, one voice can get lost, but together, we will be heard.

On a brighter note, this year's PJ Day was a huge success! So many schools and businesses got involved, raising essential funds while building awareness—especially among school children. While our generation may not see all the change we need, I hold onto hope that their generation will. Awareness is where it begins.

We also had some exciting developments with the support of Loy Yang B, which allowed us to employ a part-time Crisis Case Coordinator. I'm thrilled to welcome Bernadette Kent (or Bernie, as we know her) to the role. Bernie has been volunteering with us for eight years, and she's already making such a difference. Having her on board means I can dedicate even more time to supporting carers and kids where it's needed most.

Our Giving Tree had its biggest year yet! Despite the financial pressures so many families and businesses are facing, the generosity of our community—near and far—has been incredible. This year, we reached every state across Australia, and we even received enquiries from carers in America. Sadly, the challenges carers and children face are universal, but knowing we're making a difference right here means so much.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank every single person who has donated, shared our stories, or supported us in any way this year. We truly couldn't do what we do without you.

To my amazing Thursday Ladies—you are the heart and soul of A Better Life For Foster Kids. I couldn't do this without you, and I'm so grateful for everything you give.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a safe, happy New Year.

With heartfelt thanks,

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



KEY ACTIVITIES

Our key outputs in 2024

- 2,015 Crisis Cases delivered.
- Over 7,000 Christmas gifts delivered to 2,082 children.
- We furnished four households this year with all furniture and whitegoods needed
- Material aid including food provided to over 50 families in need
- Support to 6-7 carers each week with the time spent with each carer between a few hours through to months of advocacy. One carer has been supported for two years.
- 61 children and carers attended our annual camp, providing an opportunity for carers to connect and children to enjoy activities

Corporate Supporters

Loy Yang B is a strong local supporter and in 2025 commenced funded for our Crisis Case Co-ordinator, an essential role to meet the increasing demands of our Crisis Cases. As well as this vital support, when we were flooded they were there in a sec, with teams from their facilities doing work on our rooms allowing us to continue to operate.

Other integral local supporters **ExxonMobil Australia** and **ProTen** continue to provide support across our organisation.

Corona Worldwide raised funds from their global network for our work.

Good2Give enabled workplace giving for our cause and **Payless Promotions** provided in kind support for PJ Day.

We were one of the lucky community groups to secure a place in **Southside Racing's Slot Series** and we had our very own race at **Sale Greyhounds**.

We also welcomed our first storage facility partner- **A-OK Self Storage**- who are providing complementary self-storage to us to create a Mornington Peninsula depot.

Thanks to our **Cuppa A Week** campaign regular donors, providing stable ongoing funding for the core needs of children entering emergency out-of-home care.

Gippsland's Biggest P.J. Day saw over 50 schools and businesses participate, making it our biggest fundraiser yet.

Giving Tree host locations and donors also reached an all time high with over 25 Giving Trees operating across Victoria, and one from NSW! Several local community groups got behind our Christmas appeal, including Scents with Cat with the Buddy Bear Drive, Bundy Country Women's Association and Meridian Lifestyle.

Melbourne Racing Club Foundation also supported our Christmas Giving Appeal with a generous cash donation and Symmetry HR, as well as one very generous private donor.





WALL OF GRATITUDE

Thank you to our Grant Funders

Loy Yang B

Bendigo Bank Koo Wee Rup

Harcourts Foundation

Ballarat Connected Communities
(Bendigo Bank funded)

The Pierce Armstrong Foundation

Gardiner Foundation (FRRR)

Metro Trains

Border Trust

Ballarat Foundation

Community Bank Koo Wee Rup (Bendigo
Bank)

National Pies

William Angliss Charitable Foundation

Campbells Edwards Trust

Jemena Community Grants

Sisters Of Charity

Flora & Frank Leith Charitable Trust

Trinity Families Foundation

The Andrews Foundation





GIPPSLAND'S BIGGEST P.J. DAY

Gippsland's Biggest P.J. Day is a partnership between a group of hardworking volunteers and ABLFFK.

Thank you so much to the schools from the 2024 Gippsland's Biggest Pj Day for your generous donations.

We had a truly magnificent day with over 30 schools participating across Gippsland, and dozens of businesses also getting involved in the fun.

This year we raised an enormous amount of \$53,000 thank you to the generosity of everyone, from the kids with their gold coins, to some businesses who provided substantial donations.

"This event is more than just a fundraiser; it's an opportunity for our community to connect and support an organisation that makes a real difference in the lives of children in out-of-home care. We invite everyone to join us for a day of fun and giving back." Heather Baird, Founder, A Better Life For Foster Kids.

Thank you to all who were involved

Garfield Primary School, Kemp Aquatic, Araluen Primary School Royal Flying Doctor Service - Sale Office. Woodside Primary School, Foster Primary School, Sale College, Wonthaggi Primary School, The Cassidy Crew, Duke Street Children's Centre, South Street Primary School, Gwenfa Hampton Kindergarten, Lakes Entrance Primary School, Star Hotel Sale, Stratford Primary School, Woodside Beach Hotel, Cobains Primary School, Big W Morwell, Avon Legal Victoria, Toora Primary School, The Sale RSL & Community Club, Neerim South Primary School, Boisdale Consolidated School, St Michael's Primary School Heyfield, Phillipson's Accounting & Financial Planning, Mirboo North Primary School, Moe (Albert Street) Primary School, Nagle College, St. Thomas' Primary School Sale, St Patrick's Primary School Stratford, Maffra Primary School, Payless Promotions, The Jolly Dolly Takeaway, Longford Primary School Morwell Central Primary School, Sale Primary School, St Mary's Primary School Maffra, Gippsland Grammar, Wellington Legal Services Pty Ltd, Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation

Save the date

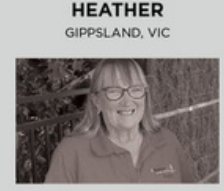


September 12th 2025





A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT



HEATHER
GIPPSLAND, VIC
FOSTER CARE HERO

Heather Baird from Gippsland grew up in orphanages and foster homes, experiencing firsthand the struggles of foster care. One of her strongest memories was attending school in tattered clothes, feeling the weight of being different. After leaving care, Heather faced the world unprepared, but her experiences ignited a passion to help others. In 2014, she founded A Better Life for Foster Kids, aiming to give foster children dignity and improve their physical, educational, and psycho-social outcomes, ensuring they feel valued and supported.

Our organisation, volunteers and Heather herself, received significant recognition this year for their transformative work supporting children in out-of-home care and their carers. Heather's tireless advocacy and the organisation's impact have been celebrated through a number of awards and acknowledgments.

In 2024, Heather was honoured as the winner of the **Regional Development Victoria Leadership and Innovation Award at the 7NEWS Victorian Community Achievement Awards**. This accolade highlights her vision and determination to address the needs of vulnerable children across regional Victoria, fostering hope and change in their lives. Earlier in the year, Heather was named the winner of **Black Pepper's World's Kindest Person Search**, an acknowledgment of her unwavering compassion and dedication to children in care.

ABLFFK has also been recognised as a **Finalist in Victoria's Protecting Children Awards**, which celebrates outstanding contributions to the safety and wellbeing of children. Similarly, the organisation's collaborative spirit was honoured as a **Finalist in the Volunteering Victoria Awards' Volunteering Partnerships Award**, which pays tribute to the power of enduring partnerships between organizations, businesses, and communities to achieve meaningful outcomes.

These accolades recognise the profound impact our organisation has on the lives of children and carers and demonstrates how compassion, leadership, community support and partnerships can inspire lasting change.



Connecting community

Volunteers are the heart and soul of A Better Life For Foster Kids, embodying the compassion and dedication that drive our mission.

From the steadfast commitment of the "Thursday Girls," who ensure the smooth operation of our services, to the tireless efforts of the Gippsland's Biggest PJ Day Committee, led by Andrew Williamson, each volunteer brings invaluable energy and expertise.

Community members who craft handmade items for our emergency cases add a personal touch that speaks volumes to the children and carers we support.

These acts of kindness not only define who we are as an organisation but also provide our volunteers with a deep sense of purpose and connection. Together, they create a network of care that amplifies our impact and strengthens the fabric of our community.



Core Programs



Crisis Cases

The Crisis Cases program is a cornerstone of A Better Life For Foster Kids, providing essential support to children entering out-of-home care during times of profound uncertainty and distress. Each case is thoughtfully packed with age-appropriate clothing, toiletries, and comfort items, offering immediate relief and dignity to children who often arrive in care with little to nothing of their own.

To ensure accessibility of these cases, we now have depots across Victoria including Sale, Bairnsdale, Warragul, Koo Wee Rup, Frankston, Somerville, Yackandandah, Albury, Ballarat and Bendigo

In 2024, the program delivered just over 2000 cases across Victoria, easing the transition for children and reducing the emotional burden on carers. The impact of this program is far-reaching, offering a tangible expression of care and stability when it is needed most.



Allambee Camp 2024

Our first time at Allambee Camp was a blast. A special weekend of connection and experiences for 61 carers and children. This time away offers respite and connections for the children and carers who attended and is made possible thanks to the support of our community.

Christmas Giving

Christmas in 2024 has been our biggest year yet. Like 2023, we were inundated by requests from carers right up until the day we closed our doors for the Christmas break. Thanks to our community we were able to fill orders for over **2000 children** across Australia, totalling over **7000 gifts** distributed, all wrapped by Heather and our volunteers who worked tirelessly to bring joy to so many kids Christmas morning.

This would not have been possible without the **25+ businesses and organisations who hosted Giving Trees**, the generous donations of individuals and businesses and for the fundraising efforts across the year. With such large volumes of gift vouchers going out to adolescents and families, we would love to partner with a sponsor to enable our giving to continue and impact more in 2025.

