



**Permanent
Care and
Adoptive
Families**



Annual Report 2020

Permanent Care and Adoptive Families

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All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible

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Thanks and Gratitude

To the many individuals and organisations who have contributed and supported Permanent Care and Adoptive Families this year, thank you for giving, sharing and caring:

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To Adoption Services at the Department of Justice and Community Safety, in particular: Matthew Reeder and Vicki Shannon

Thank you to our members who have generously shared their experiences in the case studies and quotes presented in the annual report.



Acknowledgement of country

In the spirit of reconciliation PCA Families acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Everyone is welcome at PCA Families

We value and celebrate diversity in all its forms. PCA Families actively supports inclusion of people from LGBTIQ+ communities, people with disabilities, people from diverse cultural and linguistic communities, people with non-traditional family structures, and people with diverse religious beliefs and affiliations.

PCA Families is a child safe organisation

We believe that children have the right to feel and be safe at all times.

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Message from our patron Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott AM



What an extraordinary year it has been for families in Victoria! And how well Permanent Care and Adoptive Families has risen to the challenge in adapting the ways in which it supports families.

On looking back over this year we can see the flexibility and resourcefulness of all those families who saw their kitchens and loungerooms suddenly turned into classrooms and offices. The isolation and restrictions brought an additional layer of stress to the complex lives of many permanent care and adoptive families.

Beyond the “COVID cocoon” many things have continued. The Permanency Amendments Longitudinal Study (PALS) is still progressing and it has collected and analysed important information from a broad range of perspectives, including those of permanent carers. I do hope that we will know the findings soon and put them to good use.

It has been said that the gap between what we know and what we don't know in relation to the well-being of children is smaller than the gap between what we know and what we do. May we put our emerging knowledge to work in the interests of the children and young people we cherish, and may we listen very carefully to what they are saying to us.

I hope the year ahead brings health and happiness to all permanent care and adoptive families.

Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott AM

From the President Meredith Carter



Wow it's been a wild ride hasn't it? So much has happened and where to start? Quite apart from the pandemic we emerged from 2019/ 2020 having actively recruited a wonderful new CEO, as well as actively recruiting some fabulous new members to the board and its subcommittees.

Along the way we also moved premises, completed the second evaluation in two years of the Flexible Funding service, pivoted our much-loved Journal Club to deliver peer support on-line, and introduced the new daytime on-line support group, Click and Connect and revamped our branding and website.

Lisa Milani came on board as CEO in the week Melbourne went into lockdown in March 2020. Lisa's appointment followed six productive years at the helm by Brenda Carmen with a great contribution in between the two from Alannah Andrews stepping up to the role of General Manager in the Interim.

At the end of her first week in the job and one of the last days we could gather together before lockdown, Lisa participated in a strategic planning day, involving the board, subcommittee members and staff it was a great orientation for her!

Selection of a CEO and strong strategic planning are critical aspects of any board's responsibilities. They are key to ensuring an organisation is not only well managed and doing its best to meet the immediate needs of members. They are also vital to ensuring it is well governed, accountable, and looking to the future.

Our new vision envisages a future where: *every child who cannot live permanently with their birth parents thrives in a strong, stable, and permanent family.* It reflects the evidence that stable, permanent arrangements for children are so important to their lifelong wellbeing. It also underpins our purpose – why PCA Families exists. That is:

Permanent care, kinship care and adoptive families have committed to helping their children thrive and we are committed to helping them do it.

It is clear there remains much to be done to help our community of families. Not least is the ongoing challenge to increase awareness of permanent care in the broader community as well as within government. The needs of this group must not be an afterthought and the needs of adoptive families, often just as vulnerable, must also be included.

This means advocacy is a critical role for our organization and we are delighted by our CEO's strategic approach to these issues in close collaboration with the Board.

Successes on this front include our participation in the development of the Victorian Government's Strong Carers Stronger Children strategy released in October 2019. It gave us a significant opportunity to highlight to government the need for greater attention to the profile and needs of the growing population of permanent care families.

A Departmental mail out to all permanent carers in late 2019 certainly led to much greater awareness of our services amongst many of the families who need our support, reflected in a significant increase in the volume of calls to the Helpline.

And as the pandemic kicked in we were pleased to see the responsiveness of government to the need for extra support for our families. This occurred through both the Helpline and Flexible Funding brokerage service. However, we were dismayed when at the end of June 2020, we found that the Departmental sought to review all Helpline services in out of home care.

We look forward to the formal outcomes of the review. We are confident that the PCA Families Helpline meets the criteria established by the international evidence. It has also been subject to close examination as part of the two detailed evaluations of the related Flexible Funding service noted above.

Meantime we are delighted that our persistent evidence-based advocacy has led to strong support for an increased recurrent base for the Flexible Fund and are very grateful to the former Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Minister for their strong support of this program.

Children and young people who join a family through adoption, kinship care or permanent care may not have had the best start in life. We want our families not only to be able to meet their basic needs. We want them to be able to offer their children a stable childhood with the same experiences and advantages any other children can expect.

Together with our partners in government, the not-for-profit sector and others, the PCA Families' board will continue to strive on your behalf to achieve this goal. We offer our very grateful thanks to all of you who have helped us along the way during 2019-20 and look forward to working with you again into the future. Amongst the many, special thanks to Jaclyn Letts who took on the role of minutes secretary and more for the board during 2019-20.

Meredith Carter
President – PCA Families

From the CEO

Lisa Milani



As Meredith mentioned, I had the pleasure of joining PCA Families for the last few months of 2019-2020, and what an incredible few months it was!

This year has brought many ups and downs for families due to the devastating impact of bushfires followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a state emergency being declared by Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews in March 2020.

For many of you the pandemic resulted in more time to connect with family, getting back to basics, needing to adjust to working from home and remote learning, to job loss or reduced hours, financial stress, mental health issues, social isolation and safety concerns. It has been an incredibly challenging time for many of you, and I, like most people, was glad to say goodbye to 2020.

I have had the great privilege to connect with a growing number of members, particularly around your lived experience of being a permanent care, kinship care or adoptive family. I have been genuinely in awe of your collective resilience and commitment to supporting your children to reach their fullest potential, and to heal from trauma, attachment issues and loss/grief issues, in addition to the complexities that COVID-19 has brought.

I truly believe the permanent care, kinship care and adoptive community is bursting with unsung heroes that show up every day to make a difference in the lives of children, irrespective of the setbacks along the way.

As you'll read in the annual report, we have had a key focus on public policy reform over the year (and beyond). As you know, the needs of children do not change by virtue of a permanent care or adoption order being granted.

I am pleased that in recent years there has been growing recognition of the needs of permanent care and adoptive families beyond the granting of a permanent order. There is of course still significant progress to be made.

I would like to particularly thank Minister Luke Donnellan – Minister for Child Protection and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers and his advisors; colleagues in the former Department of Health and Human Services (now Department of Families, Fairness and Housing – DFFH); and Adoption Services at the Department of Justice and Community Safety for your openness to exploring how families augmented through permanent care and adoption can be better supported into the future.

Of particular note is the commitment made by Minister Donnellan and the now DFFH to provide ongoing flexible funding to permanent care families, adoptive families (if child has additional needs), and families with a parenting order via the Family Law Court (the latter two if the family is in receipt of the care allowance). I am also thankful for additional funding to ensure families were supported during COVID-19.

It is critical that permanent care, kinship care and adoptive families are well supported to achieve the best very outcomes. This includes ensuring that:

- Children are afforded opportunities to heal from trauma, abuse and neglect;
- Children and families can access peer support to build connections with others with similar life experiences to reduce feelings of isolation and share wisdom;
- Along with readily being able to access timely, specialist services when needed, for example, child or family-based therapeutic services, and support at key life junctures including the transition to permanent care or adoption, teenage years and adulthood, in order to support optimal development, positive family functioning and ultimately family preservation.

Thank you to members who have contributed to our public policy and advocacy activities. It is so important that you and your family's collective voices are heard to promote systems change that is both child and family-centred.

Thank you also to external stakeholders who have supported this work, as well as our Alliance partners and other external stakeholders that we work collaboratively with in the delivery of our client services.

As this report will demonstrate, much has been achieved by PCA Families this year. Thank you to the PCA Families team for your incredible work with our members and clients. The work you do sits at the heart of our organisation.

Also, a special thanks to the support provided by our volunteers and to the Board of Directors who generously donate their time and expertise.

Lisa Milani
Chief Executive Officer – PCA Families



2020-2022 Strategic Plan

Who are we?

Permanent Care and Adoptive Families (PCA Families) is a not-for-profit member-based organisation representing the permanent care and adoption community in Victoria. Established by parents from this community in 2003, we continue to be guided by the lived experience of our members. We take a child-centred and family-focussed approach to supporting strong and stable families.

As the go to organisation for the community, PCA Families delivers peer support, therapeutic programs and advocacy informed by lived experience and research.

Our Vision

That every child who cannot live permanently with their birth parents thrives in a strong, stable, and permanent family.

Our Purpose

Permanent care, kinship care and adoptive families have committed to helping their children thrive and we are committed to helping them do it.

Our Mission

We advocate on behalf of and deliver peer support and other trauma informed services for permanent care and adoptive families. Our independent support is trusted by our families and often critical to their success.

“There’s always the support there, that if you’re stuck with something or you don’t know where to navigate or you’re feeling confused, you know there’s a number to call, PCA Families (is) just behind you.”

Our Pillars

Building on our history, our 2020-2022 strategic pillars seize opportunities to continue to build our membership base, strengthen our client services, advocate with and for our members and build a sustainable funding base to serve our community into the future.

Pillar 1: Grow and engage our membership

Systemically reach all new permanent care and adoptive families to encourage them to become members. Engage families to further build a sense of community among members. We will:

- Ensure new Permanent Care Order (PCO) and adoptive families are referred to PCA Families by placement agencies, relevant government departments and Courts.
- Engage members to develop a stronger sense of belonging and shared understanding within our community.
- Promote Journal Club and other peer support related activities.

Pillar 2: Deliver high quality services to our clients

Deliver client-centred support, advice and advocacy programs based on lived experience and develop high quality evidence base about the needs of our clients. We will:

- From review of the operational model, implement a Quality Management System (QMS) for the Helpline and Flexi Fund Program.
- Develop outcomes framework associated with our programs and services.
- Participate in the Permanency Amendments Longitudinal Study.
- Pursue opportunities to resource research and evaluation activities.

Pillar 3: Engage and advocate with key stakeholders for strategic outcomes

Influence the service system through bringing lived experience and evidence into public policy and service delivery decision-making. Promote opportunities to increase the capacity of members to be heard in public policy development and in the service system. We will:

- Position and engage proactively with key partners, governments, policymakers, sector peaks and other external stakeholders, to secure our reputation as a leader in the sector.
- Identify advocacy priorities alongside our members and undertake strategic advocacy.

Pillar 4: Diversify and grow our revenue

Secure diverse and sustainable resources from government agencies, philanthropy, individual donors and private companies, to contribute to our purpose and programs. We will:

- Secure and retain government funding streams.
- Fundraise for useful and necessary supports to make life easier for our families, e.g., parent training.
- Engage with philanthropy to resource peer support activities.

Strategic Enablers

Our vision for the future is underpinned by five strategic enablers. These enablers relate to ensuring strong organisational infrastructure and are critical for us to deliver our strategy.

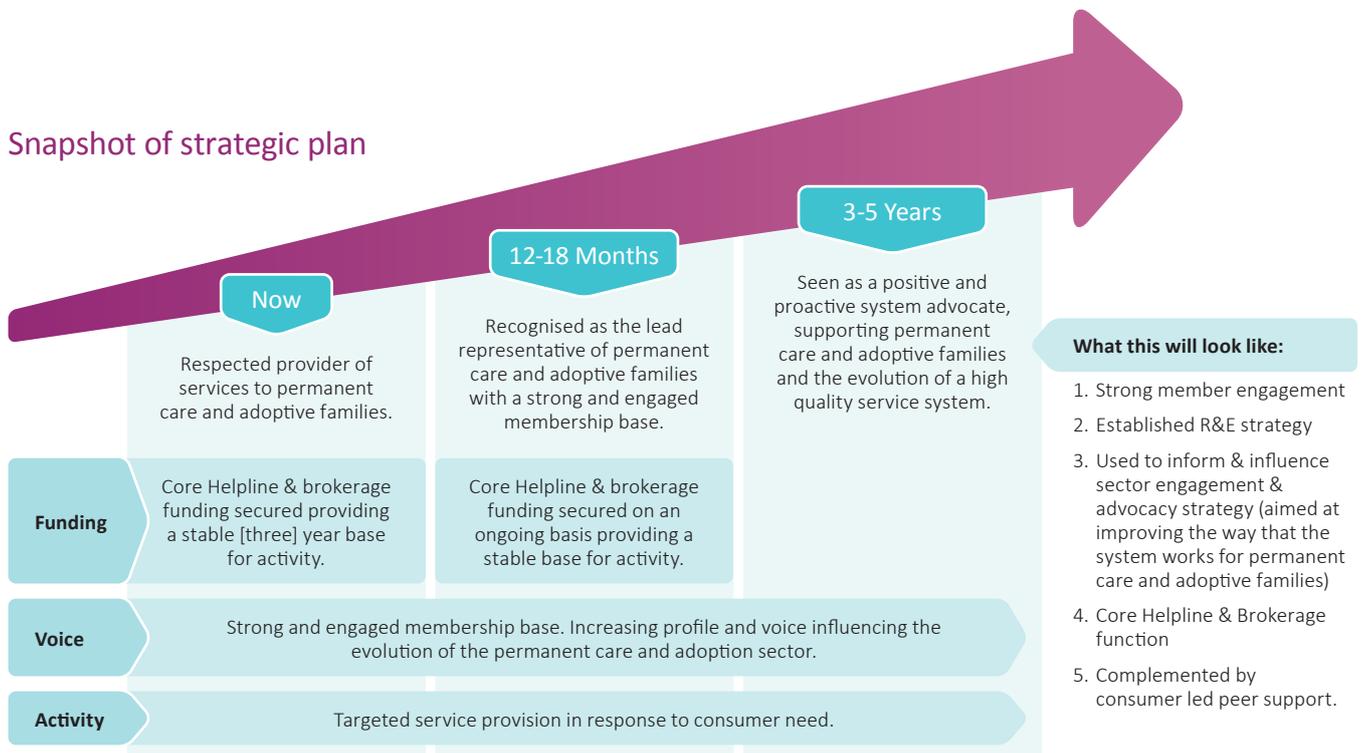
We will:

1. Embed recommendations of workforce review undertaken to provide structure and support for our professional staff and volunteers.
2. Ensure our database can capture the needs/profile of members and clients and the outcomes of our work, aligned with QMS and outcomes framework.
3. Ensure good governance, to deliver financial and accountability systems and clear reporting aligned with the priorities of this strategic plan.
4. Develop external communications and branding strategy to underpin communications with members, client service delivery, stakeholder/partner engagement and revenue development.
5. Develop and launch the PCA Families website as a source of resources, linkages and inspiration.

2017-2020 Strategic Plan Review



Snapshot of strategic plan



Membership engagement highlights

We have seen a marked increase in our membership over the course of the 2017-2020 strategic plan



We started to build on our online presence in 2019-2020



Our peer support group, Journal Club celebrated its 10th year!



We have consolidated the reach of our support to families and secured a sustainable funding base

Snapshot of Helpline

Year	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Helpline funding	\$307,562	\$314,721	\$358,266

Snapshot of Flexible Funding

Year	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Total Flexible funds (\$)	3,156,945	2,837,567	2,520,217
Flexible funds for distribution – recurrent (\$)	885,958	903,677	921,751
Flexible Funds for distribution – top-up (\$)	2,270,988	1,933,890	1,598,466
Flexible funds distributed (\$)	2,405,203	2,591,972	\$2,496,175
Total program administration (\$) (note includes both PCA Families and OzChild)	219,256	223,641	562,216 [†]
No. of applications made	1,041	1,435	1,321

[†] Administration costs were increased in 2019-2020 to more fairly reflect program costs. Note this year's amount also includes additional operational funds received for specific projects, including program evaluation.

“One of the things I like about the organisation (PCA Families), is that when I access certain supports, they didn't expect me to fit into a box. It was very nice to be able to come to an organisation that didn't say... we don't cover you.”



Since the start of the 2017-2020 strategic plan, we have established a more stable funding base. This aims to ensure that we can continue to serve the permanent care and adoptive community into the future. Funding by the former Department of Health and Human Services to deliver Helpline services and significant fixed-term boosts to flexible funding helps ensure that families are able to meet the needs of the child or children in their care post the granting of a permanent order.

We have been supported by a range of philanthropic organisations. They include significant funding from the Buckland Foundation to deliver regional/rural peer support over three years. We achieved 59 outreach visits to country and regional Victoria, supporting 412 parents, carers, and their children face to face; and there were 530 beneficiaries to the overall project. We have also been grateful for support from Helen MacPherson Smith Trust, Matana Foundation, and R. E. Ross Trust to deliver Life Story Work.

“It's wonderful to be able to ring an independent person, and just speak to them, and they're there for you. It's just critically important in terms of that loneliness, in terms of feeling overwhelmed that you have somebody that you feel is there for you. (PCA Families) actually make the effort to help you solve the problem or the challenge that you've talked about.”

We are a reputable and respected member-based organisation

PCA Families has cemented its role as the go to organisation for matters related to permanent care and adoptive families in Victoria, including by both government and non-government agencies.

We have ensured permanent care and adoptive families are heard and supported

Permanent care, kinship care and adoptive families are an often hidden and under-supported group caring for some of the most vulnerable children in our community. We often hear from parents and carers that raising children from permanent care, kinship care and adoption backgrounds is rewarding. However, many families also tell us they experience real challenges. We are committed to ensuring families have their voices heard by those who make decisions on behalf of children.

Over the course of this strategic plan, this has included:

- Engagement with members about their experience of permanent care and adoption to inform our advocacy priorities and promote systems change based on the lived experience of our members. Just one example of supporting members to have their voices heard directly, was facilitating interviews between our members and the Permanency Amendments Longitudinal Study researchers.
- Submitting a response to the Permanency Amendments Inquiry by the Commission for Children and Young People and facilitating member participation at roundtables with the Commission.
- Submitting a response to the review into the Adoption Act by the Law Reform Commission.
- Provided feedback to the Victorian Department of Education about revisions to the Out of Home Care Partnering Agreement (OHCPA) for children attending Government, Catholic and Independent Schools, including of the needs of permanent care children (past the first 12 months of a PCO), adopted children and children in family reunification programs.
- Submitting a response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs "Inquiry into local adoption as a viable option for children in Out of Home Care" about the need for appropriate resources for children and young people with permanent care and adoptive backgrounds.
- Participating in the Carer Strategy Working Group, a sub-group of the Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group. This was an opportunity to highlight the importance of peer support, information technology, Helpline, and respite for permanent care parents and carers. We have also advocated for permanent care and adoptive families to have equal access to training, raised as an important issue by our members.
- Participating on the Permanency Amendments Longitudinal Study (PALS) Working Group, a two-year project reviewing the impact of the legislative amendments to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 in 2016. As a member of the PALS Working Group, we have highlighted important issues raised by members in relation to the legal and practical implications of these changes since the permanency amendments.

"We have saved (government) many thousands of dollars over the years. Of course, we don't do this for thanks or accolades, but a small amount of financial assistance at this time will ease the pressure a little and show that we are appreciated and our efforts are not forgotten."



Information, Advocacy and Support Services

2019-2020 financial year highlights



357

new members welcomed



1,321

Flexible Funding applications processed



2,019

Helpline contacts responded to



\$2,570,768

funding distributed to eligible families



30

peer support group sessions

Helpline

PCA Families Helpline is a free, independent and confidential service, offering short term support, practical information, advocacy and referrals to other services. Our approach is child-centred, family-focussed and trauma-informed.

Of the 2019 Helpline calls received (or made to clients requiring additional support) over the course of 2019-2020, 94% of clients were families with a child or children on a PCO. This highlights the high level of ongoing support many families augmented through permanent care require.

Most parents/carers who accessed the Helpline called once over 2019-2020, but there were also 24 parents/carers who in combination called for support 414 times over the financial year (average of 17 calls each). This includes one client who contacted PCA Families 41 times alone seeking support.

The majority of Helpline calls were from families post the granting of a permanent order and who were no longer receiving any case management services or support from either Child Protection or the original placement agency.

This gap in the availability of supports post-order means that families often have little or no support in place to support them to provide trauma-informed care to their children. Families report real benefits from access to emotional and practical support from PCA Families, alongside links to other services and access to funding.

“It seems to me, the role of caring for a child in this sort of situation can be very lonely, and it’s wonderful to be able to have someone, a human being that you can talk to, that isn’t necessarily part of the formal structure of the department, but you really do feel that they are there for you, and will try and help you, and it’s just wonderful.”

Why parents and carers called us pre-COVID-19

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the reasons permanent care and adoptive parents/carers contacted us remained consistent with the previous financial year, including themes centred around managing children’s behaviour and the impacts of trauma, family relationships, educational issues and navigating family contact.

Parents and carers often contacted us post the granting of a PCO seeking information about financial supports. Too often future provision for their needs was not factored into case planning. This has required advocacy both at an individual and systemic issue to ensure children’s needs were met and that families were set up for success.

Families have also struggled with inconsistencies across systems. In some instances, this has resulted in children being ineligible for initiatives that they otherwise should be included in. One example is the Additional Childcare Subsidy. Despite children on a PCO being eligible, and PCA Families’ staff providing support letters, in many cases the claims were still rejected. This extra financial and emotional stress on families with young children was too often not easily resolved.

The pandemic impact

Since the state emergency was declared in March 2020, the public health concerns and restrictions shifted the level of urgency and complexity of calls. Parents and carers presented with greater levels of distress. The broader pre-COVID-19 Helpline themes were still apparent. However, the focus, scope and intensity were different.

The key COVID-19 related issues clients have contacted the Helpline for included:

Financial stress

Financial stress was a key overarching theme, incorporating issues such as reduced or loss of income. This had an impact on home mortgage repayments and rental payments, as well as families’ ability to meet day-to-day costs including groceries, winter clothing for children and IT costs.

Family stability

Another key theme was the strain COVID-19 placed on family relationships. Families consistently reported more behavioural outbursts, as well as the mental and physical health of children and young people with complex needs, undermining family stability. Families who contacted the Helpline often have few or no other services involved. Without the support of PCA Families, many would have been at risk of family breakdown.

Mental health and wellbeing concerns

During the pandemic restrictions, children and young people’s needs and behaviours were reported by families as more extreme. This was compounded by children’s complex trauma experiences. A number of children within the permanent care and adoption community experienced a decline in their mental health. In some instances, the significant risk to young people’s health and wellbeing necessitated first-time admissions to hospital inpatient units.

Families also found it harder to access professional services due to COVID-19 restrictions. Many services quickly adapted by offering alternatives such as telehealth appointments. However, families often met delays before they could access services.

Some families reported that telehealth did not meet the needs or preferences of their child(ren) or young person. Building a relationship with a new therapist can be challenging in ordinary times. It seemed that telehealth was particularly difficult for younger children. School aged children were already spending extended times learning online due to school closures. This also meant some refusals to engage in another online service for therapy.

Family contact issues

Families also experienced challenges due to a lack of information available for permanent care and adoptive families about how to safely meet court requirements related to family contact. Families reported feeling confused and conflicted as to how best to meet the needs of all parties, whilst adhering to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Personal and emotional support

Many families reported feeling overwhelmed due to remote learning and no access to play or social outlets for children and young people.

Families contacted us due to concerns for children with suppressed immunity and fear related to the child attending school or being exposed to the coronavirus. Grandparent carers frequently reached out for emotional support due to being in the ‘high risk’ category for being infected by COVID-19 due to their age and/or ill health.

Remote learning and education issues

Finally, and significantly, remote learning was a big challenge for many families. It was compounded by many children with trauma histories being unsettled by the lack of the routine and predictability of school. Behavioural challenges while learning from home were not uncommon.

Initially we saw families reaching out because their permanent care children were not being seen as ‘vulnerable enough’ by some schools to continue attending school (when remote learning commenced). PCA Families staff supported families to advocate on behalf of their child on an individual level, alongside broader organisational systemic advocacy.

Flexible Funding Program

The flexible funding program provides financial support to families with a child or children on a PCO, as well as certain children subject to an Adoption Order or Parenting Order, provided the parent or carer are in receipt of the carer allowance.

The program is jointly led by PCA Families and OzChild with oversight from the Permanent Care Alliance, which includes PCA Families and OzChild, alongside the following agencies:

- Foster Care Association Victoria (FCAV)
- Kinship Care Victoria (KCV)
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)
- The Mirabel Foundation, and
- The CREATE Foundation.

It is also supported by 'Consult 8', a consumer group comprising permanent care parents/carers from around Victoria.

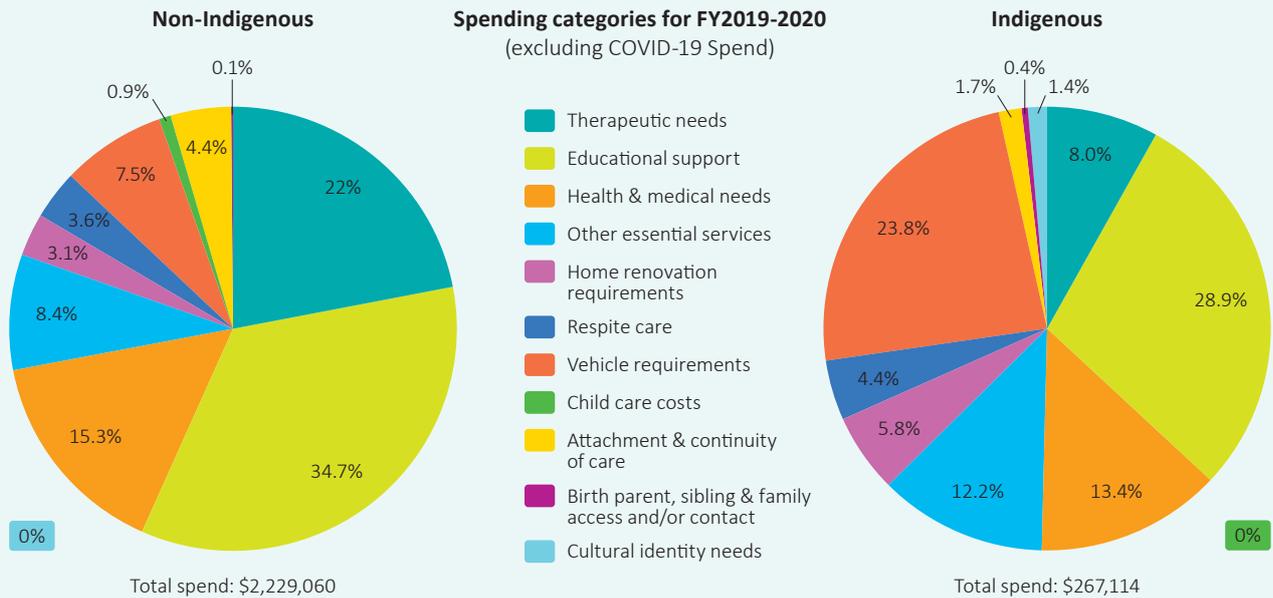
DHHS mailout helped us to reach new families

PCA Families arranged a DHHS mailout to families in November 2019 to alert new families about the availability of flexible funding. This resulted in a spike of new clients accessing our services from around 30 new clients a month to up to 72 new clients in the months following the mailout. The mailout generated greater demand for our services. It was a great result for families who too often were unaware of the program or of other supports available to them.

Flexible funding expenditure was at a similar level to the previous year

In FY2019/20 there was a total of 1,321 flexible funding applications made over the course of the financial year and in total \$2,570,768 was distributed to eligible families. As a percentage of overall budget this is comparable to the 2018-2019 financial year.

There were unexpected differences in Indigenous versus non-Indigenous spending



For non-Indigenous families, educational needs were the second highest need in FY2018-2019 (28%) and the highest need in FY2019-2020 (34.7%), increasing by 6.7%.

In FY2018-2019, the greatest need for non-Indigenous families was therapeutic related needs (29.1%). There was a decline in this category in 2019-2020 (to 22%). However, it remains a high need as the second highest spending category.

Health and medical needs were the third highest need of families in both years at 12.5% (2018-2019) and 15.3% (2019-2020) respectively.

For Indigenous families, compared to the previous year spending for health and medical needs decreased by 4.9% and spending related to therapeutic needs decreased by 4.9%. While respite costs also decreased, educational costs increased by 3.1%. It is notable that vehicle related costs increased significantly from approximately 3% to 23.8% compared to other spending categories. The highest spending categories by Indigenous families this year were vehicle requirements, educational support (29%) and health and medical needs (13.4%) accounting for 66% of total expenditure.

Dedicated COVID-19 Funding

PCA Families' advocacy was required on behalf of permanent care families following a Ministerial announcement that a \$600 once off COVID-19 payment would be made only to kinship carers and foster carers. It was subsequently announced that an additional \$300,000 COVID-19 flexible funding would be made available via PCA Families for our community between May and October 2020. This decision to increase flexible funding availability was largely welcomed because it acknowledged the pandemic impact on the families we support.

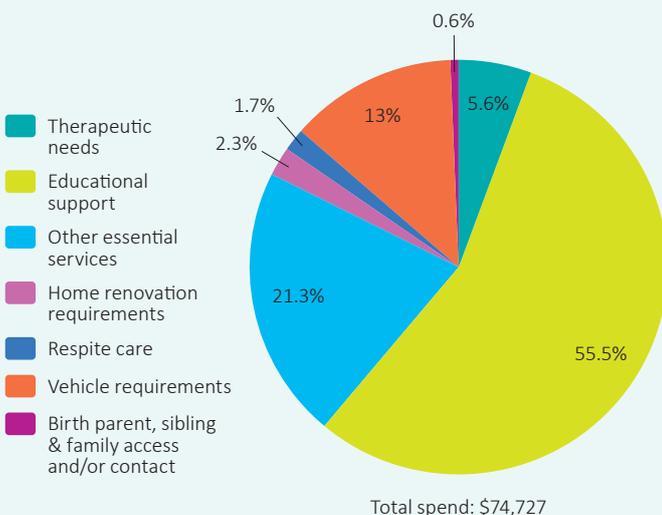
Between May – June 2020, almost \$75,000 of this COVID-19 related flexible funding support was administered directly to families as follows:

Indigenous Families	Non-Indigenous Families	All
\$17,622 (24%)	\$57,104 (76%)	\$74,726 (100%)

"I was struggling with some financial stuff and (PCA Families) were amazing... I was just so grateful (because) we couldn't afford all these things."

COVID-19 Spend against Category

1 May 2020 to 30 June 2020



The majority of the COVID-19 funding administered in the 2019-2020 financial year related to Educational Support (55.5%), followed by Other Essential Services (21.3%) and Vehicle Requirements (13%). These three categories accounted for 89.7% of the funding.

Education support has incorporated all aspects of equipment needed to assist with remote learning. This included laptops, printing options, craft supplies and headphones. There were also many families in financial hardship due to factors such as job loss. The result was an increase in applications for vouchers to assist with essentials such as groceries, petrol and winter clothing.





Flexible Funding in Action – Sylbar the Assistance Dog

By Nola L, PCA Families Member

We are grandparent carers of our two little granddaughters, aged 8 and 7. Permanent care was granted nearly seven years ago when they were just babies. It's been a long struggle both financially and emotionally to raise these two beautiful girls. We are blessed to have them in our lives, but as many other carers would understand it's certainly challenging. Both girls were born addicted and have serious psychological issues. Our youngest also has autism and FASD. Without the help, care and support of PCA families our journey would have been even more difficult.

The support from PCA families has been both personal and financial to us, but as you would understand often these two dilemmas go hand in hand. As kinship carers you have enough to deal with, but with the added stress of lack of finances, sometimes it's just too much.

Our paediatrician suggested to us some time ago to try and get an Assistance dog for Grace, the benefits sounded wonderful, but once again, there was the problem of finances. However, the more we researched the more we knew we just had to somehow make this happen. Sylbar came into our little family about 6 months ago. We were fortunate to be accepted by the Victorian Guide Dogs to purchase a reclassified guide dog. Sylbar was not suitable for a blind person, however, for a child with autism she was perfect, as not every dog can become an Assistance Dog, they have to have to right personality and be the right mix for the child.

Reclassified guide dogs are amazing and have had a good deal of training, but the very important role of a fully fledged Assistance Dog required further extensive training. And this was once again, far beyond our reach. This was not a normal request that we were asking of PCA families, so one can imagine how incredibly happy we were to be told the funding had been granted.

Sylbar is such an important part of our family, she goes to school everyday, she was even at remote learning doing Zoom calls with the teacher. Our little girl is much calmer in her presence. Yes, there are still autism meltdowns, but these are few and far between now. Sylbar and Grace are still in training (Sylbar would pass the test now) but a child with autism is another matter! We expect she will be off her learner's in a few months.

A big thank you to PCA Families.

“I came across (PCA Families) and for me it was an absolute revelation, because I’d been so isolated, and most of the other parents that you’re talking to just don’t get the issues that you have.”

A Message from Journal Club

Journal Club was established to provide monthly peer support to parents and carers, including members either awaiting placement of a child or transitioning from kinship or foster care. Journal Club offers members an opportunity to connect in a safe space and to share the unique and common experiences of parenting children through permanent care, kinship care and adoption.

PCA Families’ Journal Club has been held monthly since 2009 with the same facilitators who have many years of parenting experience. In 2020, we embraced Zoom and were delighted to welcome so many new faces, both regional and city-based, as well as interstate! It has been such a pleasure for us to be reaching so many more members.

Our conversations, as always, have continued to be based loosely around short journal articles or else have been facilitated by guest speakers focusing on topics relevant to parenting of non-biological children.

The essence of our meetings continues to be the deep respect and mutual support offered to each other and the deep appreciation of each family’s unique journey with our children without judgement... together with a shared sense of good humour.

Practical ideas are often exchanged regarding how to care for children whose behaviour can be very disturbed as a result of early trauma, as well as how to navigate departmental and legal requirements, such as contact orders with birth families, school matters, etc.

Journal Club over the last year has attracted fathers as well as mothers and grandparents of children whose backgrounds span permanent care, foster care, kinship care, intercountry and local adoption. Some have had children just newly placed with them, while others’ children have been teenagers and adult children.

Applicants awaiting placement have also been most warmly welcomed and have not only gained early insight into the challenges as well as the joys of raising non-biological children, but have also received great support in understanding the application process further.

Our online meetings in 2021 continue to provide mutual support to offload and/or celebrate with others who understand the stresses and joys of our caring role. Online meetings are here to stay – plus we plan to re-introduce some in-person meetings whenever possible.

“Best free support system ever! You couldn’t pay psychologists enough money to get the information we get (from Journal Club).”

Children and Youth Programs

Mindfulness in Motion Kids Program

Mindfulness in Motion commenced at PCA Families in 2017. The highly popular program continued to be delivered in the studio during 2019 and moved online in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although a big adjustment, the online mode of delivery continued to assist young people’s personal growth in a fun, respectful and caring environment through the paradigm of martial arts training.

The Program follows the motto borrowed from the Martial Arts Therapy Program of:

Be Strong: linking back to physical and emotional strength

Be Calm: noticing the physical and mental tension and working to dissolve this

Be Kind: not only to others, but above all to ourselves

Try Hard: in everything we do pay attention to giving it your best effort

Mindfulness in Motion assists young people to develop resilience, emotional regulation, focus, teamwork, self-reflection, and body awareness. The success of this program is credited to the seamless linking of martial arts training with self-awareness and respect.



Board Members

Our Board is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organisation and ensuring it continues to deliver services of a high standard and in a sustainable manner.

Meredith Carter, President

Meredith Carter brings to PCA Families her lived experience of fostering and permanent care. A Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Meredith's strong commitment to community participation also complements her leadership experience.

This includes serving as a CEO of two not for profit organisations over 13 years and on a number of statutory tribunals and boards, including as Chair. Now a consultant, her social policy expertise is underpinned by wide experience in the public and not for profit sectors, law reform and governance.



Roslyn Rule, Treasurer

Roslyn is a well-rounded finance executive with broad experience including management, strategic advice, reporting, governance and systems. She has forged her career working in both big and niche businesses and understands nuances and drivers for organisations of different magnitudes and in different stages of development. Roslyn is motivated to give back to the community and offers her diverse finance and leadership experience to the PCAF Board.



Donna Coelho, Vice President

Donna Coelho is an adult adoptee and mother to a permanent care daughter. Donna has been a stay-at-home mother since 2010 and is on the Parish Education Board at her daughter's school. She has a background in Administration, Customer Service and Supervisory roles across a number of sectors. Donna brings her lived experience and knowledge as an adoptee and permanent care parent to the PCA Families Board which she joined in 2016.



Dan Barron, Director

Dan Barron is a father of three children. For several years he was a full time 'stay at home dad' with two of his children, who both joined the family via permanent care. His work experience includes many support and care positions in the fields of physical disability, intellectual disability, mental illness and young care-leavers, in Australia and in the UK. He came to Australia in 1995, and currently works both as a Case Manager in a homelessness support service, and as a Cook and Support Worker in a Social Support Group at an Over 55s High Rise building.



Chris Lockwood, Secretary

Chris Lockwood has over 20 years' experience working across the Mental Health, Construction and Finance sectors. He has specific knowledge of mental health, safety and suicide prevention in the construction industry, and expertise in managing strategic growth, sustainable funding and partnership development. Chris is a director of Suicide Prevention Australia and is currently the National CEO of MATES in Construction, the leader in suicide prevention in workplaces and across industry in Australia, as well as being the proud father of two children adopted from China and Korea.



Alba Chliakhtine, Director

Alba was born in Brazil and has been calling Australia home since 1988. Alba's professional career spans over 30 years in the supply chain and business strategy in both the private and government sectors. In 2002 she commenced her voluntary work in the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) sector by supporting the establishment of the ABRISA- Brazilian Association in Melbourne. In 2010 Alba extended her volunteering capacity by joining the Victorian Immigrant and Refugees Women's Coalition (VIRWC) in a Directorship capacity. Alba is a Board member of the Ross House Association and a graduate and member of The Australian Institute of Company Directors. Alba commenced her family journey in Brazil by adopting two children.



Naomi Colville, Director

Naomi brings with her a diversity of experiences including corporate recruitment, leadership roles at a disability employment agency and migrant support services, and even a stint as site manager for Cirque Du Soleil. Most recently, Naomi was the executive assistant for a statutory authority’s board of management. Now an ‘at-home’ parent of two children, one with various diagnoses and special needs who came through permanent care... and one ‘rainbow baby’. The days are busy as President of the Specialist School’s Board and secretary of the other school’s Advisory Committee. With various other community governance roles, Naomi is a passionate advocate for regional and rural families with additional needs who face the challenges and complexities of poor service provision and support. Naomi brings a perspective representative of the unique challenges faced by marginalised and, at times, isolated families.



Kris Peach, Director

Kris has had 10 years’ experience as an Anglicare respite carer and appreciates the challenges and opportunities facing permanent care and adoption families. She has strong financial skills, developed during her 5 years as Chair and CEO of the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) and 28 years with KPMG as a technical accounting expert. As CEO of AASB, Board member and Audit Committee Chair for Open Gardens Australia, President and Treasurer of YHA Bushwalking Victoria and Treasurer of MCC tennis she has extensive experience in developing and implementing strategies, policies and processes for small organisations, including managing risk, corporate governance and compliance.



Sarah Witty, Director

Sarah had a successful career in both the real estate and finance industries. After some time, she decided it was time to give back. Much to her delight, she was provided with the unique opportunity to put her skills to good use with not-for-profit charity, Homes for Homes. As National Partnerships Manager, Sarah works closely with the CEO and external advisors on establishing new fundraising opportunities within the property development and banking industries. Her diverse experience gives her a unique understanding from the corporate and not for profit business world which she brings to PCA Families. Sarah also fosters children through MacKillop Family Services.



Board attendance

1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020

Member	No. of Meetings		Date Appointed
	Eligible	Attended	
Meredith Carter	7	7	17/10/2016
Donna Coelho	7	4	17/10/2016
Chris Lockwood	7	6	6/11/2013
Roslyn Rule	7	6	24/10/2018
Dan Barron	7	5	6/11/2013
Alba Chilakhtine	7	5	24/10/2018
Naomi Colville	5	5	24/10/2019
Kris Peach	5	4	24/10/2019
Sarah Witty	5	3	24/10/2019

“I just found that I could just ring up, and I wasn’t asked hundreds of questions, and (PCA Families) were just so understanding. If it wasn’t for a group like PCA Families, I think people like us, the kinship carers, the permanent carers, once DHHS withdraws, we’ve got no-one.”



From the Treasurer Roslyn Rule



It has been a busy year at PCA Families and we are proud to have been able to help so many families. This has been aided by additional government funding as a response to the COVID 19 Pandemic and by the tireless work of the Board and staff, including the newly appointed CEO who has proven to be a genuine asset to the organisation.

Over the last year and as an ongoing project, much work has gone into improved governance and risk management. Organisational policies had a major review and focussing particularly my area of Finance and Risk, appropriate controls are in place and risk is being regularly reviewed and managed. A new bookkeeper was appointed, and he has implemented updated systems and approvals that has helped with efficiency and compliance. I would like to thank Andy Dao for his professionalism and commitment.

Further to this, PCA Families have also now implemented General Purpose Financial Reporting, moving us to best practice and ensuring requirement of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012 are fulfilled. Kris Peach was appointed to the Board and brought her extensive experience with the Australia Accounting Standards Board to effect this change.

I would also like to thank Judy Gouldbourn who has been a valuable member of the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) sub-committee of the Board. Her extensive human resources expertise has also been beneficial to the organisation.

I am again pleased to report that PCA Families is in a strong financial position with enough equity to sustain our operations for at least the next 2 years. A decision has been made to use some of the surplus to engage professional assistance to secure funding other than from government in an effort to diversify and not be solely reliant on government funding. That being said I am excited to say that in the last few days we have also ongoing flexifunding confirmed by the government that will be of major benefit to our members and families.

The financial statements overview included in this report has been extracted from the PCA Families' Financial Statements for the year ended, 30 June, 2020. The financial statements have been prepared as General Purpose Financial Statements in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the Associations Incorporation Reform ACT, 2012. For more detailed information, full financial details are available on our website www.pcafamilies.org.au.

Income Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2020

30 June 2020

\$

30 June 2019

\$

Revenue

Interest revenue calculated using the effective interest method

861,285

5,826

534,502

10,949

Expenses

Administration expenses

(76,980)

(30,656)

Rent expenses

(25,911)

(60,000)

Employee benefits and consulting

(565,094)

(420,242)

Depreciation and amortisation expense

(11,507)

(2,315)

Other expenses

(19,397)

(30,178)

Surplus before income tax expense

168,222

2,060

Income tax expense

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–

Surplus after income tax expense for the year attributable to the members of Permanent Care & Adoptive Families

168,222

2,060

Balance Sheet

For the year ended 30 June 2020

30 June 2020

\$

30 June 2019

\$

Assets

Current assets

Cash and cash equivalents

536,983

449,715

Trade and other receivables

35,660

3,741

Total current assets

572,643

453,456

Non-current assets

Property, plant and equipment

20,314

5,209

Total non-current assets

20,314

5,209

Total assets

592,957

458,665

Current liabilities

Trade and other payables

47,906

76,994

Employee benefits

29,076

33,919

Total current liabilities

76,982

110,913

Total Liabilities

76,982

110,913

Net assets

515,975

347,752

Equity – members' funds

Reserves

–

207,000

Retained surpluses

515,974

140,752

Total equity members' funds

515,974

347,752



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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

We have audited the financial report of Post Placement Support Service (Vic) Inc, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2020, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity, the statement of cash flows, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the responsible entity' declaration.

In our opinion the financial report of Post Placement Support Service (Vic) Inc has been prepared in accordance with the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*, and *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012*, including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the registered entity's financial position as at 30 June 2020 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures of the Australian Accounting Standards Board as disclosed in Note 1.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the registered entity in accordance with the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*, and *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012* and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibility of the Responsible Entity for the Financial Report

The responsible entity of the registered entity is responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 to the financial report is appropriate to meet the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*, and *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012* and the needs of the members. The responsible entity's responsibility also includes such internal control as the responsible entity determine is necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the responsible entity is responsible for assessing the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the responsible entity either intend to liquidate the registered entity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial report.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: <http://www.auasb.gov.au/Home.aspx>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

George Georgiou FCA
Registered Company Auditor
ASIC Registration: 10310
Melbourne, Victoria
Date: 30 November 2020



STATUTORY AUDITS | DUE DILIGENCE | TRUST ACCOUNT AUDITS | OUTGOING AUDITS |
INTERNAL AUDITS | AFSL AUDITS | GRANT AUDITS

We would like to thank and acknowledge the support of



Families,
Fairness
and Housing



There are many ways you can make a difference in the lives of permanent care and adoptive families

PCA Families exists to support strong, stable families who have the support they need to provide nurturing and permanent homes for the children and young people who come into their care through permanent care, kinship care or adoption. We know first-hand that the journey for families is rewarding but not always easy.



How your support will make a difference

Supporting PCA Families will enable us to continue to develop and roll out programs that promote strong and stable families through parenting and peer support services that directly benefit children, young people and their families. It will also support us to continue our advocacy work to improve the lived experience of permanent care and adoptive families.

How you can get involved

There are many ways you can play an important part in helping us to support our community.

Donate

You can donate online at www.givenow.com.au/pcafamilies.
Donations over \$2.00 are tax-deductible.

Regular giving

Monthly giving is an effective way to ensure PCA Families can sustain our vital programs and services to the permanent care and adoptive community. You can become one of our regular givers at www.givenow.com.au/pcafamilies.

Include a gift in your Will to PCA Families when you are planning your estate, or donate in memory or celebration of a loved one.

Host a fundraising event to bring the community together and raise essential funds to support permanent care and adoptive families. This could involve:

- Fun runs, marathons or other sporting adventures
- Dress-up days or movie nights
- Sausage sizzles or bake offs
- Art exhibitions or trivia nights

See here if you're interested in organising an event:
www.pcafamilies.org.au/support-us/fundraising-campaigns

Volunteer

We welcome applications to join us as a volunteer. Visit www.pcafamilies.org.au/about/employment-volunteering to view the volunteering positions that are currently available.

Join our team

Work with our small, dedicated and skilled team who are passionate about supporting strong and stable permanent care and adoptive families. See www.pcafamilies.org.au/about/employment-volunteering for more information.

Become a member

It's free! See www.pcafamilies.org.au/membership for more information about member benefits and to sign up.

Get social

Like us on Facebook to keep in touch with the work we're doing!
www.facebook.com/pcafamilies

Thank you for your continued support of PCA Families.

"It's hard work but if it wasn't for PCA Families, honestly, (my grandchildren) would 100% be in foster care."

"When you have a permanent care child, there aren't any other services that are available, you can't ring up an agency and ask them to support you because there is no case manager involved, so to be able to talk to PCA Families is absolutely brilliant... the support I've had has been just spot-on."



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