



Family Inclusion Strategies Hunter (FISH)

MEDIA RELEASE

Hunter Region leading the way with peer support in child protection

For release – Wednesday 12 January 2022 and ISNF socials Friday 14 January 2022

A philanthropic grant from the [Ian and Shirley Norman Foundation](#) will greatly assist [Family Inclusion Strategies Hunter](#) (FISH) in their work as an advocacy group of parents and child and family practitioners who want more children and families to stay safely together.

FISH is committed to children in out-of-home care having strong and healthy relationships with their parents and family. FISH promotes family inclusion for all children through preventing child removal, strengthening child-parent relationships, and increasing parent and family participation in child protection and wellbeing activities.

In 2019-20 there were 16,160 children in care in NSW and 14% were from the Hunter. Of these, only 553 children returned home to their parents, 59 of whom were from the Hunter. One way to improve outcomes for children in care is support and advocacy with parents and families.

Peer advocacy is provided by parents with lived experience of child protection systems. It emphasises the importance of family in children's lives. It responds to the urgent need to prevent child removal and to return home as many of those children currently in care as possible.

FISH recently introduced a peer support and advocacy service which is the first in Australia to employ parents as peer support workers. They provide emotional support, information, referral, education and advocacy with other parents and families. In 2021 FISH provided 550 peer support engagements at Broadmeadow Children's Court, by phone, and in groups.

"Financial support from the Ian and Shirley Norman Foundation of \$140,000 per year for the next three years will support the growth of this innovative service. It has the potential to change relationships between children in care and their families and to reduce time they spend in care. It is ground-breaking work in reducing trauma for children" said Tracy Norman, Founder and Chair of the Ian and Shirley Norman Foundation.

Felicity Kime, the President of Family Inclusion Strategies Hunter and a Peer Support Worker said, "This generous grant means we can continue supporting and advocating with parents, families and their children. We have met some amazing parents since starting our service and it will be great to be more involved in their development and building relationships with their children and others."

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