

# Acknowledgement of Country

CASPA acknowledges the First Nations People upon whose stolen lands we operate.

We recognise that this land was never terra nullius – the land belonging to these People was never ceded, given up, bought, or sold.

We recognise their continuing connection to their land, language, waters, sky and culture.

We must consult with community and centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and experiences in all that we do. We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.



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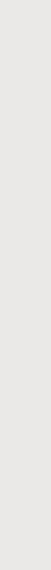
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"The moment I held her, I promised she would always have a place in our family but never lose the place in hers. All the difficult moments are eclipsed by the joy of watching her thrive, seeing her family succeed, and knowing she's safe and happy."

**Danni**Restoration Carer



A significant aspect of CASPA's advocacy is the respect for children's rights. We believe it is crucial to consider children's perspectives and lived experiences regarding their family relationships.

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# Letter from the CEO



Reflecting on the past year, we are filled with gratitude and determination as we present this Annual Impact Report.

At CASPA, our dedication to providing high-quality services and support for children, families, and people with disabilities across New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia has only grown stronger, despite the increasing complexities of our sectors. Our commitment to therapeutic care and social responsibility has guided our efforts, allowing us to implement programs that not only meet immediate needs but also promote long-term resilience. Through collaboration, innovation, and a shared vision, we have advanced our goals while **uplifting those we support**, showing that our success is deeply connected to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

This journey has not been without its challenges. What stands out most to me is the incredible **resilience and commitment** of people and communities in facing these challenges. The journey of resilience is tiring, and while we celebrate our successes, we must also acknowledge the tough work we do, the journeys of those we support, and the many complex challenges we face. The cost-of-living pressures, drastic housing shortages, rising levels of homelessness, the deepening domestic violence crisis, and systemic barriers to equitable and quality services for the most vulnerable in our communities are just a few examples.

The sector in which CASPA operates faces these challenges daily, and I am humbled by the perseverance and determination of so many who give their passion and careers to this hard work, often making personal sacrifices along the way. It is a privilege to support people and communities in their time of need, and I am proud of what CASPA, in partnership with its people and service users, has achieved this year.

Operating an organisation that delivers such specialised and sensitive human services requires external oversight and robust auditing and quality assurance evaluations. A significant highlight was gaining NSW Out of Home Care re-accreditation with the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) after the previous 5-year cycle of accreditation expired. **CASPA achieved a renewed 5 years** of Accreditation in NSW and was acknowledged by the OCG for our deep commitment to the rights of children.

In my role as Principal Officer in NSW, I am constantly reminded by my colleagues and the children themselves of the importance of **listening to children** and understanding their worries, stories, and needs. I am grateful to be in a workplace that holds such strong values around this. It starts with our Board of Directors, who foster a strong commitment to the rights of children, and they are to be commended for their diligent governance of CASPA.

Earlier in the year we also underwent assessment for our NDIS re-registration. We are proud to state we have received registration to provide quality NDIS supports in 13 classes across Australia and are mobilising NDIS supports into regions where accessibility has been a challenge for participants. Across all areas of CASPA, innovative and out-of-the-box teams and initiatives have emerged over many years. CASPA dentifies gaps in service delivery and continues to provide innovative and bespoke solutions for the sectors in which we operate.

I am proud of the advancement of our Hammers 4 Hope program, with more young people participating in workplace experience and learning, and even the permanent employment of young people formerly within the statutory care system. Hammers 4 Hope is changing the lives of young people by providing invaluable skills in home maintenance and building services, with opportunities for traineeships and apprenticeships. A dream has been realised with a national team of trauma-informed and therapeutic tradespeople.

Lawyers 4 Hope is now fully established and operating as a law firm with purpose, with all profits from the business being invested in ongoing supports and aftercare services for young people with out-of-home care experience. The innovative model we have established utilises a growing network of lawyers to deliver commercial legal services alongside pro bono legal services for vulnerable young people and other charitable organisations where legal services may be financially untenable. Lawyers 4 Hope has actively been donating its profits to the CASPA Foundation, and we are embarking on an exciting year ahead for the new law firm.

Other areas of diversification and reach include the expansion of NDIS services into the Tennant Creek Northern Territory area, with a growing number of participants seeking CASPA's services in this region. This highlights CASPA's continued commitment to delivering much needed supports into regions where contextual barriers exist. The need in remote and regional areas is critical. In a growing organisation, remaining nimble has been a key priority of the Executive team to stay true to the CASPA way. Tennant Creek service delivery truly highlights how regional and remote areas of Australia have significant needs for quality services. We continue to demonstrate our capacity to mobilise into difficult-to-reach locations, supported by inclusive communities who partner with us to establish our programs.

This year, CASPA was awarded the Intensive Therapeutic Care contract in NSW, transitioning our residential service delivery from the legacy Residential Care contract. With this contractual change came the ability to execute an Executive level restructure to align national programs into one department, headed by Angela Bontea as the Executive Director of Child, Youth, Family and Disabilities. Alongside this department, we rolled out a major strategic priority by implementing a Quality and Research department headed by Kylee Gordon, making our longstanding desire to invest in research and data collation a reality.

Our Clinical Services team was strengthened by the launch of a National Allied Health Team headed by Michael Manning. Collectively, these three teams now have major oversight on a national level of the care, services, and supports being delivered, ensuring the latest research, ongoing research, and best practice models are implemented through our teams. We also launched a Strategic Impacts and Futures Department led by Oksana Tkachenko, focusing on projects that support the deeper reach and impact of our services by working with philanthropic partners.

#### Our efforts have led to several positive outcomes:

58

Successful family reunifications over 5 years 6.7%

Increased placement stability in 12 months 120

Supported by CASPA's alternative schooling\* 60 were skills trained thro

trained through CASPA's social enterprises\*\*

I would like to thank all Executives named and including Peter Freer, Nathan Baunach, Richard Jones and Amanda Mead for their invaluable partnership with myself and the Board in steering CASPA through extensive change and **remaining committed and true to the values of this wonderful organisation**. Change is hard and often scary, and without thought leaders such as my executive team colleagues, we could not have been a part of the remarkable stories and journey in this report.

Another year has gone by, and as I reflect on the long road we have travelled to get here, I must celebrate our Chair, Nicolas Harrison, for his calm hand and support to both me and the whole of CASPA. His highly diligent governance and oversight, and his generosity of knowledge and time to guide and support me as CEO in a year of many and varied challenges, is not fully captured in these words. I thank him for his sixth year of service as Chair of CASPA and acknowledge that his time in this role has been taxing and tiresome. While his knowledge and expertise will always be welcome at CASPA, there will come a time when I must accept that he will step down from his tenure and rest from our demands. I thank him beyond what words can convey for his guidance and sharpness in supporting me to lead CASPA.

Finally, to all the staff of CASPA, I want to acknowledge the work you all do every day, every night, every moment to **improve the lives of others**. The passion this workforce shows is nothing short of mesmerising. Some days my inbox is so full, and in that fullness are overwhelming amounts of compliments, feedback, acknowledgements, and celebrations of CASPA's people. To be the leader of such an inspiring workplace is my genuine privilege, and I look forward to a year ahead where our people can be nurtured to develop and hone their skills to continue delivering services that go to the heart of why we exist – **to support people to thrive**.

Naarah Rodwell CEO

<sup>\*</sup>Since inception.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Since inception, including the Tuckshop and Hammers 4 Hope from work experience to traineeships.



# Together we THRIVE

### **Our vision**

For children, young people, families, and people with disabilities in regional and remote
Australia to feel connected to their communities, with access to support, resources and opportunities to thrive.

### Our mission

To provide compassionate, innovative & quality services to children, young people, families and people with disabilities through relationships and holistic supports that promote wellbeing and inclusion.



#### THE CHALLENGE

# This leads to

Most Australians don't leave home until they're 24, giving them the financial and emotional support they need to learn, grow and develop independence. Young people in out-of-home care often transition to independence much earlier, with formal care placements ending at 21. Many may leave available support systems even before this.

Research shows that extending care placements to the age of 21 doubles education participation and halves the risk of homelessness, highlighting the importance of ongoing support during this critical time in a young person's life.

\*Data from: The Home Stretch.

IN THE FIRST YEAR OF LEAVING CARE:

18%

exit care to a permanent home

35%

experience homelessness 29%

are unemployed 41%

of females become pregnant

### Our solution





#### **WE FOSTER**

Healing, safety and protection



#### WHICH LEADS TO

Stronger families and resilient communities

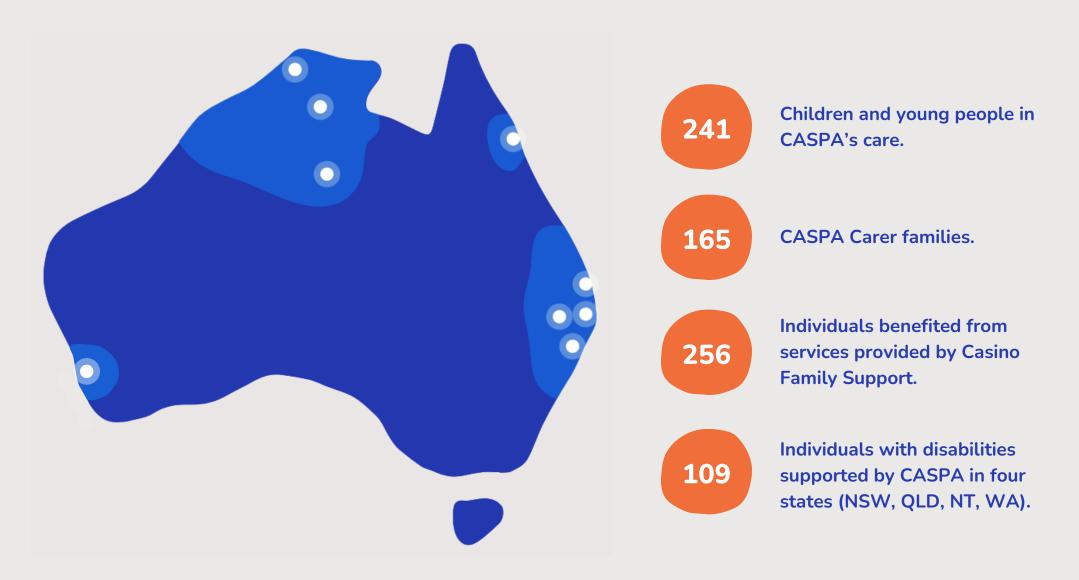


#### **AND RESULTS IN**

Sustainable change for their futures



## Our reach



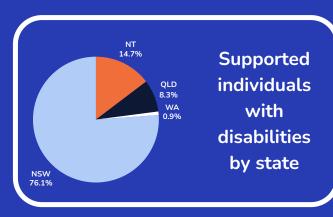
# Disability & mental health supports

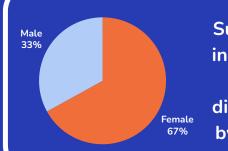
CASPA empowers NDIS participants to attain **greater independence**, even facilitating their successful relocation to rural areas where support options can be limited. In some cases, we've established new services in remote locations to ensure that all participants have access to the care they need.

CASPA is there for individuals as they transition from out-of-home care (OOHC) to adulthood. We extend NDIS services so participants can keep their established social and support networks, ensuring a **smooth journey** to independent living.



The service from CASPA has been incredible. I have been so grateful for all of their knowledge and they have worked so collaboratively with our team with organising all elements of our participant's life."





Supported individuals with disabilities by gender

Registered to
provide 13
classes of NDIS
support across
Australia



# Children and young people

Our specialised program supports young people through their preparations to leave care, building the skills they need as they transition to independence.

CASPA's **education team** provides project-based learning and life skills for youth disengaged from mainstream education. Programs are tailored to individual learning styles and levels, with educators trained in therapeutic crisis intervention to assist those with challenging behaviours.

#### SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE

32

young people were assisted through our independent living program in 23-24

18

successful transitions from residential care to independent living

4

successful transitions from homelessness to independent living

32

students attended the CASPA education centre

#### **HAMMERS 4 HOPE**

Hammers 4 Hope collaborates with the education team, empowering young individuals on the verge of leaving care with essential job skills.

young people have gained on the job skills through H4H

#### THE TUCKSHOP

The Tuckshop provides hospitality training to young people through our education centre with around 50 young people gaining experience here since establishment.

17

young people gained experience here in 23-24

### **Our Communities**





CASPA showed strong support for homelessness awareness. 3 of our executive directors participated in the Vinnies CEO Sleepout. With 35% of young people becoming homeless in their first year of leaving out-of-home care, the need for support is clear. CASPA is committed to reducing this risk and ensuring successful transitions to independence. Their collective efforts raised over \$10k and highlight CASPA's commitment to making a positive impact in the community.



#### LOVE ON A PLATE

In response to local feedback about financial challenges in Casino NSW, CASPA organised two six-week cooking programs. These were warmly received, with parents coming together to prepare and share nutritious meals with their families. Beyond providing immediate food relief, the programs fostered a sense of community, helping to build trust and reduce isolation. This strengthened connections, fostered community engagement, and highlighted CASPA's role in delivering local solutions.



#### JOINT PROTOCOL

CASPA continued our Joint Protocol partnership with Lismore Police to help reduce interactions between young people in out-of-home care and the justice system. CASPA's trained staff are the first responders, focusing on de-escalation, safety, and emotional wellbeing to prevent police involvement. Regular meetings now include community legal services, Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), and other agencies, fostering trust and collaboration to achieve better outcomes for both the young people and the wider community.



#### CARING FOR CARERS

In September 2023, we held a special Carer Conference and Celebration to honour CASPA's carer families during NSW Foster Care Week. This event celebrated the dedication of our carers, offering them the chance to connect, attend information sessions, and receive valuable training to support their roles. Over 60 families participated, creating a vibrant space for sharing knowledge, building community, and acknowledging the incredible work our carers do every day.

# Transitioning care



CASPA is committed to transitioning eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in NSW to be case managed by local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

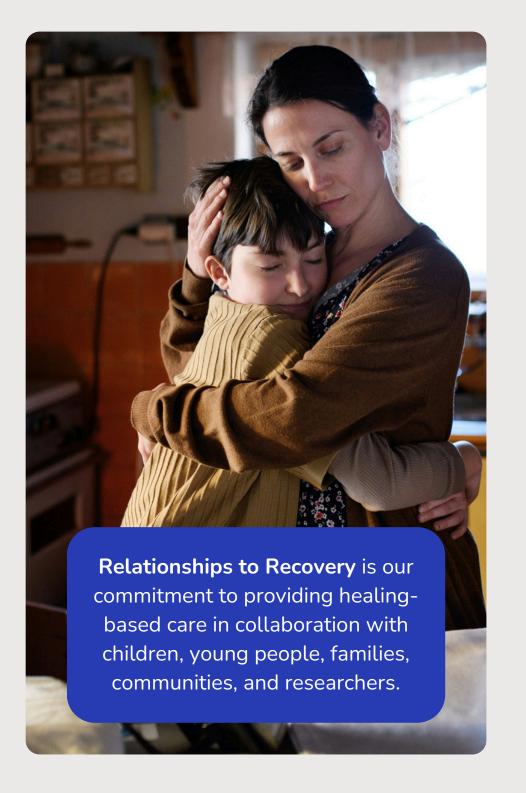
This is part of a broader reform to ensure care for Aboriginal children is led by Aboriginal people and governed by strong Aboriginal agencies. Our transition preparation began in October 2022, with the official launch in July 2023, and follows a three-year phased plan prioritising families outside CASPA's operational areas, non-Aboriginal carers, and kinship placements. CASPA is collaborating with ACCOs including Ngunya Jarjum, Winanga-Li, KARI, and AbCare, setting clear yearly targets for transitions.

CASPA has implemented proactive measures to ensure smooth transitions. Initiatives like carer morning teas, joint home visits, and bi-monthly newsletters foster strong relationships and support information sharing between carers, ACCOs, and the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

#### **OUR COMMITMENT**

A robust governance framework underpins the transition, with regular reporting to executives and corporate risk assessments keeping stakeholders informed and engaged. CASPA has also developed resources to support staff and carers, with transition updates included in team meetings to address issues promptly and collaboratively.

Looking ahead, CASPA remains committed to overcoming challenges in partnership with ACCOs and stakeholders, ensuring Aboriginal children and young people receive culturally safe care and the support they deserve.



# Hope for healing

This year CASPA launched our new Therapeutic Framework: **Relationships to Recovery** 

This model is designed to provide the best care for children and young people, built on solid research and evidence. It was developed by analysing existing therapeutic care models and focuses on healing and post-traumatic growth, with clear, measurable outcomes.

The framework is based on Trauma-Informed Practice and key theories, like Attachment Theory and the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics, which help us understand the impact of trauma on development. We've also included research from experts like Bessel van der Kolk to ensure it's grounded in the latest knowledge.

The principles of Safety, Choice, Collaboration, Trust, and Empowerment form the foundation of Relationships to Recovery. We've expanded Safety to include cultural, emotional, and environmental aspects, with Cultural Safety as a priority. This ensures our practice acknowledges cultural and linguistic diversity.

Our framework aligns with the 10 Essential Elements of Care from the Australian Childhood Foundation and the QLD Hope and Healing Framework. We've streamlined these into nine elements that fit within CASPA's existing procedures, ensuring consistent delivery of care across different regions.

### Our team

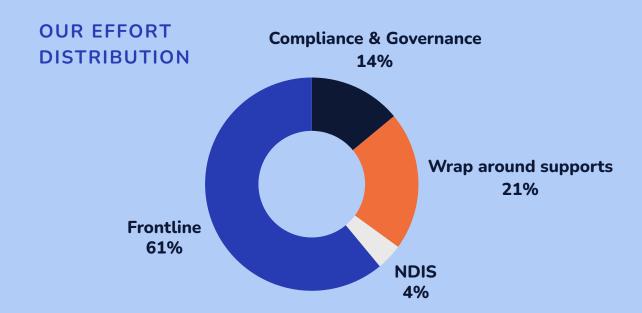
#### **OUR STAFF**











#### **OUR BOARD**



**Nicolas Harrison** Board Chair & Director



Naarah Rodwell CEO



Ross Morgan Board Director



Kate Webber Board Director



**Donna Kildea**Board Director



**Steven Wenzel**Board Director



# Danni and Roxy's story

# Danni and Roxy have always been deeply caring individuals, passionate about community, inclusion, and mutual aid.

They are firm believers in the concept of 'found family', the people you gather throughout life who love you not in spite of who you are, but because of it. "As we talked about our future together, we kept circling back to foster care," says Danni. "We wanted to grow our found family and support children who needed it most."

When they started exploring foster care agencies, Danni and Roxy were apprehensive. "We were concerned that, as a gay couple, we might not be accepted by some agencies. I also have a dynamic disability that affects my movement, so I wasn't sure if that would disqualify us," Danni recalls. But their experience with CASPA was different from the start. "CASPA welcomed us wholeheartedly. They saw our differences not as barriers, but as strengths that could help us connect with children who might feel like they don't fit in themselves."

Waiting for their first placement was both exciting and nerve-wracking. "When we got the call, I rushed out to buy a car seat because she was too little for the hand-me-downs my sister had given us," Danni says. "I stood in the shopping centre parking lot, stressed and sweating, struggling to install the car seat, but I was ready."

Fostering is not the typical parenting journey. Danni and Roxy reflected that while it included many expected things – snuggles, first steps, daycare drop offs and snotty noses – there are unique challenges. Being a foster carer also includes making space for trauma and uncertainty. Like any parent, they chose to put parts of their life on hold so they could show up for her. But there were many unknowns involved, including how long she would be in their care.

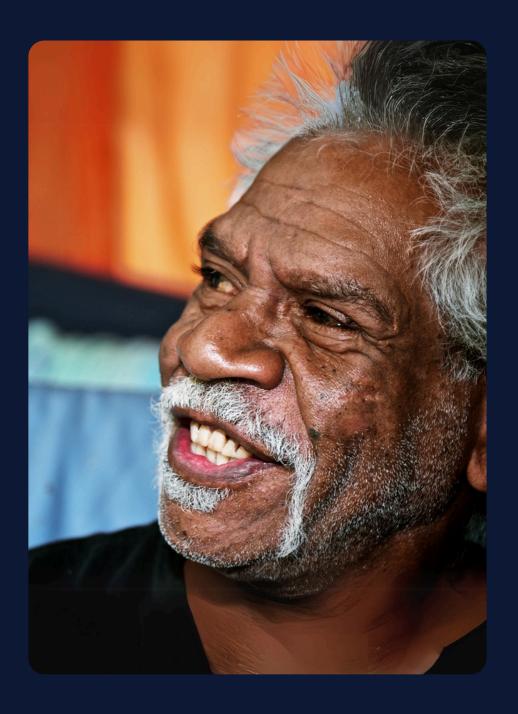


After two and a half years as part of Danni and Roxy's family, the little girl has returned home to hers. The couple continues to be part of her extended family, with frequent visits, shared recipes, and goodnight video calls. "I miss her every day, but she is where she's meant to be," Danni says. "We're still here, a part of her life, watching her grow."

Danni and Roxy emphasise that fostering goes beyond just providing a home; it's about fostering the whole family, creating a safe, loving space that allows children to stay connected to their roots and their communities. They credit CASPA for creating a 'parenting village' around them with training, carer groups, and a dedicated support team. "Our caseworker was always there to offer advice, help us advocate, or simply listen," Danni says. "You don't have to be perfect or fit into a specific box to be a carer. CASPA gave us the tools we needed to be the carers this child and her family needed."

Reflecting on their journey, Danni shares, "Fostering her was the hardest thing we've ever done. But we don't regret a single second of it, because it was also the most rewarding. We will always be a family home away from home for her, whenever she may need it."

Patrick lived in a remote outback town and was unable to vacate the hospital he was receiving care from due to the lack of support available in the area. With CASPA's assistance, he now receives the help he needs to live in the community in a supported environment – recently his family member has also moved in with him!





#### THE IMPACT OF HAMMERS 4 HOPE

# Creating pathways to independence

For young people leaving the care system, the journey to independence can be daunting. Without a strong support network, they face significant challenges including risks of poverty, homelessness, and difficulty securing employment. CASPA's Hammers 4 Hope is transforming this narrative, providing young care leavers with the skills, confidence, and resources they need to build a stable, independent future.

In 2024, Hammers 4 Hope received a generous \$10,000 grant from the Qantas Regional Grants program, funding essential equipment, clothing, and education fees for young adults entering the trade industry. With this support, CASPA can further its mission of empowering care leavers to break free from cycles of disadvantage.

One of the young people benefiting from Hammers 4 Hope is 18-year-old Terence Puruntatameri. Growing up in residential care in the Northern Territory, Terence faced a challenging journey.

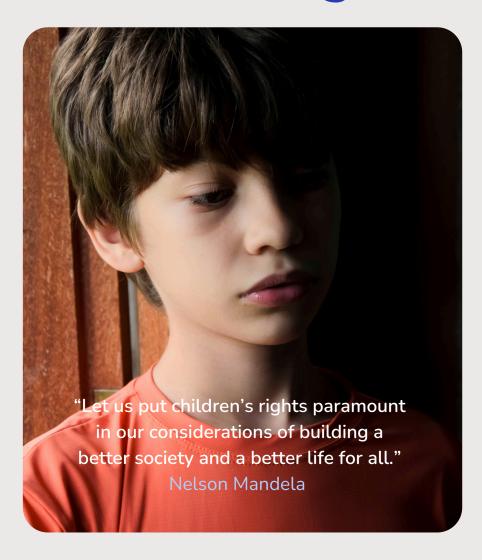
Thanks to the Hammers 4 Hope initiative, Terence is now building his future. After completing the Try a Trade construction program, he's renting a home and working with the Hammers 4 Hope team to maintain CASPA properties and support local businesses in Darwin. His goal is to become a carpenter, a dream now in reach.

For CASPA COO, Peter Freer, stories like Terence's are what make the work meaningful. "Clients who use Hammers 4 Hope benefit from knowing that their money is going to a worthy cause. They're not just paying for a service; they're actively supporting the local community and helping vulnerable young people gain skills and job readiness."



#### **POLICY ADVOCACY**

# Upholding children's rights



CASPA has been at the forefront of advocating for children's rights in Australia, particularly focusing on those in Out of Home Care (OOHC). Our research paper, submitted to be published in the Special Issue of Children Australia (2024), titled "Children, Trauma and the Law," highlights key lessons from various case studies. This research underscores the critical importance of maintaining children's rights and their lived experiences in fostering the emotional wellbeing of children. Emphasising children's rights is essential, as it leads to more positive healing outcomes for young people and must be integrated into casework practices.

A significant aspect of CASPA's advocacy is the respect for children's rights. We believe it is crucial to consider children's perspectives and lived experiences regarding their family relationships. Empowering children to understand and exercise a sense of agency is vital for their development. This approach is particularly important for young parents in OOHC, emphasising the need for adequate support to navigate their unique challenges.

Recognising the historical and ongoing challenges within OOHC, CASPA advocates for systemic reforms that prioritise children's rights and wellbeing. Our aim is to inspire a more effective child protection system that places children and young people's rights and lived experiences at the forefront. This advocacy also extends to broader issues, such as the current debate on the age of criminal responsibility in the Northern Territory.

Recently, CASPA expressed strong concerns regarding the Northern Territory Government's legislation change to lower the age of criminal responsibility to 10. In response, we joined community representatives and concerned citizens at a rally outside Parliament House to oppose the proposed law reform. The presence of young people from the therapeutic care system highlighted the real-life implications of such measures.

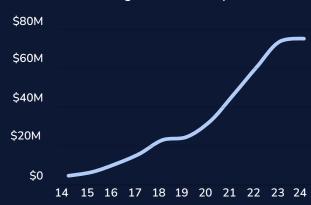
Evidence shows that early contact with the criminal justice system increases the likelihood of reoffending. We advocate for **restorative programs** that support growth and healing rather than the criminalisation of children and young people who are suffering the effects of traumatic childhoods and require our care and understanding.

Through these advocacy efforts and our commitment to improving health and living conditions for those in care, CASPA aims to promote social justice and uphold the rights of children. Ultimately, our work seeks to create a more compassionate and effective system that prioritises the wellbeing of young people over punitive measures.

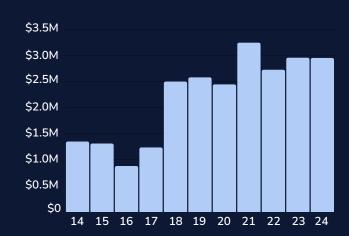
# Financial summary

#### Revenue trend

16 times revenue growth over 10 years.



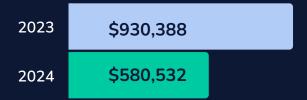
#### Year on year equity



#### **OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY HIGHLIGHTS**

#### Property repairs expenditure

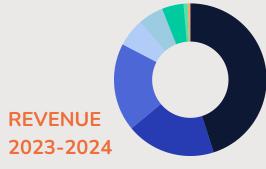
60.3% reduction in property repairs since 2023.



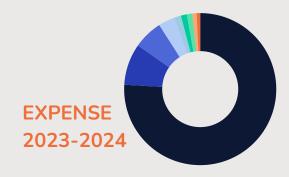
#### Motor vehicle expenditure

21% reduction in motor vehicle costs since 2023.

2023	\$1,080,526	
2024	\$892,868	



Revenue	2024
<ul><li>NSW therapeutic care</li></ul>	45.06%
Foster care	18.93%
N-T therapeutic care	18.67%
QLD therapeutic care	5.93%
SIL and STEP	5.39%
Disability services	4.60%
Family support	0.88%
Other	0.54%



Expense	2024
Employee benefits	75.91%
Administration	8.83%
<ul><li>Direct beneficiary</li></ul>	6.21%
Occupancy	3.47%
Depreciation	1.48%
<ul><li>Security costs</li></ul>	1.26%
MV expense	1.16%
Insurance	0.91%
Property repairs	0.76%



### Our partners

Our partners' generous contributions over the last year have been nothing short of amazing. Their financial support, essential goods, and services have played a pivotal role in helping us continue our mission and truly impact those we serve.

Thanks to them, we've widened our programs to help more families in need and offer crucial support. Their kindness has taken us further, enabling us to instil hope, foster connections, and provide assistance to countless individuals and families.

**Arise Church** 

Big W

**Bunnings Lismore** 

Casino RSM Club

Casino VIEW Club

**Good 360** 

**Harrison Law** 

Lawyers 4 Hope

**Lean Finance** 

Me and My House Child Care Centre

Mental Health Support Group Northern Rivers

**Nesbitt Trust** 

Oak Tree Retirement Village

**Quilts 4 Kids** 

Rotary Club of Lismore Networking

Scentsy

**Square AU** 

**Summerland Bank** 

The Good Pantry Lismore

Variety Australia

Weber Bros Entertainment



### Get in touch



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