

President Report

2023 in Review



Report from: Outgoing President, Felicity Kime

Date: 6th December 2023 - presented at AGM

So, this is my last president report for FISH. I am disappointed and excited at the same time. I have been involved with FISH for 10 years. A lot of that time, I was on the committee, including the last few years as President. I have seen some amazing things happen and FISH has really changed. One big change is the service we set up in 2020 and helping parents and families at court, on the phone, in meetings sometimes, and in workshops. My favourite part is the workshops and educating parents to talk to their child's caseworker, to ask questions and expect to be informed. That's great to watch. I'm really excited about the new projects that are funded by the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation. So, what happened in 2023 ...

FISH Plan 2022-2023

Governance	Individual and Group Advocacy	Community Advocacy	Systems Advocacy	Grants and Fundraising/ Finances
Engaging and bringing-in parents and families. Building and stabilising governance.	Consolidating the peer support and advocacy service.	Partnering with other agencies and extending influence.	Advocating on all levels and maintaining critical stance.	Raising funds and revenue.

We have come to the end of the current FISH Plan. A new one will be developed sometime in early 2024. We probably got mixed results across the plan. There are some important things that we didn't get to. More work can be done on community and systems advocacy. My excitement about workshops is also for workshops we do with workers and carers about family inclusion. In the past, we did a quite a few of these, then Covid came and we stopped. Earlier this year we started again and even got DCJ involved. There need to be more. Parent consultations are increasing again. They are important to change workers' and managers' practice. There is some info in this report about workshops and consultations and examples of feedback. Those activities are also really important to help skills for parents who represent FISH as peer workers and committee members. Hopefully that continues.

Grants and fundraising

- High tea, Newcastle: raised \$6,300 (May 2023)
- Ian and Shirley Norman Foundation: Additional Peer Worker (\$53,500, May-Dec '23. \$80,000, '24)
- Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation (\$94,831, May 2023-May 2025)

Workshops and conferences

Allambi Care information

session: Family inclusion. Carers and workers. Felicity Kime, Rachel Evans & Beck Rayfield (February 2023)

As much as I have tried to be inclusive of parents, there is still so much more positive work that can be done.

It helped me identify what strategies i use and need to use.

Made me think about what else we could do. My practices have change and are family inclusive but i can always do more.

Reflecting on possible explanations for practitioners contribute to parents' experience & how we may support change.

Being accountable for the impact our work has on families and reminding us the importance of humanising this sad experience for families and children.

Lack of compassion and how confusing our requests can be and how stuck in time restoration family time can be and how this limits capacity for parents to explore real skills.

A reminder to include parents in every step of restoration casework.

Sharing stories and your advocacy gives me both shock at your experiences and hope that the work we do can improve outcomes for families.

DCJ Practice and Permanency

Conference: Family Inclusive Restoration Practice, session with Casework Specialists and Permanency Coordinators from across the state. Felicity Kime & Lou Johnston (March 2023)

DCJ workshops, Hunter/ Central Coast:

Introduction to Family Inclusion. Pilot series run with caseworkers at different locations. Conducted with a plan to run more across DCJ in the district to improve practice and create increase income for FISH. Felicity Kime, Rachel Evans, Jessica Cocks & Lou Johnston (observed on rotation by peer workers and parent leaders) (May 2023, 4 workshops)

A follow up meeting was held with the Director, but no further workshops have happened.

Creative ways to work with families, how we can be informal and flexible in our approach with families, using our power to work with not against

It got me thinking more about the child's needs and rights and who shares that responsibility.

Helping caseworkers acknowledge Worker/Parent/Carer all as equals when it comes to decision making.

Show the parents, children and carers the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I will initially begin my relationship with parents by asking their thoughts on what will work best for them and maintaining a relationship with parents.

I have been at around 4 events that FISH have presented and it is always such an inspiring & thought-provoking experience. Such a great refresher for human connection

Not so much learned - more insight into the 'other side' of things. hearing your lived experience was powerful!

How important consistent support is for all parties - sibling connection - building genuine connections.

Not to judge parents and to provide genuine support to them on behalf of their children.

The importance of supporting not assessing the parents and building meaningful and trusting relationships.

Challenge Community Services: Developing Family Inclusive Restoration Practice workshops (x 2):

- State managers. Felicity Kime & Rachel Evans (first time parents co-facilitated without worker support) (June 2023)

- State Caseworkers. Felicity Kime & Jessica Cocks (July 2023)

DCJ Managers of Combined Sydney

Districts: Family Inclusive Restoration Practice workshop. Asked us to do it because they saw the session Practice & Permanency Conference session. Felicity Kime & Lou Johnston (September 2023)

Prep beforehand needs a stronger focus in our practice, review the importance of supervision orders and consider are they supportive or not.

FISH definition of what family inclusive practice looks like. Thinking of the triad parent/ carer/ caseworker.

Considering the stages of family action plans to address the grief and loss for parents prior to other actions. Including more actions for parents in oohc plans.

Hunter New England Health, Child Protection Week, Clinical Practice Seminar. Felicity Kime & Jessica Cocks (September 2023)

Raising community awareness

- Meeting with Sharon Claydon, MP. Follow up from High Tea. (September 2023)
- Interview with Newcastle Herald. Felicity Kime. (made possible by Nicola Ross, FISH ally) (November 2023)
- LWB Care Book launch
- Carer Support Group. DCJ Cultural Hub. (December 2023)

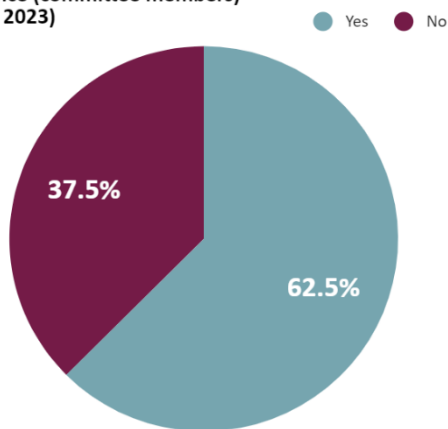
Consultations and reviews

- DCJ assessment tools review and consultation (March 2023)
- Review of Shared Lives training package for carers. ACWA Carer Training Material Review. Tammy Prince-Doyle, Tash Huard & Jessica Cocks. (September 2023)

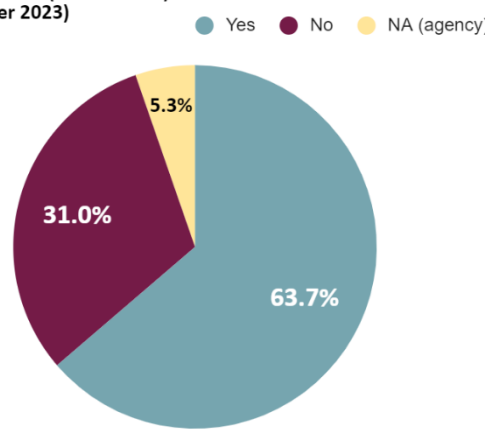
Membership

FISH currently has **107 members**, including 8 committee members. Details about the percentage of members with lived experience of child removal and navigating systems and processes first-hand are below.

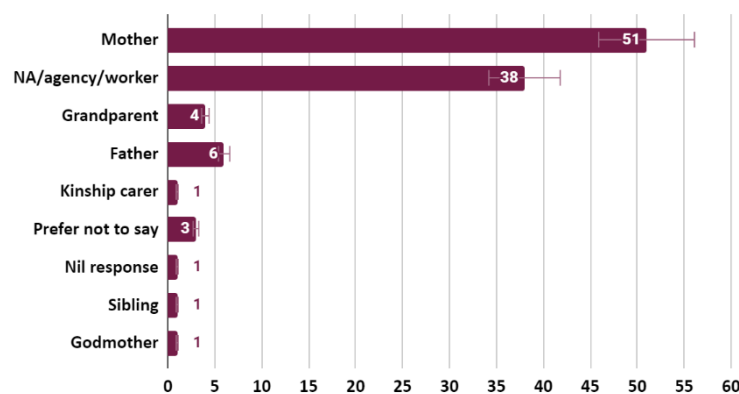
Lived experience (committee members) (at December 2023)



Lived experience (all members) (at December 2023)



FISH members: Relationship to child who is/was in care (all members) (N=107 @ December 2023)



Conclusion

Well, another good year for FISH. I want to wish everyone in FISH all the best. I will still be supporting the work of FISH in different ways. I really hope that FISH gets more parents on the committee to bring a louder parent voice to decision making.

All the best.

Felicity Kime

FISH President
6 December 2023