



KIDS FIRST™

# Annual Report 19/20

Stories from our HEART



# PRESIDENT & CEO'S MESSAGE

Our Kids First HEART values underpin everything we do.

- Hope
- Empowerment
- Accountability
- Respect
- Trust.

They are the hallmarks of the way we work with one another, clients and families.

The second half of this reporting period was unlike any other we have experienced. 2020 has challenged all of us to dig deep and find something extra. As a provider of community services and early education, we simply could not take our focus off the clients, children and families who rely on us. Inevitably caught up in the COVID-19 pandemic like everyone else, this wasn't always easy.

Throughout this time, it is our values that have come to the fore. And our passionate and talented staff who have embodied them. So, for this year's Annual Report we decided to highlight a selection of stories that bring our values to life.

We are immensely proud of the Kids First team of staff and volunteers who adapted to the many changes and challenges this year demanded of them. We thank each person and admire their resilience and concern for one another.

The experience of steering an organisation through this time galvanised our Board and strengthened our resolve to be courageous in extending the reach and impact of Kids First. We thank all members of the Board for their contribution and extend a warm welcome to our newest members who joined us amidst the most unprecedented circumstances of this year.

We dedicate this year's report to a woman who was a member of our Board for only a short time, yet throughout her professional career was a valued friend of Kids First. Sue Beecher certainly represented all of the values our organisation holds dear. We are inspired by her memory.



Sandy Forbes  
President



Aileen Ashford  
CEO

# THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



ONE

NUMBER OF PROMOTING FIRST RELATIONSHIPS PROVIDERS IN AUSTRALIA (THAT'S US!)

25,512

HOURS OF FAMILY SERVICES



1,126

AVERAGE MONTHLY PHONE CALLS TO THE ORANGE DOOR NEMA

9

EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS DELIVERED FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

138

KIDS FIRST TEAM MEMBERS

10,841

ADULTS ENGAGED IN SERVICES OF THE ORANGE DOOR NEMA

80

AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

8,505

HOURS OF SEXUAL ABUSE COUNSELLING & PREVENTION PROGRAM SERVICES

6,736

CHILDREN ENGAGED IN SERVICES OF THE ORANGE DOOR NEMA

100%

% OF OUR TEAM CONFIDENT IN USING VIDEO CONFERENCING AT 15 APRIL, 2020



2

EARLY YEARS SERVICES

252

CHILDREN ENROLLED IN OUR EY SERVICES

2%

% OF OUR TEAM CONFIDENT IN USING VIDEO CONFERENCING AT 1 MARCH, 2020





# THE YEAR IN WORDS - OUR VALUES

## HOPE

Hope is inextricably linked to our purpose and how we work with children and families.

People engage with Kids First for myriad reasons yet a common theme linking their association with us, is a desire to bring about positive change in their lives. There is a hopefulness on our clients' sides, and it is hopefulness that guides and inspires us too.

Our practitioner team has long supported the use of sensory exploration. In exploring the senses, we can uncover ways for children and caregivers to feel safe with one another and to create new communication opportunities to strengthen their attachment.

Our ability to support sensory experiences was enhanced in October 2019, with the official opening of our own Sensory Room. Located at our Heidelberg Centre, the Room was made possible through grants from the Helen MacPherson Smith Trust and Brockhoff Foundation.

Once inside the room, our clients can explore the colours, textures, objects, sounds and visuals, on a journey of finding their own sensory preferences. Since opening, more than 60 of our team members have been trained to use the Room, and practices are documented in a comprehensive Sensory workbook that we produced.

Three-quarters of the clients who have sessions in the Sensory Room are clients of our Sexual Abuse Counselling & Prevention Program (SACAPP) team. In recent years, there has been increased attention to the clinical importance of addressing the body to facilitate integration of sensory and emotional awareness in sexual abuse recovery.

*"Prior to using sensory methods I had never seen this young person smile or laugh. He lacked hope and often spoke of feeling he couldn't be helped, yet he began to respond to the Sensory room, particularly the egg chair, and used that to swivel back or forth to indicate his feelings...*

*Once we began online sessions he talked about missing the sensory opportunities and I noticed a big difference in his ability to concentrate. So we arranged for some items to be sent to him, including a body sock. He began the session stating he was not going to enjoy himself and didn't believe he could identify feeling of any kind in his body. He also noted that he would watch the clock for the session to finish (as he often did).*

*Once he put on the body sock, his demeanour changed completely. He shifted from sullen, somewhat guarded and agitated, to giggling and talkative and engaged. He didn't look at the clock at all, and sat in the body sock and spoke about topics he had not been able to discuss at all since the beginning of his therapy. He was hopeful, and it was lovely to witness."*

Kids First SACAPP team member



# EMPOWERMENT

Now two years old, the North Eastern Melbourne (NEMA) Orange Door is one of the foundation sites for the biggest reform in family violence in Australia. The Orange Door (TOD) has shifted the way that the community can access family violence services, as well as how family violence, child and family, and perpetrator intervention services coordinate with each other. Kids First is very proud to be part of this pioneering reform.

Every day, team members at NEMA Orange Door empower women as victim survivors of family violence.

Often this begins with the act of listening. To hear and believe a woman's story and to acknowledge her bravery in keeping herself and her children safe. She has survived. We can partner with her to build on this strength.

We recognise autonomy and decision making, providing a range of choices, and respecting all the decisions women make – and at times this involves 'opting out' of the service system.

We work through brokerage options providing immediate practical support to get women back on their feet. This can include accessing safe interim accommodation or making their own home safer. And we are there to link clients into our family services where we will continue to support them with counselling, accessing legal and financial services and finding long term housing options.

ToD offers a unique approach where both the emotional and practical needs of victim survivors can be explored. And a new start can emerge.

*"This year one of our team members worked with an older woman who had been in a very long term and abusive relationship since she was young.*

*She had never managed her own money. So it was a huge first step for her to do something many of us would take for granted and did when we were young - she got her own bank account.*

*It took months of engagement and work, but she was so happy when she was able to do this and deposit her own money."*

Kids First NEMA Orange Door team member



# ACCOUNTABILITY

If being accountable is about owning a sense of responsibility, then ours firmly sits with the clients and community we are entrusted to serve. Our practice reflects our client centred approach. No two people are the same and no assumptions are made.

From the outset, our Intake & Engagement team thoroughly assesses each potential clients' needs. If there are services they require outside of Kids First, then we will advocate on their behalf and make referrals that may save them retelling experiences they might find traumatic or challenging.

Our practitioners don't seek to impose goals with their clients based on what they think will benefit them. Rather, goals are created collaboratively, and we regularly check in to see how progress is going. At the beginning of each session we determine if there is anything clients would like to focus on. And at the end of each session we seek feedback to see if what they had envisaged discussing has been covered, or if anything is missed it is added to the agenda to ensure we are on track with the client's needs for the next session.

Our accountability to our clients and families and ensuring the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers, were the driving forces that shaped our COVID-19 response this year. Within a matter of days, the Agency continuity plan, led by our Quality & Risk area and prepared by our Leadership team, was propelled into action. With client and staff safety paramount, in the middle of March 2020 we temporarily closed our centres and swiftly transitioned all child and family services to a remote delivery model.

If at that time we weren't familiar with Microsoft Teams video conferencing, it is fair to say we quickly overcame that inexperience. And it was essential we developed guidance for using video for our clients too, to ensure quality and privacy standards would be maintained, and they would be comfortable to interact through the video medium.

Needing a 'one stop shop' for our staff to access resources, wellbeing tips and Department of Health & Human Services guidance, we built a Staff Resources Hub, effectively a new intranet, within 72 hours.

For our early years staff at Korin Korin and Seymour, their responsibility was (and is) to the children and families who attend our kindergartens, and they remained open during the various stages of COVID-19 restrictions.

As environments that generally welcome parents, care givers and volunteers in with open arms, kinders instead had to restrict access, maintain distance and embed strict hygiene procedures.

The early years teams have been Kids First's very own courageous front line. We are completely grateful for the ways in which they maintained continuity of learning for children, striving to provide a 'normal' experience at a time when normal has been near impossible to pin down.





# RESPECT

Kids First has a strong track record for introducing internationally sourced, evidence-informed programs and services into our Australian context. Caring Dads and Mothers in Mind are two examples of Canadian programs that we have successfully adapted to suit the needs of our clients. We will only seek to adapt programs that are grounded in respect – for individuals, their dignity, needs and preferences. Respect is a value hardwired into our culture.

Promoting First Relationships (PFR) is an evidence-informed program from the United States. It has been embraced by our practitioners this year, with Kids First the only Australian exponent of the program.

PFR aligns with all of our organisational values, most notably that of respect. All strength-based work is founded on the notion of respect. Through PFR we aim to bring parents' strengths to the surface as a starting point to build their confidence so that parenting can be positive and offer moments of joy in supporting a rich bond with children.

PFR is based on attachment theory and builds confidence and competence in parents. It does this through a unique approach, starting with visiting families in their homes where child development and safety can be explored. Interactions between parents and children are recorded and then played back – a critical component of the PFR model. While viewing with the parent, the practitioner pauses and reviews positive interactions that meet children's social and emotional needs. PFR is becoming a foundation of our work with parents across our family services case management program.

This year Jane\* came to Kids First after experiencing family violence. The experience had diminished her confidence, and after years of having her parenting skills undermined, she was at a low point. Her five-year-old son Oliver\* was showing signs of aggression towards her and particularly after visits with his father.

Jane's key worker determined that PFR would support Jane's goals for herself and her relationship with her son. Over time Oliver's aggressive behaviour reduced. Upset behaviour that would typically last for 90 minutes was reduced to 20 minutes and he even began activating some self-soothing behaviours. Importantly, Jane's confidence grew, as she explains.

*"When I first started (PFR) group, I was unsure of myself. Watching the videos... has given me more belief in myself and more focus and motivation in my approach in helping Oliver.*

*(PFR) has been a fantastic support especially in my confidence as a parent. Before the program I doubted myself a lot, thinking I must be doing something wrong or could be doing something better. You helped me see all the little things I was doing well and reflect on what I also needed.*

*You always made me feel comfortable to share and I felt you very quickly picked up on our needs and went out of your way to accommodate these. I never felt judged and the way you delivered feedback was encouraging and motivating.*

*A huge thank you, you have made a huge difference in my life and hopefully a flow on effect to Oliver's life."*

\*Clients names changed for this case study.



# TRUST

Our organisation has been a trusted part of the fabric of Melbourne's north east for many years now.

Our offices in Thomastown, and Altona Street, The Orange Door site in Heidelberg, and our Korin Korin kinder in Wollert, have firmly embedded us in this community.

This year was time to venture beyond. Twelve months ago, we successfully applied to become part of a new community partnership in Seymour, a town 104 kilometres north of Melbourne in the Mitchell Shire.

Our Strategic Plan has set in place our ambition to expand our early years services to communities where we could add value through our unique model of education and care. And so, this year the new Seymour Family and Children's Centre was opened, with the on-site kindergarten operated by Kids First and showcasing our unique model of early learning in a beautifully appointed space.

Being a new player in a new community does not automatically engender trust – this is earned. We have loved getting to know our site partners Our Place, Seymour College and Mitchell Shire. And it has been our great privilege to build trusting relationships with children and families in Seymour.

In 2021 we will add another early years service in Mitchell Shire as part of the Wallan East Family and Children's Centre. We are very excited to again partner with Mitchell Shire and earn the trust and respect of the community.

*"It has been wonderful opening a brand new service and welcoming three and four-year-old children and their families to the Centre. And it's been fabulous recruiting talented and passionate local educators to our early years team.*

*This has been a challenging first year, pushing us to roll with the many twists and turns that COVID-19 has presented. Yet I believe it has forged a real sense of teamwork and trust within our very new team, and also brought to the fore the qualities of the Seymour community that we are proud to have joined."*

Kids First Early Years Manager



# THANK YOU

## 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; Justice Bernard Murphy; Tony Smith; Kerry Ryan; Wayne Gorst; Stephanie Milione.

## PATRONS

Patron in Chief, Her Excellency, the Hon. Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria; Patrons, Elaine Marriner, Neil Mitchell AO, Ross Stevenson.

## VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to the 80 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!

## FUNDERS

We would like to acknowledge the generosity and support from the Victorian Government, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education and Training and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.

## MAJOR PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS



# THANK YOU

## EVENT ORGANISERS

Elaine Marriner, Margaret Robinson and Leonie McNicol who in 2019 organised another flawless event and our most successful Lunchtime Rumours Feast ever that generated \$284,000 for Kids First.

The Executive Wealth Circle Board members who staged a very successful event generating more than \$8,000 in support of Kids First. Susan Gin (Chair), Nadia Taylor, Cindy Huang, Jessica Lau, Diana Lin, Dr Catherine Lou, Tomm Paulsen, Professor Charles Qin OAM, Katy Wang, Mary Wang, Rebecca Wu, Evelyn Xie.

Green Acres Golf Club for the incredible \$50,000 raised by the club and its members as part of their Charity Golf Day. We thank particularly Peter Busch, General Manager for your generosity and Mark Bolton, Christina Moore, Lee Rimes and the Charity Day Committee for their tireless efforts to 'drive' such a seamless and enjoyable event.

Steve Vidanovski owner of Force Fitness Studio, Bundoora who literally put his body on the line and flipped a tyre for 4 kilometres to raise nearly \$5,000 for us through the kindness of his studio clients, friends and community.

## LUNCHTIME RUMOURS FEAST SUPPORTERS

Event major sponsors: 3AW 693, De Bortoli Wines, Elaine & David Marriner and Family, Marriner Group and Staff, CHANEL Bertocchi Smallgoods.

Hamish McLachlan, MC

3AW Breakfast Team: Ross Stevenson, John Burns, Jon Anderson, John Silvester, Peter Ford, Kate Stevenson, Glenn Robbins, Mark Davidson, Damian Tardio, Mikkayla Mossop

Event partners:

- Aloft Perth
- Australian Football League
- Australian Grand Prix Corporation
- Bamba Press (Troy Riley)
- Bill Gibbons – Jericho Cup Warrnambool Pty Ltd
- Calendar Cheese Company
- Craig Howard – Mercedes Benz Berwick
- Craig Jackett – Jackett Pty Ltd
- Cricket Australia
- Crown Metropol
- Element Richmond
- Four Points by Sheraton Central Park Sydney
- Four Points by Sheraton Melbourne
- Four Points by Sheraton Perth
- Gerry Ryan – Mitchelton Winery and Jayco
- Grayline Tours
- Hertz
- Ian Curley – French Saloon
- Koko Black
- Lello Pasta Melbourne
- Marriott Brisbane
- Marriott Melbourne Hotel
- Marriott Surfers Paradise
- Meyer Cookware Australia Pty Ltd Pier One Sydney
- Racing Victoria
- Rob Sinclair – E & S Trading Co (Discounts) Pty Ltd
- Sealy of Australia
- Sheraton Grand Gold Coast
- Sheraton Grand Sydney Hyde Park
- Sheraton Melbourne Hotel
- Sleepmaker Commercial
- St Andrews Hotel, Fitzroy
- Stephen Walters
- Steve Abbott – Jellis Craig
- Supernormal Restaurant Melbourne
- Tony Smith – Kieser Australia
- Vince Gurciullo – De Bortoli Wines
- Westin Brisbane,
- Westin Melbourne – Debra Watts
- Westin Perth.

# THANK YOU

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.

## PHILANTHROPIC TRUSTS & FOUNDATIONS

- Amy Dickinson Legacy Fund
- AS & C Figuerola Trust
- Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation
- CommBank Foundation
- Ephraim Yoffa Charitable Trust
- Flora & Frank Leith Trust
- Forest Hill Early Childhood Foundation
- Gandel Philanthropy
- Helen McPherson Smith Trust
- Jack Brockhoff Foundation
- JB Were Charitable & Endowment Fund
- Louis and Lesley Nelken Trust
- MF Foundation
- Percy Baxter Charitable Trust
- The R. E. Ross Trust

## DONORS

For every individual who has donated in support of our work. Every donation is received with immense gratitude. Thank you!

## GROUPS & ORGANISATIONS

- Angels 3081
- Anglicare Victoria
- Banyule City Council
- Banyule Community Health
- Barwon Family Violence and Sexual Assault Centre
- Berry Street
- Big Group Hug
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Child Development Institute Toronto
- Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
- cohealth
- Council to Homeless Persons
- Darebin City Council
- Early Learning Association Australia
- FamilyCare Shepparton
- IPC Health
- Lago Cold Stores Pty Ltd
- Laurimar Primary School
- Mitchell Shire Council
- MOSS Incorporated
- Nappy Collective
- Rotary Club of Preston
- St Kilda Mums
- State Bank of Victoria Retired Officers Club
- Uniting
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Association
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- VCOSS
- Wellways
- City of Whittlesea
- Yarra City Council

## UNIVERSITIES & RESEARCH INSTITUTES

- Murdoch Children's Research Institute
- University of Melbourne
- University of Toronto



# VALE SUE BEECHER

This year we lost a treasure. A woman who leaves an incredible personal and professional legacy, and woman who was a very dear friend of Kids First.

April 2020 witnessed the passing of Sue Beecher, philanthropist, Kids First Board member and wonderful human.

Our thoughts and condolences are especially with Sue's husband Eric, their children Kate, Joanna, Tom and Sophie, and the entire Beecher family. While Sue joined the Kids First Board just last year, she had a long affinity with our organisation.

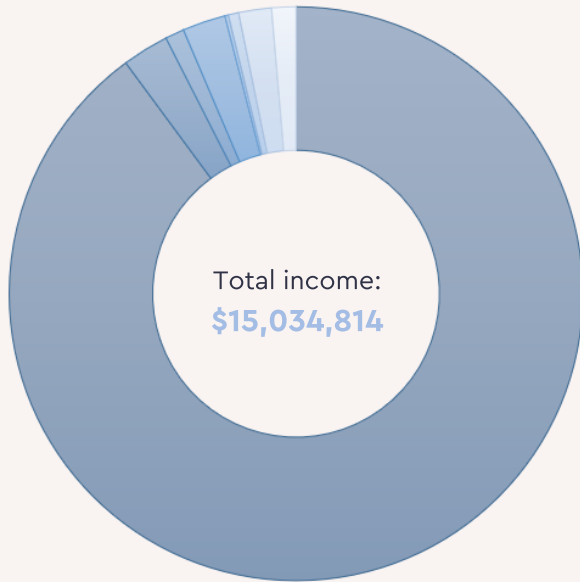
Sue completed her social work degree at the University of Melbourne alongside our CEO, Aileen Ashford, and Sue's first social work role was with the Children's Protection Society – now Kids First.

Sue's passion for people and community saw her drive a social justice agenda across many spheres. She worked as philanthropy services manager at Perpetual Limited, senior advisor at Wendy Brooks and Partners and philanthropy manager at the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) National Voice for our Children. Sue was also an active member of Human Rights Watch.

Sue leaves an incredible legacy of social work and philanthropy and we plan to honour her memory through the establishment of a Sue Beecher Leadership Award.

Vale Sue Beecher.

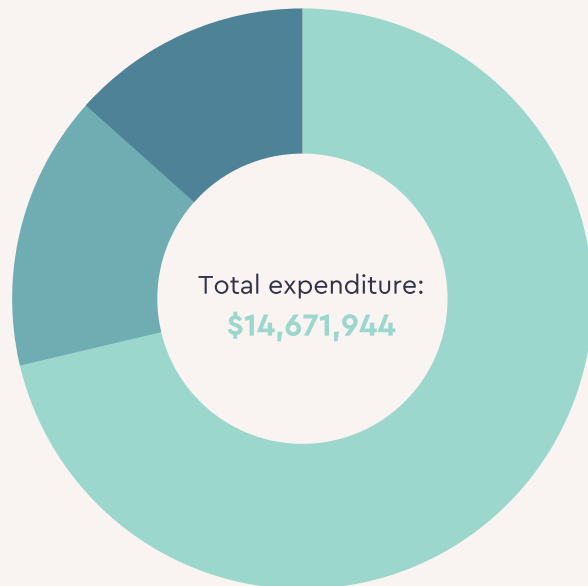
# INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2019/20



## Kids First income

- 92.4% Government grants (\$13,899,040)
- 2.7% Donations & subscriptions (\$408,989)
- 1.1% Philanthropic & trusts (\$160,922)
- 2.5% Operating activities (\$375,375)
- 0.2% Interest received (\$27,779)
- 0.6% Other income (\$83,262)
- 1.9% Investment income (\$289,284)
- 1.4% Net fair value gain of financial assets designated as FVTPL (\$209,837)

<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$15,034,814</b>
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## Kids First expenditure

- 71.3% Employee benefit expense (\$10,459,993)
- 15.3% Client expense (\$2,248,753)
- 13.4% Administration and operations expense (\$1,963,198)

<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>\$14,671,944</b>
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<b>Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year</b>	<b>\$362,870</b>
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*"This has been a challenging year in every respect. From a financial standpoint, Kids First's sound fiscal position has enabled it to retain a solid footing to weather the external impacts of COVID-19 and confidently continue its mission for children, families and the greater community."*

Simon Hutchings, Treasurer & Vice President



KIDS FIRST™

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