



THRIVING CHILDHOODS AND FUTURES

ANNUAL REVIEW 2022



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Adopt Change Financial
Reports can be downloaded at
[www.adoptchange.org.au/about us](http://www.adoptchange.org.au/about-us)

INTRODUCTION

In this 2022 Annual Review, we've highlighted our work throughout the year and the goals we have reached in our mission to support and educate families and communities in caring for displaced children, as well as showcasing how your ongoing support helps us to achieve our vision of a world where all children can grow, learn, play and thrive in safe, nurturing and stable environments.

Adopt Change believes that every child deserves to grow up in a safe and permanent family home where they can thrive. Through our supports, training, projects and events we work with children and young people and the families and communities who care for them. We also work with the government, child welfare sector, corporates, media and other supporters to create better outcomes for kids.

Thank you to all our supporters who have worked with us to help create better outcomes for children and young people to enable them to reach their full potential.



HIGHLIGHTS

Some of our highlights across the year at a glance

NATIONAL PERMANENCY CONFERENCE



We hosted our 6th annual National Permanency Conference online across

3 days

with all states and territories involved.

over 250

registered delegates

over 40

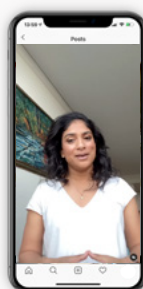
local and international speakers

This year's conference included an additional third day focusing on trauma-informed education in schools



515 MYPACK

My Pack first night backpacks prepared and provided to children entering foster care



Awareness raised and potential carer homes found for children & young people in urgent need via our annual **#aHomeForEveryChild** campaign in November



INFANT CARE RESEARCH

My Forever family NSW partnered with University of Western Sydney & TReSI to conduct & publish our Infant Care Research **Caring for Infants in out-of-home care in NSW – Carers' Perspectives**



PUREBABY CAMPAIGN

Over **1,200**

garments sold in our collaboration with Purebaby



15

Become a Carer for Kids Information Sessions held in NSW with over

250 potential carers attending



Adopt Change 2022 THRIVE National Recommendations Paper

launched at Australian Parliament House, with support from all state governments and 5 signatories including Brisbane Youth Service (BYS), Fams, The Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) and PCA Families.



Media Coverage

across the year to raise awareness and shine the spotlight on the importance of child welfare and permanency



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

The Adopt Change mission is clear - that all children and young people should be ensured a safe, nurturing and stable home. We believe that these are fundamental elements of a positive childhood and enable children to thrive in their future.

At Adopt Change we have dedicated ourselves to providing ongoing support for families so we can collectively achieve this. We work with government, sector, those with lived experience, carers and professionals across the country to create positive change and ensure that every child is considered when informing policy and making decisions.

Currently, there are over 46,000 children and young people who are unable to safely live with their family of origin, and as a result find themselves in the out-of-home care system. In 2020-21, only 17% of these children achieved a permanency outcome.

Throughout 2022, Adopt Change has continued our efforts in advocating for the betterment of supports for children and young people in care. Although there is commitment to our cause from all states, we maintain that Australia requires a national approach to most effectively drive change.

To work towards this, Adopt Change has delivered our third national recommendations paper launched at Australian Parliament House, following our latest National Permanency Conference. The paper outlines key recommendations for the welfare of children and young people, so that progress can be made.

The My Forever Family NSW program, operated by Adopt Change, has also been instrumental in supporting children in out-of-home care and those who care for them. In 2022 we received over 1,476 household enquiries about becoming a carer, delivered over 100 training sessions and provided carer support for over 1,000 carers.

I would like to thank CEO Renee Carter, our founder Deborra-lee Furness, and our team of changemakers, being our staff, Ambassadors, volunteers, supporters and media ambassadors. They have worked tirelessly campaigning, raising awareness through various media platforms, collaborating with the sector, government and policymakers to create a better future for children and young people in care and highlighting the 4,000 homes urgently needed across the country. I would also like to thank my fellow Board Directors. I look forward to continuing our journey to drive change.


We also look forward to working with the new federal government under Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

Thank you to our corporate supporters and sponsors this year, and the continued support received from the NSW government for our My Forever Family NSW program.

Victoria Buchan
Chair of the Adopt Change board

46,212 
CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

31,400 
HAVE BEEN IN CARE FOR
TWO YEARS OR MORE

17% 
ONLY OF THE
CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME
CARE ACHIEVED A PERMANENCY
OUTCOME



MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

In the face of flooding and the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to support families and children, and will ensure that we keep going until we see the improvements in the system that we seek.

Although this has at times been a difficult year, I am incredibly proud of the work that we have achieved. Once more, I had the privilege of working alongside such a wonderful team as we continue to work towards our goal of #aHomeForEveryChild. In the face of flooding and the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to support families and children, and will ensure that we keep going until we see the improvements in the system that we seek.

Some highlights from the past year include:

- We extended our National Permanency Conference to 3 days, including a day dedicated to trauma informed education, with every state and territories support. (p8)
- We had the honour of again hosting live Q&A sessions for our delegates with international trauma specialists Dr Bruce Perry and Dr Gabor Maté.
- Our annual Foster and Kinship Care Week Picnics returned in person across the state, with over 800 attendees at the main picnic in Sydney. (p15)
- We recently celebrated our A Home For Every Child campaign, building a national list of people interested in becoming carers and generating donations for our cause. (p22)
- Our Empower Change program featured our first ever in-school visit to Orange, where we experienced great success. (p25)
- We launched Australian first research into Infant Care, in partnership with the University of Western Sydney and TReSi, exploring the need for more adequate support for those caring for infants. (p16)
- Our office was again filled with hundreds of hand knitted blankets from our community for our MyPacks. (p24)
- We partnered with our ambassador Nicole Warne and Purebaby to design and launch a kids and babywear collection, with all proceeds donated to Adopt Change. (p23)

Since our last Annual Review, our organisation has grown. Whilst this growth is a reminder of the effective change we're making, it is great to be surrounded by people who are passionate about ensuring that children and young people grow up in supportive environments. Our team are dedicated to making positive change and creating better outcomes for children in care, and it is so wonderful to be driving change together.

NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS PAPER

Our National Permanency Conference formed the basis of our third recommendations paper which was launched at Australian Parliament House on 30 November 2022. For the first time our recommendations paper includes a statement of supporters, with the Federal Government and organisations including Brisbane Youth Service, Fams, Foster Care Association of Victoria, Shine for Kids and Permanent Care and Adoptive Families pledging to support the recommendations outlined in the paper, demonstrating collective commitment towards children and young people thriving at home and in school.

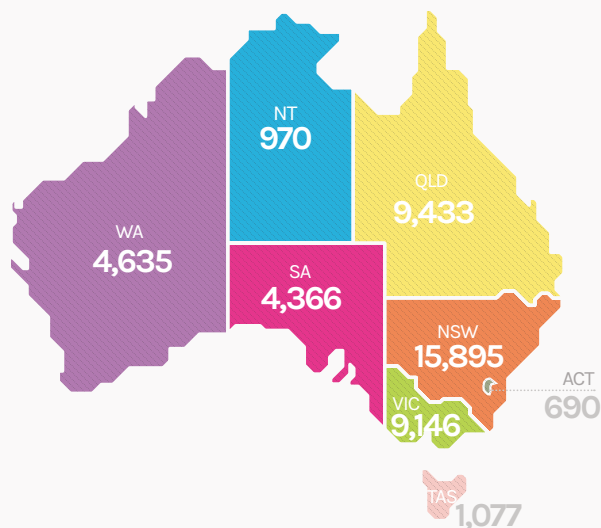
The key recommendations for 2022 are as follows:

- Policy makers and practitioners to continue to work in true partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks, communities, families and experts to build cultural competency within state and territory care and protection, education, health and justice systems, increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care and protection staff and dramatically reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the OOH system
- Amplify and integrate the voices of children and young people across decision-making processes and service delivery
- Support children and young people to thrive into adulthood by building confidence and capacity for them to 'graduate to independence' rather than 'leave care'
- Increase investment in early family support and family finding
- Develop the National Carer Framework to support, build capacity and retain new and existing carers
- Jurisdictions to prioritise home-based care and permanency in a timely manner
- National focus on building trauma informed foundations for the child welfare sector, carers, educators, service and the community
- The importance of collaboration, data and information sharing

A HOME FOR EVERY CHILD CAMPAIGN CAMPAIGN

In 2022, we simplified our November campaign to focus on one message – help us find a home for every child that is safe, nurturing and stable. There are 4,000 homes for kids and teenagers urgently needed, with many of these children living in residential care and group homes, looked after by caseworkers on shift. Our aim was to raise awareness and urgently find more homes for these children and young people. We asked people to help by opening their home to become a carer, or donating to our cause.

For the first time we created a national list of potential carers from all states, allowing us to broaden our reach in finding homes all across the country.



We were thrilled to have the support of many of our ambassadors who shared and promoted the message far and wide. From our media ambassadors who helped platform the issue on local and national outlets, to those who shared the message on their own platforms, every bit counts. The campaign was picked up by media across multiple channels including ABC Breakfast, Studio 10 and various radio networks.

We also engaged with government and the sector on how we can enact real, meaningful change and ensure we can find 4,000 nurturing homes for children and young people in need.

THANK YOU

Finally, I want to thank you. From program and grant funding; donation of funds and items; supporters who lend their voices to raise awareness; corporates who provide merchandise or pro-bono services; board member time; ambassador and volunteer Changemaker's time... we could not do the work we do without the support we receive. Thank you for helping us strive towards A Home For Every Child that is safe, nurturing and stable.

At Adopt Change we have a clear vision and need the support of our community to realise that vision. We want to see every child have a secure home, inclusive education, easy access to trauma supports and for young people with a trauma experience to enter adulthood equipped and supported. I'm looking forward to continued collaboration and support from our dedicated carer community, changemakers, policy makers, and sector to make this vision a reality for the 46,000 children in care.

Renée Carter
Chief Executive Officer
Adopt Change

ABOUT ADOPT CHANGE

OUR VISION

A world where all children can grow, learn, play, and thrive in a nurturing and safe environment.

OUR MISSION

To support and educate families and communities in caring for displaced children.

OUR PURPOSE

Adopt Change strives to help vulnerable children in need. Particularly those in government care, foster care, orphans or children without families. Adopt Change also helps carers, families and guardians.

To do this, Adopt Change:

- Provides resources to support these children, including in times of crisis such as entering the foster care or out-of-home care system;
- Provides support and resources to carers, families and guardians of these children, with a particular emphasis on understanding trauma and informed practices and parenting for these children;
- Provides information to schools and the community on supporting these children and trauma support; and
- Encourages people to provide all children in need with access to a safe, nurturing and stable family environment to grow up in.



BOLD

We are courageous in our pursuit of making our vision and mission a reality. We speak for children and families who need a voice.

AGILE

We proactively adapt our organisation and services to be responsive to serving the needs of our community.

INSPIRING

We bring others on the journey with us for greater collective impact by inspiring them with our vision and drive for change.

IMPACTFUL

Everything we do is about bringing about positive change for children, young people and families for better outcomes.

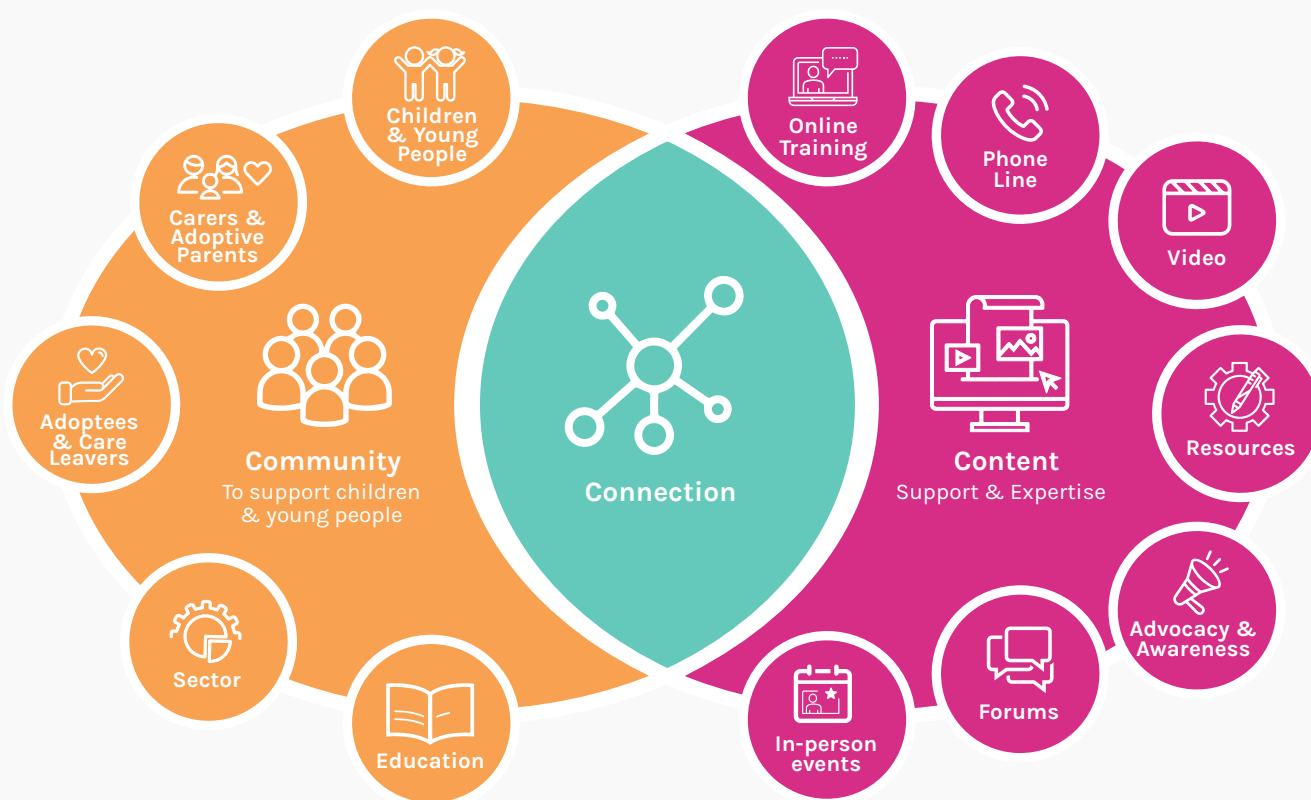
INCLUSIVE

Listening to our community, our stakeholders and our team, we are respectful of others' cultures and views, and we seek to work collaboratively.

OUR SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Despite the challenges of 2022, our team continued their work towards **#aHomeForEveryChild**

Adopt Change Connecting and Supporting Children, Young People and Families



To help displaced at risk children, young people, families, schools, and communities thrive, Adopt Change provides a range of supports and activities.



These include:

■ **Community supports and resources**, including

- Operating the **My Forever Family NSW program** to recruit, support, train and advocate for Carers of children who need safe homes. Carers and safe homes are identified through foster, kinship, guardian, or adoptive carers.
- Providing information and guidance on permanent homes for children through adoption or other forms of permanency.
- Offering trauma-informed supports for families (including adoptive and foster families), holding community events, online forums
- Providing MyPack first-night backpacks for children entering the foster-care system
- Delivering the Empower Change program, supporting care leavers with the skills they need to thrive into adulthood.

■ **Education** by facilitating workshops, conferences and information sessions for professionals, parents and carers on topics including trauma-informed care; pre- and post-adoptive supports; accessing the expertise of local and international educators, researchers and speakers.

■ **Raising Awareness** within the community and through media of the risks faced by children who have experienced trauma and the necessity for children to have access to permanency and supports to create positive life outcomes. The

annual #aHomeForEveryChild campaign in November is a prime example of our campaigns raising awareness around this issue.

■ **Research** is used to contribute to understanding of the issues that children face, including the importance of permanency; support for infant care; the impact of trauma; pre- and post-adoptive supports for families and children; and topics surrounding adoption and permanency within Australia.

■ **Collaboration** with the child welfare sector, policy makers, politicians and departments on the various issues surrounding permanency, child welfare and adoption through the provisions of consultancy and advisory services and input.

■ **Advocacy** for:

- Unified national child welfare and permanency
- Accessibility and timeliness of permanency
- Integrating the voice of children and young people in decisions
- Nationally supporting carers
- Preparing for thriving care leavers
- Trauma-informed, therapeutic services for all children in care
- Data and information sharing between services and departments
- Leading child welfare within communities



**My Forever
Family NSW**

Caring for those who care for kids

MY FOREVER FAMILY NSW

Currently, there are over 15,895 children and young people in out-of-home care in NSW. These children and young people are unable to live with their families for either short-term or long-term periods of time, and therefore require safe, nurturing, and stable homes for them to thrive.

My Forever Family NSW cares for those who care for these children and young people. We provide carers with the support, training and resources they need to ensure the best possible outcomes for the children and young people in their care.

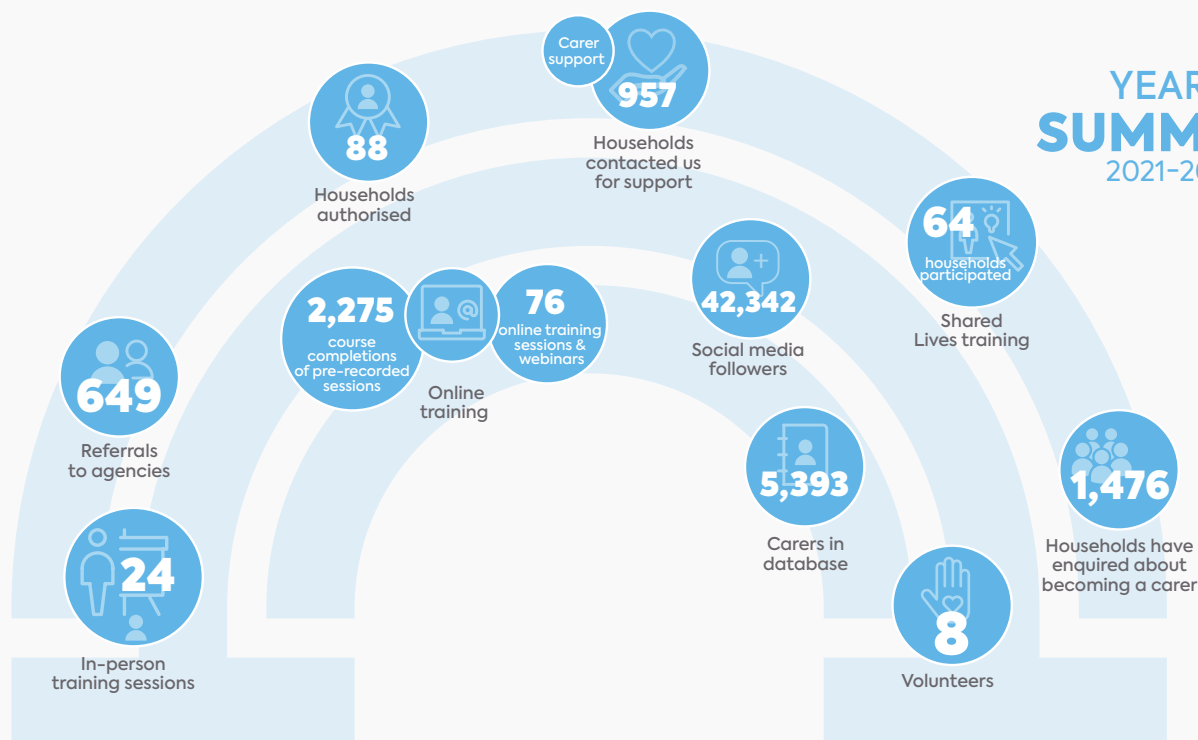
My Forever Family NSW is a program funded by the NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and is operated by Adopt Change – which is committed to providing carers with the tools needed to care for and support children who may have experienced trauma.

A first point of contact for potential carers, My Forever Family NSW provides them with information and guidance throughout every step of the authorisation process. In partnership with DCJ and accredited foster care and adoption agencies throughout NSW, we provide supplementary recruitment marketing services, ensuring that potential new carer homes are found.

Training opportunities are provided for authorised carers, and a dedicated Carer Support Team is available to assist with a range of matters and opportunities to connect with other carers, to sustain a strong, skilled and resilient carer community in NSW.

Through engagement with the state government and child welfare sector, My Forever Family NSW advocates for systemic change on behalf of carers and the children they care for. It is our hope that, together, we can achieve a brighter future for families across NSW.

YEAR 4 SUMMARY 2021-2022



"My Forever Family NSW runs the Carer Support Group up here and it is amazing to have regular connection with other carers. As it's a different way of parenting, it's a different conversation. We can talk more freely and connect in ways that are really helpful." **Northern NSW Carer**

"I cannot tell you how much the consistency and care from My Forever Family NSW has meant to me.

To know I had someone who was truthful, beside me and guiding me. Thankyou for taking all my calls, reading all my emails, listening to my ranting and leading me in the right direction without judging me." **NSW Carer**

15,895

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE IN NSW

488

CHILDREN IN NSW WERE
RESTORED/REUNIFIED
IN 2020-21

2,160

CHILDREN IN NSW
ACHIEVED A PERMANENCY
OUTCOME IN 2020-2021

1,599

FINALISED GUARDIANSHIP
OR CUSTODY ORDERS IN
NSW IN 2020-21

94

ADOPTIONS FROM OOHIC IN
AUSTRALIA. DOWN 42%
FROM 2019-2020*

CARER SUPPORT

Our Carer Support Team is qualified and knowledgeable and are available via phone or email to provide information, guidance, and support to carers on a range of issues. This includes support during the process of becoming a guardian, guidance on a range of topics including caring for children who have experienced trauma, and casework support.

Our team empower carers with knowledge and encourages them to form or join local carer support groups, in order to build their own network of support and a stronger carer community.

Last year 957 carer households contacted us for support. We were able to provide this support in several ways, including having our Carer Support Team attend Carer Reference Groups, and facilitate training and Online Lounge Rooms for carers to connect and share.

TRAINING

My Forever Family NSW offers a range of high quality, easily accessible training including in-person and online sessions or webinars that can be viewed when convenient. Our training options ensure that carers feel supported, well informed and equipped to care for children and young people who may have experienced trauma.

In 2022, with COVID-19 restrictions easing, we were able to shift to in-person and online training sessions. During 2021/22 we had 64 potential carer households attend our shared lives training. For authorised carers we delivered 36 in-person training sessions and 76 online sessions.

Popular training topics have included 'Surviving Placement Breakdown', 'The Secret to Success', 'Understanding Attachment' and 'Self-Care for Carers'. Our in-person sessions have been held across the state, in areas such as Wollongong, Batemans Bay, Casino, Cessnock and more.

“
The information was very informative, real, and honest. It helped me so much to understand how I need to help and care for myself.”

NSW Carer

“
I was deeply impressed by the quality of the presentation, the professionalism, the engagement of the Carers and the overall standard of the training My Forever Family NSW are presenting.” **NSW Carer**

ADVOCACY

To create effective change in the OOHC sector, My Forever Family NSW seeks to highlight the voices of carers. We do this in three main ways:

- Our state-wide Carer Survey conducted in August, with outcomes reported on and shared with the sector and our carer community.
- Facilitating conferences, events and forums that allow decision makers to hear directly from carers and learn about the issues that impact them most.
- Through our Carer Reference Groups, which support carer participation with non-governmental organisations and DCJ to work towards improving caring for children and young people in out-of-home care.

2022 CARER SURVEY

My Forever Family NSW conducted the NSW Carer Survey 2022 in August to improve the carer experience, create a snapshot of carer perceptions of services for the children and young people in their care, and their own experiences and views about possible improvements to practice.

Over 1,800 carers were surveyed across NSW and the findings inform ongoing efforts to better support carers and the children they care for.



“
[My Forever Family] Were my saving grace in my darkest time of caring.” **NSW Carer**

CARER PORTAL

My Forever Family NSW launched the new Carer Portal website in 2022, allowing carers access to a variety of resources, training, webinars, ebooks, audiobooks and information all in one place. The portal includes an extensive library of free resources available to all authorised carers in NSW, providing carers with guides, factsheets and information packs on topics such as caring for kids with disabilities or learning disorders, tips and guides to navigating the system, understanding and responding to trauma and more.



“
A wonderful organisation which has provided me with much needed support over the past three years. They respond promptly and communicate well.”
NSW Carer

“
I am grateful I have someone that listened when I voiced my opinions.”
NSW Carer

CARER COACHING PROGRAM

At the end of 2022 we launched our Carer Coaching Program. The Carer Coaching Program assists carers in placement stability through intensive 1:1 support sessions, with the objective of increased placement stability and carer retention.

The program offers sessions through phone or video conference, has individualised content, and personalised resources, focusing on placement stability and strengthening the relationship between the carer and child.

Carer Coaching topics may include:

- Carer self-care
- Feelings of lack of support or isolation
- Accessing therapeutic care and supports for children and young people
- Trauma-informed care
- Family time and building relationships with family, kin and community and important people in children's lives
- Supporting Culture
- Process for guardianship and/or adoption and assisting with understanding specific steps for each carer (where this is applicable)

The Carer Coaching Program is open to carers who have been in their caring role for over 12 months, who want to build resilience and confidence in their caring role and those who have expressed an interest in guardianship/adoption.

CARER SUPPORT GROUPS

Our Carer Support Groups are a place for carers to share experiences and knowledge and support one another emotionally, socially and practically. Carer support groups are run by local foster carers, for foster carers, kinship carers, guardians and adoptive parents. Groups generally run monthly and may meet online or in-person.

They are a space for carers to express themselves with confidence they will be understood and accepted. Carers share similar lived experiences, build resilience, learn new perspectives and parenting approaches and make lifelong friendships. Experts from related fields can also make special appearances to discuss topics relative to the carer experience.

Carer Support Groups are available across NSW. Carers can find their local group through our interactive map available on the My Forever Family NSW website.

FINDING MORE HOMES FOR CHILDREN ACROSS NSW

My Forever Family NSW has hosted Become a Carer Information Sessions across the state, in areas such as:

- Orange
- Port Macquarie
- Parramatta
- Nowra
- Broken Hill
- Wollongong

Information sessions include talks from a My Forever Family NSW representative about the process of becoming a carer, a DCJ representative about the current need for more carers and a carer guest speaker, with opportunities to engage with attendees and answer questions.

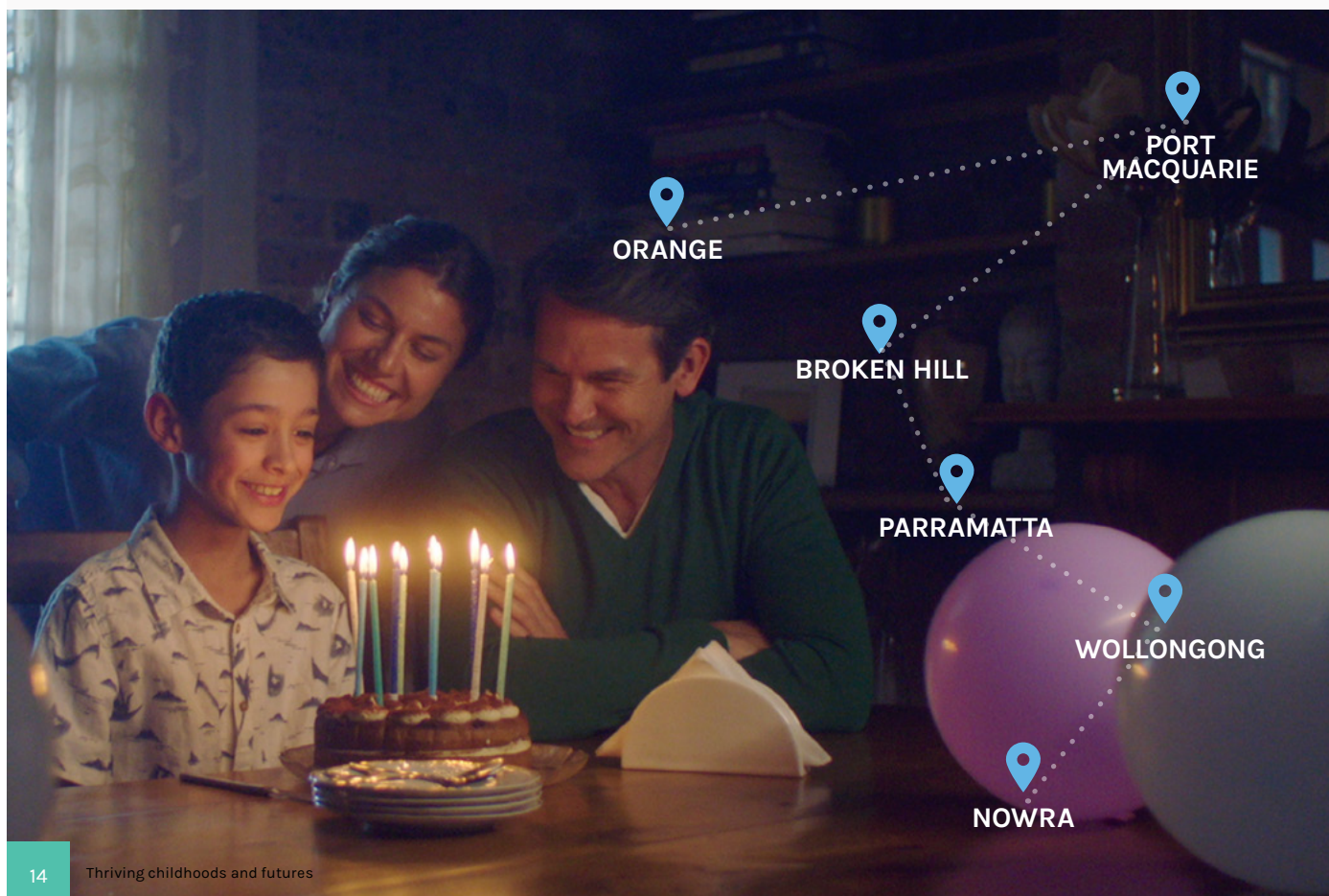
Local agencies and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOS) are also invited to attend and speak with potential carers.

Our Recruitment Team support prospective carers throughout the journey to becoming a carer, from the moment they register interest right through to authorisation and placements - they are there every step of the way.



Last year My Forever Family NSW received 1,476 enquiries to become a carer, through a series of marketing recruitment campaigns which used media engagement, online and in-person information sessions and Yarn Sessions.

Our campaigns target finding potential carers who are suitable for the specific needs of children and young people in care, including different care types and geographic locations. These have included campaigns for siblings, older children, emergency and part-time carers and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.



FOSTER & KINSHIP CARE WEEK PICNIC 2022



1,027
PEOPLE REGISTERED



100+
VOLUNTEERS

“
We had a fantastic time! I could relax
and let the kids run and have so much
fun. I loved saying “yes you can!” to
everything my children asked for today!”



“
A big thanks for everyone, there
were lots of happy kids today”

“
Everything was wonderful. Such a happy
event. Was great to help with our sense of
connection and support in our foster care
journey.”

Foster & Kinship Care Week in NSW was established in 1990 as an opportunity to thank foster and kinship carers for their incredible contribution, and to raise awareness about the need to recruit more carers. Foster & Kinship Care Week is held annually in the second week of September and is traditionally launched with the Sydney Picnic Day, which is held on the second Sunday in September.

2022 was the 31st year of Foster & Kinship Care Week, and the Sydney Picnic was held on Sunday 18th September 2022 in Marrickville, with 1027 people registered for the event. After two years of COVID-19 restrictions, this was the first in person picnic since 2019. Other regional events were also held during the month in the Hunter and Illawarra regions.


The picnic included a free BBQ lunch, a petting zoo, rides, laser tag, garden games and stalls from 18 different agencies, with information and merchandise packs to give away. There was an address from NSW Minister for Families and Communities, The Hon Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC, and the day was kindly hosted by lived experience advocate Emily Hikaiti. The event was a huge success, with all guests and staff getting involved and kids having a fun filled day.




The Hon Natasha Maclaren-Jones
MLC (NSW Minister for Families and
Communities) with Renee Carter
(Adopt Change CEO)



INFANT CARE RESEARCH

86%  of carers indicated infant specific training should be provided prior to caring for an infant

71%  of infants did not receive home visits from a community nurse or midwife

In 2022 **My Forever Family NSW**, with **Western Sydney University** and **TReSI** conducted and published the research 'Caring for Infants in out-of-home care in NSW – Carers' Perspectives'.

Babies are one of the most vulnerable populations in society, yet sadly in Australia they represent the highest rate of admissions to government care. We know the long-term impacts of trauma, and with such a challenging start to life, it is imperative infants are nurtured and supported in stable home-based care so they can begin to heal and thrive.

Whilst foster carers in Australia undergo relevant rigorous government authorisation processes and are required to undertake ongoing training to maintain their skills, the level of training provided to carers when it comes to infant-based care, particularly around caring for babies and toddlers with complex needs such as prenatal drug and alcohol exposure could be greatly improved.

This research explores the experiences of carers in NSW relating to training and support received in their role in caring for our most vulnerable. Whilst foster and kinship carers carry significant responsibility in providing safe and nurturing homes for children, there are gaps in the support provided or available.

There is an opportunity for governments around the country to expand their support of foster and kinship carers of infants who are unable to live safely at home, and to upskill carers to empower them to provide the best level of care available.

The findings of this research highlight a need to provide increased training, support, and resources for new carers of infants in out-of-home care.

Recommendations

1. Development and provision of training related to basic infant care, including topics such as infant feeding and nutrition, bathing and sleeping, immunisation and developmental milestones.
2. Provision of details to access reliable/credible sources of information related to infant care-giving prior to or at the point of assuming physical care of an infant.
3. Improved access to in-home and community nursing/midwifery services to support carers in their infant care-giving.



You can read the full report on the [My Forever Family NSW website](#).

MEET OUR NSW CARERS

Stories are a powerful way for prospective families to see the benefits of foster care and becoming carers. An encouraging voice from someone who's been there can spark inspiration and provide guidance to others at the start of their journey to provide a safe and nurturing home.

Our community of carers and their agencies have used their voices and stories to help change the trajectory for children and young people in the out-of-home care system.

Kate, Andrew and Neslihan are carers who have shown exceptional dedication to the kids in their care and to being a voice for carers and children.



Kate & Andrew

Kate and her husband Andrew were named NSW Carer Recognition Award winners in 2021 for their exceptional service in caring for sibling groups.

After registering with Anglicare, the couple opened their home to a 7-month-old boy for a long-term care placement, and soon after welcomed his siblings into their care.

Providing the children an opportunity to grow up together and keep a strong sibling bond was important to Kate and Andrew.

For five years Kate and Andrew have been caring for the 3 siblings aged from 12 months to 5 years old. Their home and lives are busier and fuller, and caring for small children has its challenges, but Kate and Andrew would not rewrite their story.

"We see the difference having a loving, stable home makes in their lives, and in the families they come from as well. The children are enriching our lives too. Their stories are now intertwined with our stories, so it's a more, richer fuller life experience for us. We couldn't imagine our lives without these kids in them."



Neslihan

Neslihan (Nes) grew up knowing the love and kindness of her Turkish Muslim parents who informally welcomed children into their care. Today she carries their legacy by providing safety and a nurturing home to children as a foster carer.

Nes strives to make the world a better place for Aiden* who has been in her care for the last two years.

Nes sees her role as Aiden's carer as a privilege and something she cherishes. Being able to see him grow and trust that he is in a safe and stable home is the most rewarding aspect for her.

Over seven years as a registered carer, Nes has cared for many children in the out-of-home-care system, and has been recognised for her services in long-term care with a Carer Recognition Award.

As an Australian from a culturally and linguistically diverse background Nes encourages other carers from diverse backgrounds to take pride in what they do and be an example in their communities.

"Fostering isn't a job, it's giving a life to those young children who haven't had a chance to see how beautiful the world is."

*Name changed for privacy reasons.

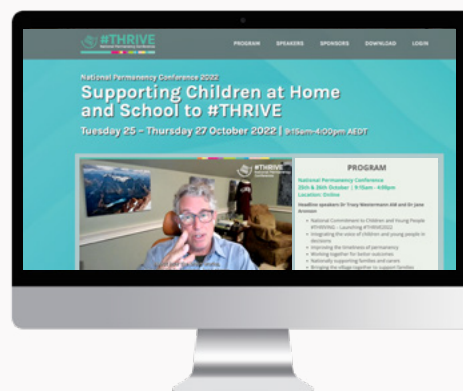
NATIONAL PERMANENCY CONFERENCE

On 25-27 October 2022 we hosted our sixth Adopt Change National Permanency conference #THRIVE2022.

The annual conference is held in response to the Community Services Ministers' commitment made in November 2016 to prioritise permanency for children in out-of-home care. For a second year in a row we had support and/or speakers from every government in Australia: federal, state and territory.

The event seeks better outcomes for children in care – in homes and schools across the country.

The three day conference was held online, with over 250 registered delegates and over 40 local and international speakers. Speakers included trauma specialists Dr Bruce Perry and Dr Gabor Maté; Global Paediatrician and Behavioural Health Expert Dr Jane Aronson; psychologist and critical thought leader in Aboriginal mental health, suicide prevention and cultural competency Dr Tracy Westerman AM; CEO of SNAICC – National Voice for our Children Catherine Liddle; Advocate for Children and Young People Zoe Robinson; CEO of Barnardos Australia Deirdre Cheers, plus government ministers and representatives including Ministers from Community Services, Education, Children's Commissioners and government representatives from around the country, peak bodies, experts in child protection and lived experience advocates.



For the first time, educators were invited to Day 3 of #THRIVE2022 on Thursday 27 October to learn about the impact of trauma on children and how to support them in school. This is critical, considering the typical experience of children in care is that many are suspended and do not complete high school. This day included a live Q&A with Dr Bruce Perry and Dr Gabor Maté, and a moving discussion with Dr Bruce Perry and facilitated by our CEO Renee Carter.

The recommendations forming this year's plenary topics included integrating the voice of children and young people in decisions, the importance of permanency and working together, supporting families, carers and care leavers to thrive and the importance of trauma informed education.

Our founder Deborra-lee Furness expertly hosted a powerful talk with Dr Bruce Perry. Other hosts included our talented Ambassadors Angela Bishop, Jonah Bobongie, Phoebe Garland, Ellia Green, Joe Hilderbrand, Emily Hikaiti, Helen McCabe, Daniella Park and Louise Ransome.

Participants were given the opportunity to participate in two national roundtable discussions, as well as provide feedback throughout the conference to help shape our recommendations to government.

3 days

over
250
attendance

8
jurisdictions

over
40 speakers
across the globe



Bruce Perry
MD PhD



Dr Tracy
Westerman AM



Dr Gabor
Maté



Deborra-lee
Furness



Dr Jane
Aronson



A summary of the plenary sessions of #THRIVE2022

Plenary Session 1: National Commitment to Children & Young People thriving – Launching #THRIVE2022

Hosted by Lived Experience Ambassador Emily Hikaiti, plenary 1 featured the conference opening address provided by Adopt Change CEO Renée Carter. Speakers included the Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services in the Australian Government; SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle; and an Acknowledgement of Country provided by Professor Paul Chandler, Adopt Change board member. Our international guest and global paediatrician Dr Jane Aronson spoke with Founder Deborra-lee Furness on how carers can best support kids to #THRIVE.

Plenary Session 2: Integrating the voice of children and young people in decisions

Lived Experience Ambassador Jonah Bobongie hosted plenary 2 as we discussed integrating the voices of children and young people in the decision making process. Jonah shared some of his incredible story, and we heard from NSW Advocate for Children and Young People Zoe Robinson, who was joined by Lived Experience Advocate Emily Hikaiti, to discuss key findings in the recent Voices of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care Report. We also heard from Matthew Bach MP, Victorian Shadow Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Child Protection and Youth Justice, and Youth Affairs.

Plenary Session 3: The importance of permanency for children in care

Hosted by Angela Bishop, plenary 3 highlighted the importance of improving the timeliness of permanency in the lives of children and young people. NSW Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones provided an address, and Michael Tidball, Secretary of the Department of Communities and Justice spoke on updates within the department, while Deirdre Cheers, CEO of Barnardos presented on the recent Barnardos and University of Oxford research 'Outcomes of Open Adoption from Care'.

Plenary Session 4: Working together for better outcomes

Plenary 4 was hosted by Helen McCabe and focused on working together for better outcomes. We heard from Kate Worden MLA, Minister for Territory Families in the Northern Territory; Chief Executive and Principal Commissioner for Queensland Family and

Child Commission Luke Twyford shared some of his personal story whilst discussing the importance of families, government and courts working together to listen to the voices of children and young people; and Chris Skinner, Manager Practice Advancement & Implementation – Mockingbird Family Stride Team at Life Without Barriers discussed the success of the Mockingbird Family model.

Plenary 5: Nationally supporting families and carers

Hosted by Phoebe Garland, plenary 5 focused on nationally supporting carers. An important outcome in the National Commitment Plan for Children & Young People to #THRIVE, as presented to government following the conference last year, carers are the bedrock of the out-of-home care system and critical to achieving permanency outcomes for children. In this session we heard from Dr Stacy Blythe on the infant care research by My Forever Family NSW and Western Sydney University; and Dr Elsie Alcorido, Acting Director, Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO), provided an overview of the VAGO report into Kinship Care in Victoria.

Plenary 6: Bringing the village together to support families

Daniella Park hosted plenary 6, where we focused on the importance of bringing the village together to support families and carers. In this session we heard from West Australian Minister for Child Protection, the Hon. Simone McGurk about the whole-of-government approach in that state, and the Hon. Roger Jaensch MP, Tasmanian Minister for Education, Children and Youth provided an update. Intercountry adoptee and Adopt Change Ambassador Zufi Emerson spoke on the importance of remaining connected to her heritage, and we heard a little about how My Forever Family NSW supports carers and families.

Plenary 7 - Nurture and support care leavers to thrive

Ellia Green, Adopt Change Ambassador and athlete, hosted plenary 7 where we discussed the critical topic of providing support to young people as they leave care. In this session Dr Victoria Flanagan discussed Foyer Central, a youth transition program; the Hon. Rachel Stephen-Smith, ACT Minister for Families and Community Services provided an update on progress in that state, and human rights advocate and lawyer Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts shared some of her lived experience insight.

Education Plenary 1: The importance of Trauma Informed inclusive environments for children in care in schools

Education Plenary 1 was hosted by Joe Hidebrand to launch the third day of the conference, focusing on the importance of creating trauma-informed and inclusive environments in schools for children in care. We heard an update from the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell; Adopt Change CEO Renée Carter sat down with Bruce D. Perry MD, PhD, author of the best-selling book What Happened to You? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience and Healing; and Lived Experience Advocate Feonyx Holden shared her story.

Education Plenary 2: Inclusive and trauma informed education for all children in care

Hosted by Louise Ransome, education plenary 2 focused on inclusive and trauma-informed education services made available for all children in care. We

heard from Nic Danta and Chloe Duncan from the Department of Education on Inclusive, Engaging and Respectful Schools; Victorian Shadow Minister for Child Protection and Youth Justice Matthew Bach who shared his personal story, and we heard about our Empower Change program, helping young people in care prepare for independence.

Education Plenary 3: The future of education - a trauma-informed approach

Hosted by Helen Baker, the final session of #THRIVE2022 was focused on the future of education through a trauma-informed approach. Thomas and Joseph Bennett discussed Foster the Future, an Australian charity helping kids in care get back on track in school, and we heard from Jane Vadiveloo CEO from Children's Ground, a system-change organisation that privileges First Nations systems of knowledge and practice.

#THRIVE2022 Sponsors:

Thank you to our National Major Sponsor for the National Permanency Conference, Department of Social Services (DSS).

Thank you to our State and Territory and Supporting Sponsors including NSW Department of Communities and Justice, Northern Territory Government, Queensland Government, Government of Western Australia, Department for Child Protection, South Australia, Barnardos Australia, Key Assets (Australia) & Life Without Barriers.

National Major Sponsor



State And Territory Supporting Sponsors



Supporting Sponsors



NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS PAPER LAUNCH AT AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT HOUSE

National Recommendations Paper 2022

Adopt Change has launched its National Recommendations Paper 2022 as an outcome of the National Permanency Conference. This paper was launched in Australian Parliament House and for the first time is accompanied by a statement of support, with organisations pledging to support the recommendations outlined in the paper.

Statement of Support signed by

**BRISBANE
YOUTH
SERVICE**
NEW FUTURES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

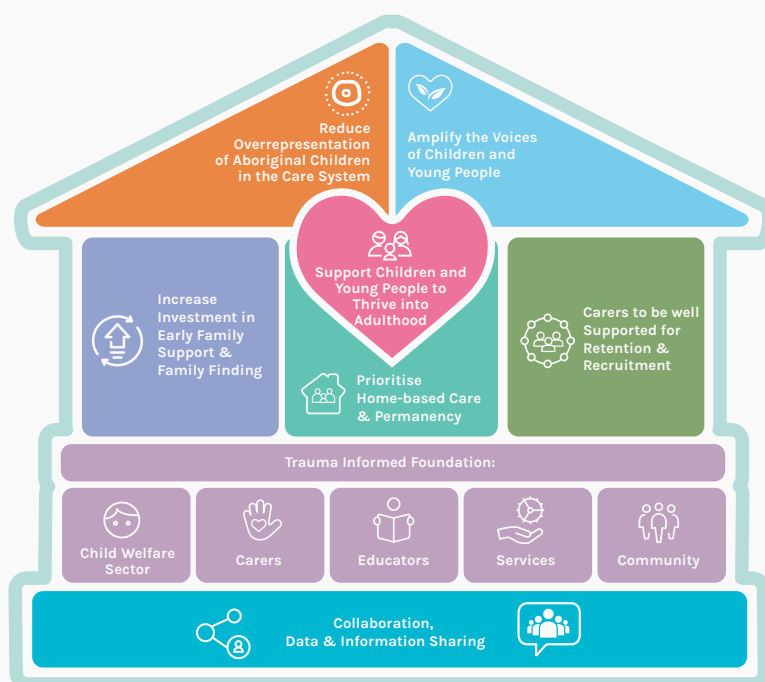
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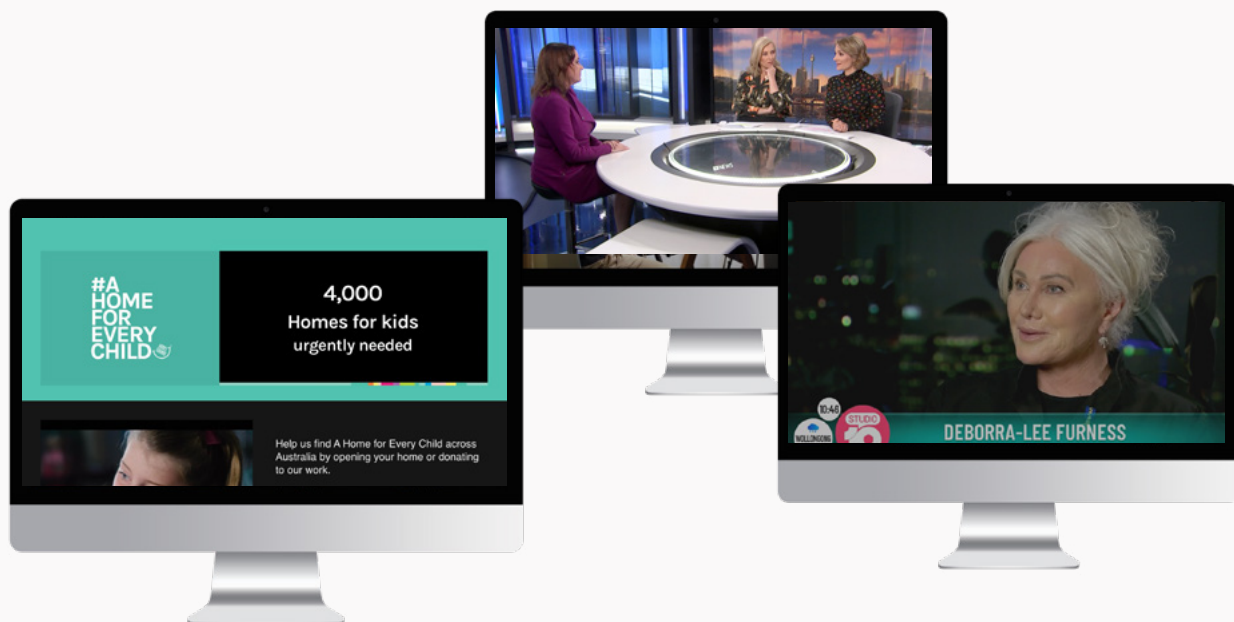
**Permanent
Care and
Adoptive
Families**

COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE TO THRIVE



Justine Elliot MP (Assistant Minister for Social Services) with Adopt Change CEO and Board members

FINDING A HOME FOR EVERY CHILD



Our awareness campaign #aHomeForEveryChild ran in November, where we asked our community and supporters to help us urgently find 4,000 homes for children and young people across Australia. This month is particularly effective in raising awareness and we receive significant media opportunities, lifting our awareness and social engagement.

This year we simplified the messaging to focus solely on finding #aHomeForEveryChild. We created a dedicated campaign page – ahomeforeverychild.org, and asked people to either:

- Register their interest to open their home and provide care
- Donate to our cause

For the first time, we created a national ‘become a carer’ enquiry form for people all across Australia to enter their details and find out more about becoming a carer. This information will then be distributed to relevant states and territories to enable potential carers to begin their caring journey.

A television advertisement was also created to emphasise the urgent need for more homes for children and young people in Australia.

Deborra-lee Furness and Renée Carter were interviewed by Angela Bishop on Studio 10 on Network Ten, on Fitzy & Wippa’s radio show on NOVA and on 2GB with Joe Hilderbrand. Renée also appeared on ABC Weekend Breakfast, interviewed by Johanna Nicholson & Kathryn Robinson, with the video from this interview being our most viewed Instagram reel to date.

Our ambassadors kindly showed their support and helped us spread the message, posting and resharing our content. Hugh Jackman created and posted a video encouraging people to open their home, and Joel de Carteret, Sallianne Deckert, Zufi Emerson, Phoebe Garland, Emily Hikaiti, Jonah Bobongie, Daniella Park, Joe Hilderbrand, Angela Bishop and Lisa Sthalekar all shared and reposted content to spread the message.

Our social media strategy extended across all platforms – Facebook, Instagram, Linked In and Tiktok, ensuring maximum exposure. We also incorporated an ‘instagram takeover’ by Jonah Bobongie, who took us behind the scenes of his podcast and promoted the campaign.

#A HOME FOR EVERY CHILD



CORPORATE SUPPORT

PUREBABY COLLABORATION

In May this year we launched the Nicole Warne x Purebaby for Adopt Change collection, a range of unisex babywear, thoughtfully designed by our ambassador Nicole Warne to raise awareness and support Adopt Change's efforts to address the need for safety, nurture and stability in the lives of children across the country unable to live safely at home.

Thank you to Purebaby, founder Mirabai Winford and the team for their generous support and contribution through this collaboration.

The collaboration raised vital funds for Adopt Change to bolster support of and advocacy for the 46,000 children living in the out-of-home care system in Australia, with infants and young children under the age of 4 representing the highest proportion of admissions to out-of-home care, and babies under one year old the most likely to be at risk of entering care.

The line features bespoke garments including baby grow suits, overalls, bodysuits, sets, kids' shirt and adult shirt. Each piece is made with Purebaby's signature sustainable organic cotton and features illustrations designed by Nicole Warne.

All profits from the collection are donated to Adopt Change, supporting displaced children and the families who care for them.

The campaign generated media across TV and print including Studio 10 and Marie Claire.

AJE BUNNIES

A huge thank you to fashion label Aje, and their continued support through the Aje x Adopt Change Bunnies collaboration. Thoughtfully made from offcuts of previous Aje collections, 100% of proceeds from each limited edition bunny sold goes towards supporting Adopt Change.

Since 2021, Aje has also donated over 400 bunnies to our MyPack project to provide kids entering care with a comforting friend who will be by their side.



>1,200
garments sold



“

To have my creative and philanthropic work intersect to benefit families and children in need has always been a dream of mine. After two years of discussions and collaboration with the dedicated teams at Purebaby and Adopt Change, I could not be prouder of my capsule collection.”

Nicole Warne Shadbolt
Ambassador

Thank you to our corporate supporters for their support of and contribution to our various programs.





515 *MyPacks have been assembled, delivered and distributed.*

Over **500** *knitted and quilted blankets lovingly made by the community*

MYPACK

MyPack is an Adopt Change initiative providing first-night packs to children and young people entering out-of-home care, who sometimes enter care with nothing more than the clothes they are wearing.

MyPacks include first night items such as a hand-made blanket, pyjamas, underwear, a soft toy, toothbrush, toothpaste, water bottle, colouring book/ pad and a pencil case with textas.

Adopt Change passionately believes MyPacks provide immeasurable emotional benefits to a child or young person arriving on their first night in out-of-home care.

The cosiness of a hand-blanket; a backpack that is your own when your world appears frightening and unsafe; a special teddy bear that is uniquely yours to provide comfort and textas to express your feelings when you cannot find the words.

These are all emotional benefits that cannot have a monetary value placed upon them.

We want to say a huge thank you to our Adopt Change community who have once again provided **over 500** lovingly hand-made blankets (knitted and quilted) and provide soft toys so that the children and young people know they are cared for. Your kindness is greatly appreciated and goes such a long way.

515 MyPacks have been assembled, delivered and distributed by Adopt Change this year across New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania. Adopt Change is continually looking for sponsorship or grants to provide MyPacks nationwide.

Approximately 784 children and young people enter out-of-home care in Tasmania each year. The Tasmanian Expansion Project will deliver 670 MyPacks over 36 months to children and young people in out-of-home care in Tasmania.

Through the generous support of the St George Flood Relief Grant and Commonwealth Bank, Adopt Change has been able to assemble and distribute MyPacks and Carer Packs which include pyjamas, a water bottle, toiletries, a book and cap to those in our community who have been devastated by the floods in Northern New South Wales.

We have also collaborated with Aje to include their limited-edition bunnies. These special bunnies are made from off cuts of fabric left over from beautiful Aje garments. Aje have kindly provided 400 bunnies to pack in the Adopt Change MyPacks.

Thank you to Wood Mackenzie Volunteers and Deloitte Volunteers who donated and assisted with the assembly of MyPacks in Sydney, New South Wales and Melbourne, Victoria.



Empower Change is an innovative program to support youth transitioning to adulthood with community, information and resources.

Each year 7,300 Australian youth aged 15-17 leave the childhood protection system in their transition to adulthood. This journey involves navigating relationships, finding housing and employment, opening bank accounts, locating important documents and learning to budget, often without the guidance and support that comes from being connected to family.

Empower Change enables youth access to subject matter experts in a safe and supportive environment, as well as connecting with their peers.

The program is co-facilitated by care leaver representatives, who are an instrumental part in providing key inputs across the year.

This year we ran our Empower Change sessions online, as well as presenting in schools. Our program consisted of twelve sessions, with topics ranging from budgeting, understanding trauma, maintaining a healthy mind and body, leaving care plans and more.

Thanks to the St George Foundation for their valuable support of the program, allowing it to be rolled out in 2022 which completes the program pilot.



www.eventsforchange.org.au/empowerchange

OUR FOUNDER, BOARD & CEO



Deborra-lee Furness
Founder



Victoria Buchan
Chair/Board Director



Helen Baker
Board Director



Dr. Tom Bourdon
Board Director



Paul Chandler
Board Director



Tom Imbesi
Board Director



Catherine McDonnell
Board Director



Mark Nixon
Board Director



Renée Carter
Chief Executive Officer

Deborra-lee Furness

Founder

Deborra-lee Furness is an internationally acclaimed actress as well as a passionate supporter of children and defender of their human rights across the globe. Deborra-lee's humanitarian work for children is a driving force in her life. It is her passion that children all over the world be given every chance to live a fulfilled life and achieve their full potential. As founder of National Adoption Awareness Month (NAAM) and Adopt Change in Australia, Deborra-lee has been a driving force for improving adoption programs, procedures and legislation, and raising awareness and understanding of the issues of vulnerable children. Deborra-lee is also Patron of the Lighthouse Foundation; World Vision Ambassador, Patron of the Bone Marrow Donor Institute; Patron of International Adoptive Families of Queensland; on the boards of World Wide Orphans Australia and the UN Women for Peace Association; and co-founder of the Hopeland organisation.

Victoria Buchan

Chair/Board Director

As Director of Communications and Public Relations at the Nine Network Australia, Victoria Buchan has extensive experience in the corporate communications sector. Previously Victoria owned and operated The Lantern Group and still retains a role as Director of the company that specialises in publicity and media relations in the entertainment industry. Victoria began her career as a journalist on the Daily Mirror before joining Network 10 as a publicist. She has worked with Fairfax, Fox Studios Australia and the Australian Broadcasting Commission where she was Director of Corporate Affairs. Victoria's journey with the adoption community began while working

with Deborra-lee Furness and discovering the injustices involved. She is inspired by those fighting for change and the rights of children to have a loving family. Since beginning this work Victoria has been touched by many people, including her own family and friends who have experience with adoption.

Helen Baker

Board Director

Adopted from the Philippines, Helen is a passionate and determined advocate for adoption and believes all children have the right to grow up in a loving and permanent home. Helen brings her professional and personal adoption experience to the Board. With a background in legal and professional services, previously a Lead Client Service Director at Deloitte as well as owning and operating a legal recruitment company for over ten years, Helen is a highly motivated and driven individual. Helen is the founder and CEO of Spill the Beans, a social enterprise empowering young people to voice their ideas, stories and inspiration. When Helen is not running around after her three children, she is running marathons; the Great Wall of China marathon being the highlight so far. Helen is currently in the process of searching for her birth family in the Philippines.

Dr. Tom Bourdon

Board Director

Dr Tom Bourdon is a leader and consultant who works with Diversity & Inclusion (D&I), social justice, LGBTQI, and education-focused organisations. Over the past two decades, Tom has served as Head of Inclusion & Diversity at Staples, Executive Director of Greater Boston PFLAG, and Director of LGBT Centers at UCLA, NYU and Tufts University. He has coached, trained and consulted with thousands

of individuals in corporate, non-profit, education and government sectors and has been an Adjunct Professor at Merrimack College since 2013, teaching grad-level courses on diversity, social justice and identity development. Tom and husband Jimmy became parents through open adoption in the US. Having relocated to Australia in 2019, Tom hopes to increase education and awareness here around the positive aspects of adoption. Tom received his Doctorate in Organisational Leadership from Northeastern University, his Masters of Education from UCLA, and his Bachelor's degree in Business Admin from Babson College. He also holds a certification in Life Coaching from NYU.

Paul Chandler

Board Director

Professor Paul Chandler, a proud Bidjigal man, was the first in his family to finish primary school. He graduated from Sydney University with a BSc in Psychology and a Master's in Education. He completed a Master of Science (in Psychology) and PhD in cognition and learning, the first Aboriginal person to receive a PhD from UNSW. Paul worked with the Australian Research Council often travelling interstate and overseas to teach and research. He served two terms as Head of the School of Education at UNSW and was recognised as one of the top 10 Scientists in Australia. He joined the University of Wollongong (UOW) as Dean of Education in 2007, the first Aboriginal Faculty Dean in Australia. During this time Paul and Michelle became foster carers for two siblings, aged two and six weeks, which they describe as the most joyous time of their lives. Paul was the visionary behind the Early Start Project and was Executive Director in the planning stage. He was Pro-Vice Chancellor (Inclusion and Outreach) at UOW overseeing their Aboriginal Centre (WIC), the Inaugural Aboriginal Strategy and Reconciliation Action Plan. Now semi-retired Paul is back at UNSW and numerous government and private boards to bring about positive social change. He also Chaired the My Forever Family NSW Advisory Committee for three years.

Tom Imbesi

Board Director

Tom became the Chairman of Deloitte Australia in May 2017 after serving as Managing Partner for Deloitte Victoria from March 2015 until May 2017. He is also a member of the Deloitte Asia Pacific Board and the Deloitte Global Board. Tom has 35 years' experience in auditing, both in Australia and in the USA and he has been a partner for 23 years. Tom specialises in the provision of assurance and advisory services to large ASX listed companies and is currently Lead Audit Partner for ASX listed Woolworths Limited and IRESS Limited. Tom also served on the Board of the Reach Foundation and was Chair of their Audit Committee.

Catherine McDonnell

Board Director

Catherine has been practising media and entertainment law for over 25 years and has actively served on the Board of various not-for-profit organisations for over eight years. Catherine brings significant corporate governance experience to the Board of Adopt Change and joined the Board to use her skills to improve the future for children needing families.

Mark Nixon

Board Director

Mark is a Partner with Professional Services EY. He has a passion to assist those most vulnerable in our community coming from his public sector experience in the Senior Executive Service but primarily from his time as a NSW Police Officer. He saw first-hand the impacts of child abuse and poorer life outcomes for those who have suffered from abuse. Mark is committed to improving the life outcomes of children and young people and has been working in the sector for the past 15 years. He knows that every child deserves a stable home and to be loved and cherished. He sees Adopt Change as making a difference to the lives of children and young people through educating parents and advocacy, but above all by providing a home for life. Mark is married to Sarah and has two young daughters. He also spends time with his two older boys playing water polo with them. It's one of life's great pleasures playing sport with your kids.

Renée Carter

Chief Executive Officer

Renée Carter is the CEO of Adopt Change and a passionate advocate for the wellbeing of children and young people. She leads the team of Adopt Change Changemakers nationally, with major activities including the #THRIVE National Permanency Conference; My Forever Family NSW; Yesvember A Home for Every Child campaign; MyPacks first night back packs; Empower Change; along with engagement with community, government, child welfare sector; and is regularly sought to speak with media about child welfare, permanency and adoption. Renée has held memberships on various Advisory Groups including Institute Advisory Group for the independent research centre, Institute of Open Adoption Studies (The University of Sydney); government and cross-sector advisory groups and taskforces (including in NSW: Leaving Care / After Care Sector Advisory Group; Court Ordered Contact Reference Group (re: Mothers in Custody); Covid-19 Child Wellbeing Taskforce/Sub-committees); Vice Chair of NSW Committee on Adoption and Permanent Care (COAPC) and Re:Think Orphanages Working Group Australia. She is a member of Australian Institute of Company Directors, with a background in communications and executive management, along with board level experience in corporate and not-for-profit sectors. Her experience includes three years as Chair of charity Child Abuse Prevention Service (CAPS), an organisation focused on early intervention, education and support of families and communities; and Managing Director of creative corporate and investor communications specialists Designate Group. Renée is committed to influencing child welfare policy and practice to deliver timely and effective outcomes for children so they can have better childhood experiences and a brighter future.

OUR CHANGEMAKER PROGRAM



Want to get involved?

Enquire about joining our
Changemakers team
changemakers@adoptchange.org.au

Adopt Change Changemakers are passionate about bettering the lives of children, young people and families across Australia.

Thank you to our Changemakers in 2022 who have made an invaluable contribution to Adopt Change through assisting with Mypacks, the Empower Change program and spreading our message to find A Home For Every Child.

Our Changemakers include Volunteers, Ambassadors, Influencers, our Board and staff team, who all work towards our shared vision of every child having access to safe, nurturing and stable homes.

Calling all Changemakers!

Are you a great project coordinator? Are your admin skills unmatched? Maybe you love to get involved in events? Wherever your talents lie, we'd love to have you on the team. Contact us at changemakers@adoptchange.org.au to find out more about volunteering with Adopt Change. Thanks to the help of our Changemakers we're able to continue our work in making a difference to the lives of children and young people and creating **#aHomeForEveryChild**.

- Sign up to our community to receive updates, newsletters, event invitations and learn how to support our mission. You can also follow us on social media and share our message and campaigns.
- Our Changemakers volunteer their time and skills in a variety of ways, such as social media support, content writing and event support. If your place of business allows volunteer hours for staff, you can join us for larger projects helping to assist in positive change for children and young people.
- Enquire with us about opening your home and your heart to a child in need by becoming a foster carer or adoptive parent. We need all types of carers for all kinds of children, from part-time through to permanent care.
- Donate to support our work. All donations are tax deductible and underpin our work towards more safe and nurturing homes for kids.
- Knit a blanket for our MyPacks, the first night backpacks for children entering foster care.

Meet some of our Changemakers

Jonah Bobongie and Lisa Sthalekar are two Adopt Change Ambassadors making a difference.



Jonah Bobongie
Ambassador



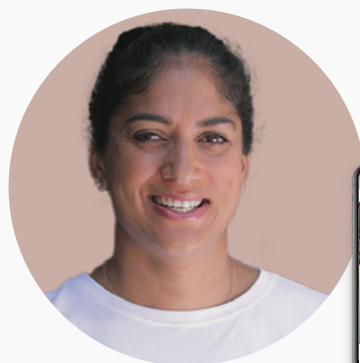
Jonah is an invaluable Adopt Change Ambassador who has tirelessly helped support and share our message through his influence online and in podcasts this year.

Jonah is an award-winning podcaster, radio producer and lived experience advocate who believes adoption and permanency are important for allowing those in vulnerable situations to experience family and stability in a safe environment.

Born in Cairns and immediately placed in foster care, Jonah grew up with his adoptive family in Brisbane. Growing up in a Caucasian-Indigenous mixed Australian family, Jonah felt disconnected from his Papua New Guinea heritage and culture. At the age of 22, Jonah embarked on a journey to reunite with his birth family, reconnect with his heritage and unearth his self-identity.

His journey of self-discovery led to the launch of award-winning podcast, *Led By A Heartstring*, which invites the world to follow along as he delves into the world of adoption. *Led By A Heartstring* received the bronze award for Best Indigenous Podcast at the Australian Podcast Awards and provides a platform to connect and be there for other adoptees. Jonah feels it allows him to be a voice for adoptees through the podcast and sharing his experience.

"I hope to continue to work towards creating change around adoption and foster care in Australia to give children and young people equal opportunities to grow in a stable home environment."



Lisa Sthalekar
Ambassador



Lisa's support and devotion as an Adopt Change Ambassador has been instrumental in helping us find A Home For Every Child this year. Lisa also penned the foreword for the book *'Moon Child'*, authored by Adopt Change community member Geraldine Moran.

Lisa is a former Australian cricketer and the first player in women's history to score 1,000 runs and take 100 wickets in ODI cricket. She's since carved out a career as an accomplished cricket commentator, covering Indian Premier League seasons, T20 World Cups (women's and men's) and U19 men's World Cup, Channel Seven's BBL and WBBL and the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Lisa is also an adoptee and lived experience advocate. Her parents (father originally from India and mother from England) found her abandoned in a hospital in Poona, 170km from Mumbai, India. At 3 weeks of age, Lisa set out on a journey with her new family and wasn't officially adopted until she was 2 years of age. Lisa also has an older, adopted sister, Caprini. Lisa says her story is a really positive one and as an ambassador for Adopt Change she has become much more aware of the broader issues surrounding permanency and adoption in Australia. Lisa believes kids deserve to have a permanent, loving and safe home available to them. She says,

"The fact I was raised in the US, Kenya and Australia by a loving family, that I was given every opportunity by my parents to excel in sport and that I now have the good fortune to travel the world, I consider myself blessed. There are so many other kids in my situation who don't get that."

Adopt Change has a great team of employee Changemakers. Meet some of our team:

From its beginnings as an initiative run by our Founder and volunteers, to a couple of staff, Adopt Change has a growing team to undertake it's ambitious but vital task of ensuring all kids have safe and stable family homes. With a staff team of around 30 people – part time and full time, our team come from a wide range of skill backgrounds, with a number of the team joining with a personal connection with out-of-home care or adoption. Our team fulfil roles including program operations, new carer recruitment and support, training and events, communications, policy, advocacy and administration.



Stephanie van den Broek
Head of Program Operations

Stephanie van den Broek is the Head of Program Operations at My Forever Family NSW. She joined the team in 2019 and brought over 15 years' experience in analytics, operations management and organisational improvement to the program. In her role, Stephanie ensures that the My Forever Family NSW program is focussed on its strategic objectives and contractual obligations to the Department of Communities and Justice. She manages the Recruitment, Training, Support and Advocacy teams to ensure that carers have the skills and support they need to fulfil their valued role caring for children and young people in the out-of-home care sector in NSW.

"Every single member of the My Forever Family NSW team is passionate about improving outcomes for carers and children in care. It's a privilege to work in a team that come to work every day committed to making a difference"



Aleksandra Jordeska
Finance Manager

Aleksandra Jordeska is Adopt Change's Finance Manager. She has 20 years of experience in accounting and finance in both corporate and not for profit sectors and brought her strong analytical skills to Adopt Change in 2017. In her role she takes care of the day-to-day accounting, internal control and processes and data analysis, supporting management with financial reporting, forecasting, budgeting, and steering the finances through the ongoing growth and associated changes of the organisation. Aleksandra's belief in the importance of a child's right to a have safe, nurturing, and permanent family home was strengthened after she became a mother.

"I'm a very passionate supporter of the work of Adopt Change towards supporting families and children to thrive. I am proud to be part of the Adopt Change family of changemakers who inspire me every day with their passion and dedication to create meaningful change."



Loren Dumbrell

Manager Carer Support at My Forever Family NSW

Loren Dumbrell is Manager Carer Support at My Forever Family NSW and oversees a dedicated team who work to empower carers to advocate for the children in their care by providing responsive and proactive support, advice and resources.

Loren and her team work collaboratively with agencies and existing carers to help improve the out-of-home care system and carers' experiences.

An essential role the carer support team play is creating a community of support through connecting carers with support groups, career reference groups and training to support carers through at any stage of their carer-journey.

"Every day is different, and I feel inspired by the staff I work with and the carers we support. I love supporting carers to make positive change in a child's life, and love being part of an organisation that is creating individual and systemic change. I'm proud of everything we've achieved together this year."



Kaisey Hayes

Projects and Grants Coordinator

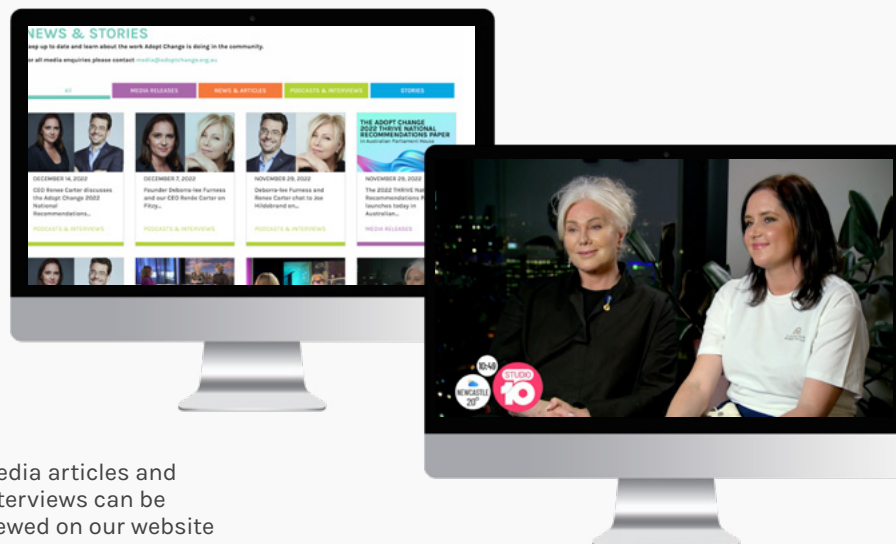
Kaisey Hayes is the Projects and Grants Coordinator at Adopt Change and she is mother to two children, who came into her family through Adoption and Permanent Care.

She strongly believes in forming connections with family of origin and is committed to helping her own children to form and maintain their own identity. To foster this, she has surrounded her family with a network of families, amongst them adoptees, adoptive and permanent carers. Having navigated the 'system', Kaisey is passionate about improving the journey for children in care and adoptive parents alike, with a particular focus on providing additional support for Adoptive and Permanent care families.

Kaisey is also a qualified Pharmacist.

"The most rewarding aspect of being part of the Adopt Change team is being surrounded by people who are equally as passionate about change for vulnerable children and young people - that sustains and inspires me."

IN THE MEDIA



Media articles and interviews can be viewed on our website

To spread awareness about our goals to ensure children and young people's safety and wellbeing remains a focus in Australia, Adopt Change frequently communicates with the media.

Proactive engagement with media outlets at national and regional levels ensure children and young people in care and their carers are on the public agenda.

This allows us to find new potential carer homes for children; raise awareness around permanency (including adoption); and ensure children are safe and supported at home, in school and within the community.

We are sought out by media organisations to provide insight on current issues surrounding adoption, foster care, permanency and child welfare, as well as helping platform the voices of carers.

Some of the media outlets that Adopt Change and My Forever Family NSW appeared on this year include:



- [Studio 10](#)
- [Prospects](#)
- [Feed Play Love](#)
- [Marie Clare](#)
- [SBS Australia](#) (then translated into over 25 languages and local SBS networks)
- [Nova - Fitzy & Wippa](#)
- [ABC - Weekend Breakfast](#)
- [2GB](#)



- [2AY Radio Albury](#)
- [Area News](#), Griffith
- [Bay Post](#), Moruya Examiner
- [The Western Advocate](#)
- 2BS Bathurst
- [7 News Central West](#)
- [ABC Radio Broken Hill](#)
- [Dubbo Photo News](#)
- [Northern Daily Leader](#), Tamworth
- ABC New England North West
- [ABC Radio Newcastle](#)
- 2NUR FM
- [Parra News](#)
- [Punjab Express](#)
- The Mid North Coast News
- [News Of The Area](#), Port Macquarie
- News Hub
- [7 News COAST](#)
- [Hope FM 103.2](#)
- [Illawarra Mercury](#)
- ABC Radio Illawarra
- [Central Coast News](#)

#A HOME FOR EVERY CHILD



**Want to
get involved?**

Enquire about joining our
Changemakers team
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