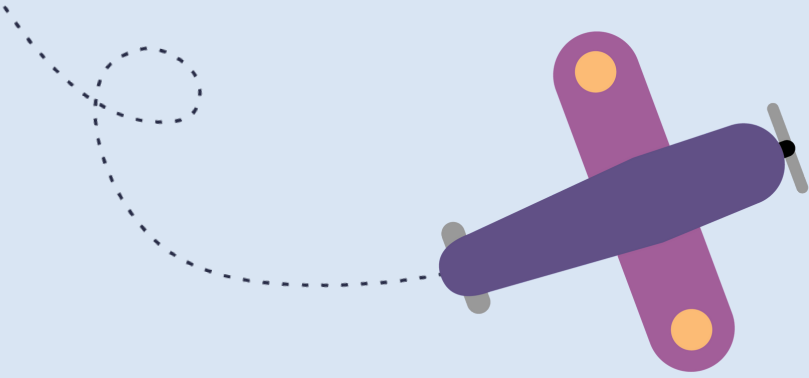


# Annual Report

## 2020 - 2021



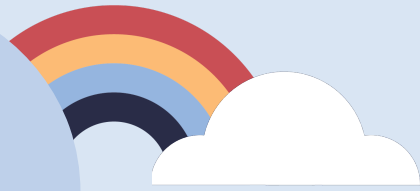


Kids First Australia would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are gathered and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.



We celebrate and value diversity. Kids First has the HEART for providing support to the community in the most inclusive manner.

# PRESIDENT & CEO'S MESSAGE



As the saying goes, "adversity does not build character, it reveals it." In another extremely challenging year, the character of our organisation has been shown through the people who proudly represent it.

Whether in providing services to kids, young people and families as our clients, educating children through our early years services, or in our administrative functions that keep our business' heart beating, we are grateful for the dedicated individuals who have shown up every day through the pandemic. They haven't just 'kept the lights on,' they have sought for the service excellence, innovation, and best outcomes for clients that we wish to be known for – as the stories in this report will attest.

Our gratitude extends to our Board, who once again navigated through these times with focus and commitment. We particularly acknowledge Wayne Gorst who stepped down from the Board after four years of dedicated service, and Stephanie Milione who, while only with us for a short time, will also be missed. After an incredible 15 years of impactful service, we said a very fond farewell to Justice Bernard Murphy who left the Board in early 2021. We are extremely grateful for his contribution. Departures saw new members join us and it was with great pleasure we welcomed Suyin Ng, Davin Magee and Stephen Sandler to the Board.

We also take this opportunity to express our deepest thanks to all our funders, volunteers, patrons and donors who have invested time, energy and belief in our agency.

This year we revisited our agency's purpose; searching for simplicity and clarity that would unite and focus our team. In looking to align with our vision 'to see all children and young people thrive in resilient, strong and safe families' we found ourselves searching for our 'why'. This led us to – "Because all kids deserve a bright future."

While the last year has been challenging for all of us in so many ways, the pandemic strengthened our resolve to enhance our services and develop new ways to illuminate those brighter futures. This report details some of the ways in which we have delivered on this purpose.

Aileen Ashford, CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aileen Ashford'.

Sandy Forbes, President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandy Forbes'.

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# OUR YEAR

## IN NUMBERS

**1,289**

average monthly phone calls to The Orange Door NEMA

**22,153**

hours of family support services

**144**

participants in Caring Dads program

**155**

Kids First team members

**6,470**

cases opened for children in The Orange Door NEMA

**7,568**

hours of Sexual Abuse Counselling and Prevention Program services

**53**

amazing volunteers

**5**

early years services

**527**

children enrolled in early years services

# OUR GOALS

1.

Maximise positive outcomes for children and families

2.

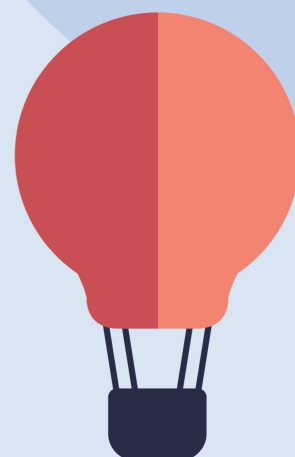
Increase our footprint

3.

Secure our future

4.

Develop our people and strengthen our culture



# OUR GOALS

1.

## Maximise positive outcomes for children and families

### Implementing the next phase of our early years education program

Twenty-two per cent of Australian children arrive in their first year of full-time school developmentally vulnerable (AEDC, 2018). This means a child is in the lowest 10 per cent in at least one of five categories including physical health, behaviour, emotions, language and communication. This data presents a clear need to do better and extract more long-term value from Australia's early years services.

Informed by the Australian-first research of our early education program, that worked intensely with children and their families experiencing vulnerability, and our experience in managing our own early years centres, we have designed the Kids First Early Years Model (KFEYM). The model addresses a critical gap for early education and care to enable children to:

- Have strong, authentic relationships with their classmates, families and educators, and a shared sense of belonging
- Be active, engaged and capable learners, and are supported to enter primary school
- Have strong protective factors in their family so that they can moderate risk and adversity and promote healthy childhood development and wellbeing.

We believe the KFEYM will lead to positive outcomes and are putting our assumptions to the test with a first-class research partner.

Murdoch Children's Research Institute is evaluating the model. The purpose is two-fold: to provide evidence of a cost-effective, impactful, scalable model, and to inform the ongoing implementation and adaption of the model.

### Standing up for consent education

Like no other time before, have we seen the level of outcry from young people in our community that their current education is falling short when it comes to understanding sexual consent.

Eighteen months ago, Kids First developed a program, 'Stand Up!' in recognition of this education gap and in response to the issues raised by young people in our sexual abuse counselling and prevention program.

Stand Up! is delivered in schools, to Year 8 students, and in cooperation with Wellbeing leaders and teachers. It has been shown to increase knowledge of key concepts including grooming, sexual exploitation, and consent. We all know how critical this issue is, and how important it is to be responsive to young people and to provide the education they deserve.

Keen to enhance the Stand Up and to expand its reach to more audiences, we successfully applied for a Westpac 'Safer Children, Safer Communities' grant. The \$200k grant is enabling us to develop digital resources for the program so that it can be delivered to any young person, anywhere. The project has been further bolstered by a donation from business owner Gerry Ryan, and the crowd donations from our November 2020 crowdfunding event. The digital package will be rolled out in 2022.



# OUR GOALS

1.

## Maximise positive outcomes for children and families

### **New access to family violence services in Epping**

The Orange Door is a free service for adults, children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence and families who need extra support with the care of children. Establishing a specialist service of this nature was one of the key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria.

Kids First is a partner in the North Eastern Metropolitan Orange Door in Heidelberg; our staff working in multi-disciplinary teams alongside child wellbeing and family violence specialists from Berry Street, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), DPV Health and Community Based Child Protection.

To meet growing demand, Family Safety Victoria established a new Orange Door access point in Epping. This is for the rapidly growing communities of Epping, Doreen, Mernda, South Morang, Whittlesea and Wollert. As a result, some members of our Heidelberg based team have located to the new Epping access point, bringing with them their specialist expertise and evidence-informed practices.

### **A new joined-up intervention to extend the impact of Caring Dads**

Family violence services and drug and alcohol services have traditionally been siloed; a division that does not necessarily make sense considering these problems are commonly co-occurring.

In a partnership between the University of Melbourne, Kids First, Odyssey House Victoria, and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the KODY Project: Developing an all-of-family intervention at the intersections of DFV and AOD' was the recipient of an ARC Linkage Grant. KODY is adapting our existing Caring Dads program, integrating it with Odyssey House Victoria's targeted alcohol and other drugs intervention, to deliver a program aimed at fathers, while recognising the needs and safety of children and women.

Children's experiences are crucial to the project, with an aim to capture their voices and experiences so the program can be most effective and inform the way healing and recovery programs are designed to meet their needs.





# OUR GOALS

1.

## Maximise positive outcomes for children and families

### **Sharing our sexual abuse counselling and prevention expertise**

Kids First was a pioneer of sexual abuse services for children and young people in Victoria. Since 1999 our Sexual Abuse Counselling and Prevention Program has worked with children and young people up to 18 years of age who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviours, or experienced abuse.

In May 2021, we were invited to make a presentation to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Management of Child Sex Offenders Information. Of the Committee's terms of reference, an item relating to "preventing sexual offences from occurring through improved public awareness" was particularly aligned to our work in schools and vast experience through the Sexual Abuse Counselling and Prevention Program.

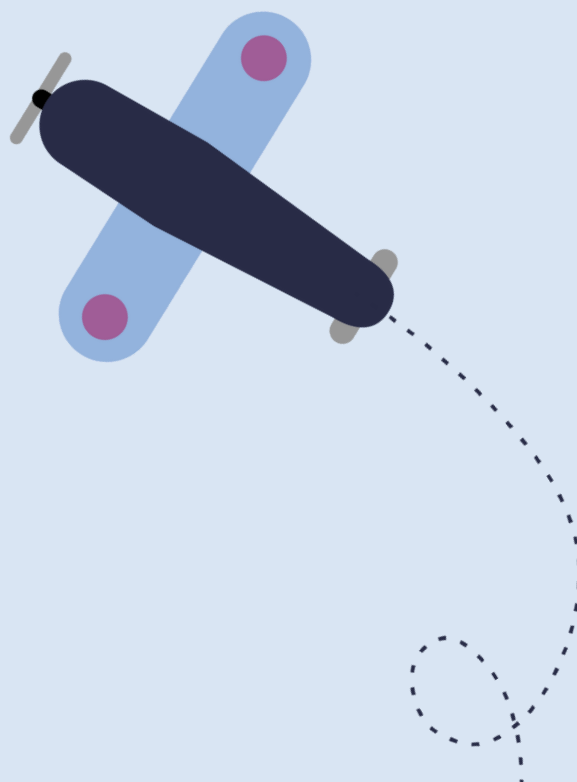
Our presentation focused on the need for early, specialist support for young people who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviours as well as the critical need for education and community agency and capacity to prevent sexual abuse from occurring.

### **A new, award-winning digital experience**

In April 2021, we launched a new website at [kidsfirstaustralia.org.au](https://kidsfirstaustralia.org.au). The site was developed with a client-first approach informed by detailed user testing with clients and parents of kindergarten children. We were extremely proud when it took out a 2021 Melbourne Design Award (Silver) in the Community category.

### **Kindergarten educators get creative with pandemic pivots**

Our kindergartens have been our very own 'front line' workforce during the pandemic. And while they have remained open throughout this time, they have at times, been faced with limiting the number of children who could attend kindergarten in person. When this occurred, our team sprang into action, preparing take-home packs for these children, as well as recording themselves reading books, and singing songs so that families could enjoy some of the usual kindergarten fun from home.



# OUR GOALS



2.

## Increase our footprint

### **New services join the Kids First Early Years family**

In 2019 Korin Korin Child & Family Centre was our sole early years' service, leading the way for children in Wollert, with our unique model of education and care. By the end of 2020 we had opened Seymour Family & Children's Centre, building our presence within the rapidly growing Mitchell Shire, and began managing Fairy Hills Kindergarten in Ivanhoe, adding a much-loved and well-established kinder to the Kids First family.

In 2021, our growth continued with the opening of Ganbu Gulinj in Epping North and Wallan East in the Mitchell Shire. It was a pleasure to open these services with the Whittlesea and Mitchell councils respectively, and to welcome the inaugural groups of kindergarten children. These brand new builds are vital community assets. Alongside the kindergartens are maternal child health and other community services.

In 2022 the newly refurbished McLeans Road Kindergarten in Bundoora will join our EY services. Whittlesea City Council has demolished the former building to make way for a brand new, 66-place kindergarten on the same site, ready for Term 1, 2022. We will offer a 3-year-old and 4 year-old program and wrap around family services.

### **Holistic support to attend kinder and thrive**

Early, sustained participation in a high-quality kindergarten program benefits all children, but children experiencing vulnerability have most to gain. A substantial body of research, including our own Early Years Education Program shows improved social, learning and development outcomes for these children, not just in the short term, but over the course of their lives.

We were appointed as the Mitchell Shire and City of Whittlesea delivery partner for the Victorian Government's Access to Early Learning (AEL) program, that aims to increase participation in three-year-old kindergarten by children experiencing vulnerability. AEL brings together our experience in managing our own early years services, and our expertise in family dynamics and strengthening relationships.

Taking an outreach approach, our facilitators will form partnerships with 16 children and their families, visiting them weekly for one year. They will build relationships with caregivers to encourage positive home interactions and attendance at kinder. Important connections will be created between families, the early childhood education and care service and its educator and other services.

AEL will see us work with maternal and child health services, Child Protection and The Orange Door to identify children who meet the eligibility criteria.

# OUR GOALS

2.

## Increase our footprint

### **New services for Hume and Moreland families**

This year we expanded two of our specialist service offerings into the local government areas of Hume and Moreland. Northern Healing and Recovery Program (N-HARP) is focused on family violence recovery and Kids First is a proud delivery partner alongside Berry Street, inTouch, Thorne Harbour, Rubix Support and VACCA.

As part of N-HARP, Kids First delivers:

- Mothers in Mind, an evidence-based Canadian program for mothers and their children aged under 5 for who have experienced family violence
- Moving On, a comprehensive program to support young people to recover and regain their confidence after being affected by family violence
- Connections, a group program for families to heal from the trauma of family violence.

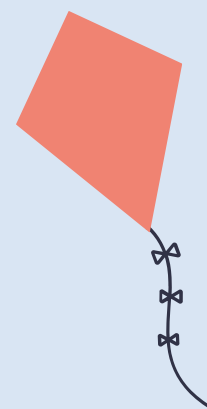
In addition, our Sexual Abuse Counselling and Prevention Program (SACPP) was also made available to children and young people in Hume and Moreland, for the first time.

### **Caring Dads awarded for its innovative approach**

Caring Dads, an Australian first intervention program to help fathers improve their relationships with their children and end abusive behaviour, was named the winner of the 2021 Minister's Award for Innovation in Protecting Children at the Victorian Protecting Children Awards.

Kids First has pioneered Caring Dads' delivery to an Australian audience. The Awards secretariat recognised the program's innovative approach as well as the many partnerships brokered to ensure it could reach a wide audience in Victoria.

Through Kids First's leadership and the investment by the Victorian State Government and Gandel Philanthropy, Caring Dads was piloted and evaluated to lead to increased safety for children and mothers who have experienced family violence.



# OUR GOALS

## 3.

### Secure our future

#### Ongoing funding for evidence-based models

Our Australian-first, evidence based models have been acknowledged as providing sound, outcomes-focused services to children and families with the Victorian Government providing Kids First with ongoing funding to continue their delivery.

Promoting First Relationships (PFR), a practical, in-depth program for promoting secure and healthy relationships between caregivers and young children aged under 5, received further funding. After strong evidence of its success in the United States, Kids First sourced PFR and is the only Australian organisation trained to use the PFR techniques.

*One client described the impact of PFR in this way: "I never felt judged and the way you delivered feedback was motivating... you have made a huge difference in my life and hopefully a flow on effect to my child's life."*

Also a recipient of ongoing funding, Caring Dads, an evidence-based model originating in Canada, works by tapping into fathers' motivation to be better dads. The program has emerged as a leader in the family violence space. Its effectiveness was confirmed in 2020 with the release of an independent evaluation report by the University of Melbourne. The report noted Caring Dads has been shown to:

- have a positive impact on fathers' parenting and co-parenting practices
- reduce the risk of children's further exposure to domestic and family violence
- increase fathers' ability to identify the impact of their aggressive behaviour on their children and improve men's responses to people more generally.

#### Re-certification to Human Services Standards

We successfully completed our annual audit against the Human Services Standards. This is a non-negotiable piece of work; our certification to the standards means we are registered to operate as a child and family services organisation by the Victorian Government. As we had aspired to, there were no non-conformances to the ISO or Human Services Standards.

As part of the audit, a number of clients were interviewed, and their comments were truly gratifying.

- *"Staff are non-judgemental and kind"*
- *"They don't hesitate to advocate"*
- *"Accessibility was maintained during COVID"*
- *"Amazing people, great support"*
- *Caring Dads facilitators are brilliant. CD should be mandatory for all new parents, sets you up for life skills"*
- *"This is the first real help we've ever got; Kids First is superior to every other agency we've been with"*
- *"Went beyond my expectations to help me with the support I actually needed".*

# OUR GOALS

4.

## Develop our people and strengthen our culture

### Lifting morale and saying thank you

With most of our staff working remotely for much of the year, and the 'kinder crew' on site in challenging circumstances, our Executive Team and Health & Wellbeing Committee has maintained an effort on keeping up morale and making time to say thanks.

Christmas gifts and cards were sent to staff, and a surprise fruit box delivered to each staff member through the wonderful social enterprise, Fruit 2 Work. National Early Childhood Educators' Day was celebrated with pamper packages delivered to our early years team.

We initiated a 'Wellbeing Wizard' initiative, with staff encouraged to take part in mindfulness and wellbeing activities, and our monthly 'Heartbeat' newsletter kept things light, with remote working 'colleagues' of the four-legged and furry variety, regularly profiled!

Chris, a member of our Client Services team, whose other life is a DJ, regularly spun tunes on Fridays for staff. The music, dancing and banter was lots of fun and a welcome distraction from lockdown!

### Our CEO recognised for her leadership

Our CEO Aileen Ashford was recognised at the 2021 Victorian Protecting Children Awards as a highly commended finalist in the prestigious Robin Clark Leadership Award.

### Employee engagement

Our annual employee survey response rate took Kids First into rare air for staff participation, with 84% of staff members taking the time to respond (where best practice is considered 65-70%). The survey results showed a 73% engagement score among our staff, highly rating our leadership, teamwork learning and development, service quality and work/life balance among other factors.

### New ways of working

We have been considering the ways in which we work and how to best set up our work to deliver on our client service promise and recognise the productivity and work/life balance benefits that flexibility brings for our team members.

While the pandemic forced us to quickly shift much of our services to remote means, we have closely engaged with our staff to build a plan for what a hybrid office/home environment schedule will look like in the time after lockdowns. We have decided to embed increased flexibility for staff and will implement new ways of working as a feature of the Kids First employee experience.



# THANK YOU



To our patrons, Board, staff, volunteers, donors, sponsors, partners and everyone in between, we thank you!



# THANK YOU



If an individual can be known by the company they keep, then we believe an organisation can too. We are incredibly grateful and proud of the partners who stand beside Kids First. Whether they deliver services alongside us or provide support and investment which enables us to increase our impact or develop partnerships that result in practice and research that takes our sector further; our partners are the best.

## **An incredible friend of Kids First**

Margaret Robinson's insight, skill and sheer hard work has undoubtedly changed life outcomes for children and families. Previously a Board member of CPS, Margaret turned to fundraising and in 2006, alongside Elaine Marriner, organised the very first 3AW Lunchtime Rumours Feast. Throughout the 14 events since, more than \$2 million has been generated for our services, not to mention the immeasurable value of the awareness generated for our agency and purpose. Margaret retired from our Fundraising Committee this year and we owe her a debt of gratitude.

## **Community kindness abounds**

We have been touched by the generosity of our community in these difficult circumstances. There have been financial donations, ranging from one off gifts and cherished regular givers, as well as donations in-kind. A favourite must be the knitted toys that Lynette, a very kind community member, began crafting during lockdown, and then generously gave to us to spread some cheer to kids.

A special thank you to the team at the Westin Hotel, Melbourne who purchased toys and food for our clients for Christmas and filled a car boot with items! And to our very own Lisa Hunter, Director of People, Culture & Performance, and Lou from our HR platform Connx, who raised \$3,000 for Kids First through a special hair 'chop for charity.'

## **The Feast that wasn't to be, still gives us much to be grateful for**

As our major Fundraiser, the 3AW Lunchtime Rumours Feast is somewhat of a Melbourne institution. A luncheon staged in August each year at the Plaza Ballroom, it has featured a raft of entertainment, delicious food and incredible generosity.

Alas despite our attempts, the 2020 and 2021 'LRF' events fell victim to the pandemic; restrictions making the event impossible to stage. We look on to 2022 for brighter days.

We wish to acknowledge the incredible dedication of the powerhouse Event Organising Committee who worked diligently and donated countless hours of their own time to prepare the event. To Leonie McNicol, Elaine Marriner, Jeanette Finegan, Sarah Young and Sarah Fallshaw we say a huge thank you.



# THANK YOU



## **Crowdfunding event shines**

Out of adversity, comes opportunity, and with our biggest fundraising event unable to be staged, we took the opportunity to partner with The Funding Network for a special online crowdfunding event. In November 2021, three of our inspiring team members each pitched a Kids First project in the hope of receiving funds from the virtual crowd. Stand Up, sensory kits and Mentoring Mums in Seymour received a combined \$34,000 in donations.

ABC Radio's Jacinta Parsons was our special MC for the evening, and had the 120-strong crowd in the palm of her hand!

## **Op Shops doors close, yet the 'store' remains open**

Our Op Shops deliver an enormous fundraising benefit to Kids First. Rosanna Op Shop has done so for more than 35 years. Furthermore, the Op Shops have enabled Rosanna and Thornbury locals to connect to Kids First and support our services through supplying and purchasing second-hand goods.

The pandemic hit retail hard, and like other shops, we have closed and reopened doors (albeit briefly) through six Melbourne lockdowns. It's been tough. Our team found a way to keep this fundraising channel open though, with time and resources spent developing our online store, [kidsfirstopshop.org.au](http://kidsfirstopshop.org.au). We thank everyone who has shopped with us. Every purchase means so much!

## **Kieser Charity Golf Day for Kids First**

In March 2021, Kieser held its seventh Charity Golf Day for Kids First. Green Acres Golf Club provided the perfect backdrop, as more than 100 generous golfers hit the course for 18 holes with heart! More than \$30,000 was raised to benefit our family violence services for children, young people and families.

We would like to give our wholehearted thanks to Kieser Australia and their team of Steph Klein and Jillian Kaufman for organising the event, and to Leonie McNicol and Jeanette Finegan who also planned everything, to dare we say, a tee? And gave their time so generously.

We also gratefully acknowledge the sponsors, supporters and players for helping us create such a wonderful golf day. We look forward to seeing everyone back next year!





# THANK YOU



## Patrons

Patron in Chief, Her Excellency, the Hon. Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria

Elaine Marriner

Neil Mitchell AO

Ross Stevenson

## Our Board

To our Board members who freely give their time and expertise to set our strategic direction and govern Kids First.

Sandy Forbes, President

Simon Hutchings, Vice-President & Treasurer

Kerry Ryan, Public Officer

Tony Smith

Suyin Ng

Davin Magee

Stephen Sandler

Wayne Gorst

Stephanie Milione

Justice Bernard Murphy

## Staff members

We truly appreciate the efforts of all the Kids First team who delivered our services with skill and empathy. Each person showed incredible dedication while managing through the pandemic and all of the many challenges and numerous lockdowns. Thank you!

## Volunteers

For the community-minded, generous and dedicated individuals who volunteer their time to work with us. We are so much better for having you on our team!



# THANK YOU



## Victorian Government

Kids First acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



## Australian Government

Kids First acknowledges funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

## Local Government and agencies

Kids First acknowledges the relationships and cooperation with local government, and particularly the wonderful team members at these councils:

- City of Darebin
- City of Banyule
- City of Yarra
- City of Whittlesea
- Mitchell Shire Council

## Philanthropic Trusts and Foundations

Thank you to the philanthropic organisations who believe in our vision and our ability to successfully deliver services. It is your courageous funding that drives innovation within our sector and we are truly grateful for your investment in Kids First.

- Amy Dickinson Legacy Fund
- AS & C Figuerola Trust
- Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation
- CommBank Foundation
- Flora & Frank Leith Trust
- Gandel Philanthropy
- Helen McPherson Smith Trust
- Jack Brockhoff Foundation
- JB Were Charitable & Endowment Fund
- Louis and Lesley Nelken Trust
- MF Foundation
- Westpac Safer Children, Safer Communities Fund.



# THANK YOU



## Corporate donor

We thank Toshiba Australia for their ongoing support and donations of printers and photocopiers that significantly reduce our office costs.

## Event sponsors

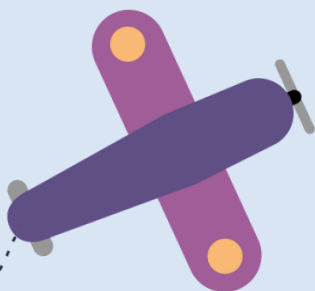
Chop for Charity: Connx

Virtual fundraiser: CURIO, Our Very Own

Kieser Charity Golf Day for Kids First: Kieser Australia, HESTA, Lakeside Financial, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, Pearce Webster Dugdales, Four Pi App and Web Development, Big Swing Golf, Tonkin, Imaging Associates, Eziway Group, Alliance Promotions.

## Donors

For every individual who has donated in support of our work. More funding means more services, more services mean more families can be resourced through Kids First. Whether \$1 or \$1000 – every donation is received with our gratitude.



## Sector peers

The organisations and community groups we are proud to work alongside in delivering quality services.

- 3081 Angels
- Anglicare Victoria
- Banyule Community Health
- Berry Street
- Big Group Hug
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Child Development Institute Toronto
- Centre for Excellence in Child & Family Welfare
- cohealth
- DPV Health
- Early Learning Association Australia
- FamilyCare Shepparton
- Family Services Australia
- inTouch
- Nappy Collective
- Odyssey House Victoria
- Our Place
- Rotary Club of Preston
- Rubix Support
- St Kilda Mums
- Thorne Harbour
- Uniting
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Association
- Victorian Council of Social Service
- Wellways.

## Research partners

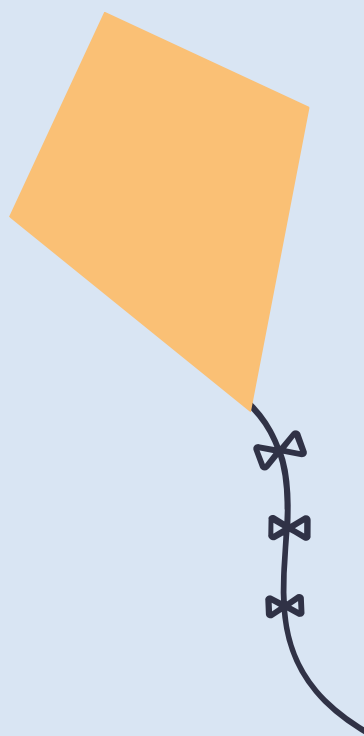
- Murdoch Children's Research Institute
- The University of Melbourne
- University of Toronto
- University of Washington.

# FINANCIALS



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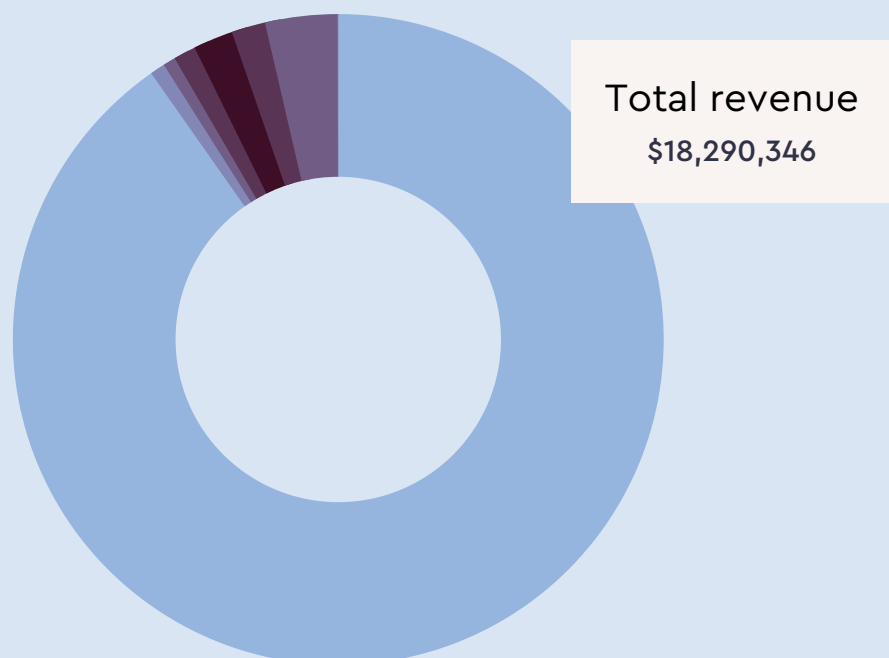
Income & Expenditure  
2020 - 2021



# FINANCIALS

\$

## Income & Expenditure 2020 - 2021



Kids First Revenue	%	\$
Government Grants	90%	\$16,506,645
Donations	1%	\$136,545
Philanthropic & Trusts	1%	\$113,004
Operating Activities	1%	\$202,422
Interest Received	0%	\$6,097
Other Income	2%	\$361,357
Investment Income	2%	\$307,964
Net fair value gain of financial assets designated as FVPTL	4%	\$656,312
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>\$18,290,346</b>

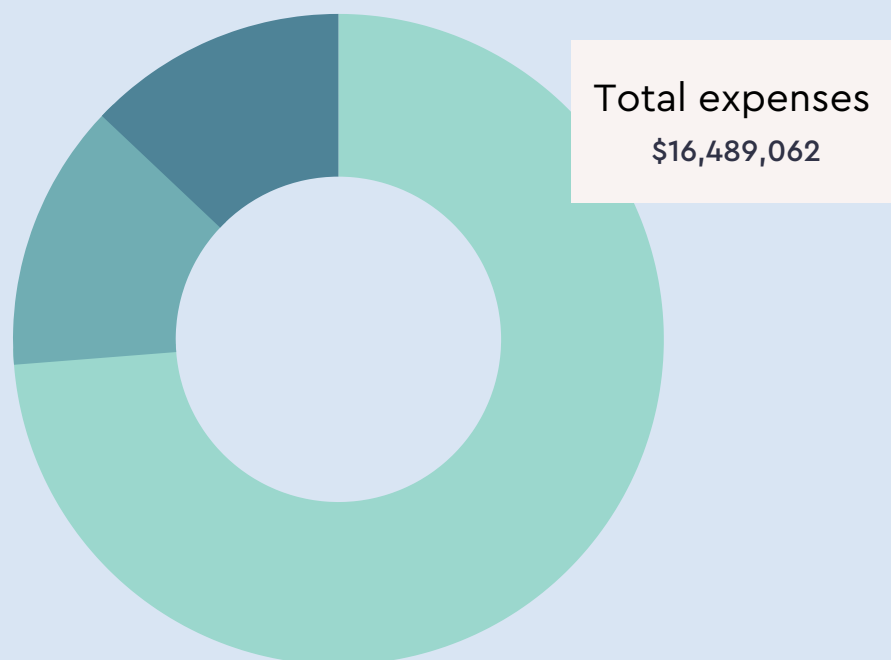
*"Kids First has taken a sound fiscal approach in the uncertain times of the last fiscal year. By delaying some capital projects and continued solid investment returns, we have delivered a strong result to maximise positive outcomes for children and families and expand our reach where we know we can have the greatest community impact well into the future."*

Simon Hutchings, Vice-President & Treasurer

# FINANCIALS

\$

## Income & Expenditure 2020 - 2021



Kids First Expenses	%	\$
Employee Benefit expense	74%	\$12,161,453
Clients expense	13%	\$2,191,990
Administration and operations expense	13%	\$2,135,619
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$18,290,346</b>

**Total Comprehensive Income for the year** **\$1,801,284**

Kids First Assets & Liabilities	\$
Total Assets	\$16,596,888
Total Liabilities	\$5,876,384
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$10,720,504</b>





**KIDS  
FIRST™**

**KIDS FIRST AUSTRALIA  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2020 - 2021**

[kidsfirstaustralia.org.au](https://kidsfirstaustralia.org.au)