



Annual Report

2021 - 2022



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Chairman & CEO's Letter

Family Spirit continues to strengthen our support for clients, looking for opportunities to achieve permanency, positive client outcomes and improved access to information.

In 2021-2022 we continued to implement a hybrid service delivery model with children and young people, their carers and their families.

We addressed a number of government and legislative changes, and organisational change as we implemented a new Client Management Information System, reviewed policies, streamlined processes and improved our knowledge and decision making.

This year we prioritised practical support and investment in our workforce and carers through the introduction of a trauma informed framework. This has been implemented for all employees and carers ensuring the inclusion of children's voices and the recovery from trauma for both children and young people supported by carers. We now have a Carer Support role to assist carers deal with the daily challenges of caring for traumatised children and young people and provide capacity for positive carer engagement. This will enhance our focus on improving our compliance, governance and data capture. We expanded our leadership team to ensure our employees have the necessary support and oversight when making important decisions.

As we move ahead, there is much to focus on and we are confident we will continue to grow and strengthen as an agency. We will undoubtedly face challenges and we are confident that the ongoing support from our NSW Government funder, strength of our people, and our Catholic principles, will allow us to continue the critical work of our organisation.

On behalf of our Chairman, Board of Directors and CEO, thank you to all of our team for their contributions over this past year.



Jason Oldridge

CEO, Family Spirit



Jonathan Raja

Chairman, Family Spirit



Overview

Family Spirit Ltd launched on 1 July 2018, formed from a partnership between two Catholic social service agencies, Marist180 and CatholicCare Sydney, who believed that by working together they could achieve more to improve the lives of children, young people and families in need.

Family Spirit operates services across the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta and Archdiocese of Sydney.

Family Spirit has an annual revenue of approximately \$11.3M and supports families in the areas of:

- Family Preservation
- Permanency Support Program (Foster Care)
- Local domestic adoption
- Aftercare
- Historical Records

Family Spirit's Board of Directors includes:

Jonathan Raja
Chairman and
Director

Peter Hanson
Director, Public
Officer and
Company
Secretary

**Sharron
Matayalo**
Director

**David
Stefanoff**
Director

Family Spirit's leadership team is led by Jason Oldridge, CEO, and the following key personnel:

**Patricia
Maher**
Executive
Manager

Caitlin Rozairo
Executive
Manager

Jesse Ko
Team Leader

Leigh Wilson
Team Leader

**Ashley
Stewart**
Team Leader

Abby Wells
Team Leader

**Emma
Healey**
Team Leader

**Nevena
Kuljanin**
Team Leader



VISION

Our vision is to be the leading provider of trauma-informed, child-led and family focused services to clients in statutory care, at risk of entering, or who have exited care.

MISSION

Our mission is to support children, young people and adults in statutory care, at risk of entering, or who have exited care.

VALUES

We follow in the footsteps of Christ and come together as a Catholic community, in partnership with our valued stakeholders, to promote the following principles:

- **The Family Spirit** - We undertake to build community, belonging, and promote the family spirit for all. We believe in the innate goodness of everyone and foster acceptance and unconditional care of families, children and young people in need. We aim to support those in need and their cultural, religious or other beliefs and needs with respect and dignity.
- **Human Dignity** – We believe everyone is created in the image of God. As such, we treat everyone with love, respect, compassion, and the utmost care and safety.
- **Participation** – We aim to ensure the child’s voice and view is taken into consideration by putting the best interests of the child at the core of all decision making and practice. We value the views and needs of our families and carers and aim to ensure that these are heard and understood in the work that we do.
- **Solidarity** – We walk alongside children and families, helping them through their challenges.
- **Common Good** – We encourage networks of support for each and every child, building and strengthening the families and communities that support these children and promoting them to grow into active participants of the community as adults.



Achievements 2021-2022

Family Spirit is now in its fourth year of operations in the social services sector.

Family Spirit is proud of its achievements over this year and the difference its employees, foster carers and partners make to the lives of vulnerable children and young people.

Over the last year, as a team, Family Spirit has:

- ✓ Embraced a new Client Management System CTARS and developed its use
- ✓ Introduced employee appreciation initiatives including the office butterfly wall, where celebrated team member's names are posted
- ✓ Learnt about Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) framework and developed our trauma informed knowledge
- ✓ Assisted over 30 families to avoid entering OOHC
- ✓ Celebrated two Adoption Orders and two Guardianship Orders
- ✓ Restored five children or young people to their families
- ✓ Supported over 50 young people to live independently
- ✓ Cared for over 100 children and young people living in Out-of-Home Care
- ✓ Renewed our Permanency Support Program contract until 30 June 2027
- ✓ Provided Post Adoption or Historical Records information to over 150 people

As at 30 June 2022, Family Spirit employed 45 personnel. Our employees have a range of professional experiences and qualifications - from diplomas and bachelor's degrees to master's degrees.

Employees were supported through the provision and improvements to workplace benefits and resources including:

- Access to professional Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Access to salary packaging arrangements
- Mindfulness and yoga sessions
- Flu vaccinations
- Ongoing supervision and training
- Rostered day off program
- Employee recognition/award program



Our Services

Our services include support to help families stay together, foster care, including respite, emergency, kinship, short-term and long-term care, guardianship and adoption. We also support young people to transition from care to living independently.

Foster Care Services

Foster carers step in when a child's natural family don't have the capacity to provide a safe and nurturing environment.

Foster carers can make a real difference in a child's life, whether support is provided on a part-time basis over a short period or in a full-time capacity over many years, the carer's positive impact can lead them towards a brighter future.

In all cases our goal is to transition the child or young person out of foster care, giving them a pathway to a permanent home. If possible, they would return to their birth family, or be cared for by extended family, known as kinship care. In some cases the carer/s may become the child or young person's legal guardian or adoption may also be an option as a permanency outcome.

Local Domestic Adoptions in NSW

We are an accredited adoption service provider in NSW. We support parents in NSW who are voluntarily considering adoption, prospective adoptive parents and adopted children and their families.

As an accredited adoptions agency, we are able to provide dual authorisation where foster carers can be assessed, trained and authorised at the same time to become both foster carers and adoptive parents.

Family Support

The Intensive Family Preservation Program (IFP) is a voluntary family support service, providing specialised support to vulnerable families who may have been identified by the Department of Communities & Justice (DCJ) as being at significant risk.

Focusing on the safety and wellbeing of children between 0-17 years, IFP supports those who have come in contact with the child protection system – offering support and resources to build family resilience, strength and capacity.

Partnering with families over 24 weeks (6 months), the IFP works to minimise and address any child protection concerns. Along with preserving family relationships. The overall aim of the service is to reduce the number of children and young people entering out-of-home care.

Leaving Care & After Care for Young People

Reaching adulthood is an exciting time for a young person ready to leave out-of-home care.

Part of that journey towards independence means gaining the necessary social, emotional and practical skills to enjoy a self-sufficient life.

With Family Spirit, young adults are supported with specialised programs to transition to independent living.

We support young people 15-25 years who are in out-of-home care and help young people who are leaving care to make a positive transition to living independently through a range of tools, carefully designed to fit their unique needs.

Leaving care planning and assistance is offered, including assistance with transitional and long-term accommodation and support with personal issues through casework, outreach and brokerage services.

These programs offer support for up to 12 months, to help young people learn the skills needed to not just live independently, but to thrive, including:

- Financial support
- Referrals
- Advocacy
- Family reunification
- Life skills
- Mentoring



Training and Support for Foster Carers

Training is offered by Family Spirit and external providers for our Foster Carers on a range of topics and provides an opportunity for them to gain skills and knowledge to support the child or young person in their care. Carers are required to complete at least two training sessions within a calendar year. Training is a great place to meet other carers and share experiences with each other and is also available online to accommodate carers' busy schedules.

When becoming an authorised carer with Family Spirit, carers are given log-in details for 'Fostering Growth', an online training forum which allows them to complete training at a pace that suits them.

Training covers topics including:

- The impact of trauma on brain development
- Family time with significant others
- Managing challenging behaviours
- Introduction to attachment and bonding
- Life story work
- Anxiety disorders for children and young people

During induction as an authorised carer for Family Spirit they are informed of some of our compulsory training modules including the Attachment, Regulation, Competency (ARC) framework, My Mob and First Aid. We hold carer reviews every 12 months which explore training that may be beneficial for their individual circumstances and also offers the opportunity for carers to voice the type of training they would find beneficial.

Anticipating growth within our foster care placements and case management, due to carer transfers from DCJ during 2022, Family Spirit focused on growing the Recruitment, Training and Assessments team with the introduction of a Team Leader and another permanent full time Recruitment Training and Assessment Officer. We have also recruited a Carer Support Worker who has been working closely with some of our carers and households to provide one on one support.

This year we developed a carer guide, a branded marquee for community events and increased involvement in community events since COVID-19. We held our first face-to-face training based on the Attachment, Regulation & Competency framework.



Case studies

When Love Becomes Permanent

The most challenging aspect of being a foster family is letting go of a child you've come to love, according to Illawong's Sale family.

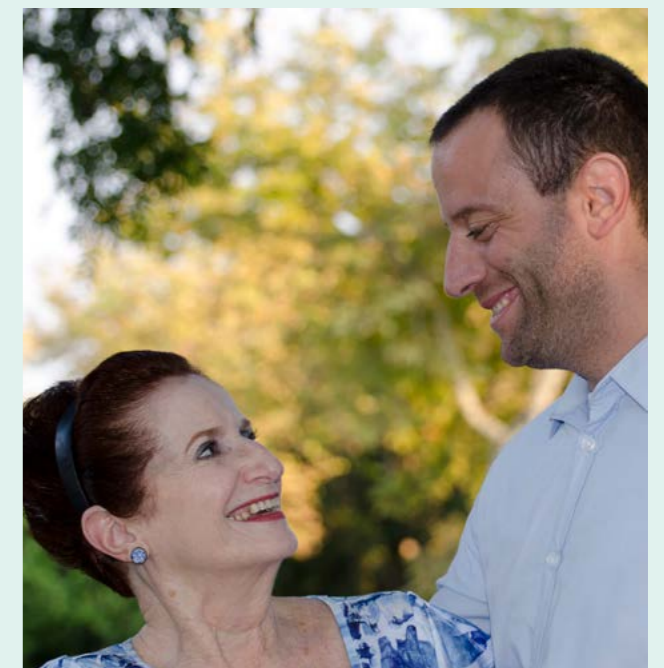
Having fostered 11 children over the past five years, they couldn't bear the thought of giving six-year-old Jade up and decided to officially make her part of their clan.

From the time little Jade arrived they just couldn't let her go. "We had always been short-term carers but found the hardest part was always giving them back. And then little Jade arrived and we just fell in love with her and knew we wanted her to stay. She calls me mum and tells people she is just one of my four children, no explanation needed. It's not always easy, she did come with some challenging behaviours, but after showing her love, respect and care she turned the corner."

The now-family of six is in the process of taking in a six-month old baby who, if successful, will also stay with them until she reaches 18 and beyond.

Big sister Sam, 25, who is a teacher, said she thinks educators make some of the best foster carers because they are used to dealing with children and challenging behaviours. She said not enough people are aware that long-term foster care means keeping a child until they are 18 and it is a good option for people who for whatever reason, don't have their own kids.

"So many people in Australia who want to adopt look overseas because the waiting list here is so long but don't realise there are hundreds of kids right here in Sydney looking for someone to love them," she said. "Recently I told a friend of mine about us taking Jade in long-term and she is now in the process of doing the same."



A Reunion

Earlier this year, Rita* contacted Family Spirit in the hope of finding her birth son, born in 1981. She'd asked for "help to find my son John*, or just to know that he is okay". With the advice of an adoption specialist, Rita began preparing a letter for her son, in the hope that we'd find him.

Letters were sent to people of the same name as Rita's son, John and about one month later, he contacted the agency. After the situation was explained to John, he was advised to take some time to think before deciding how he wanted to proceed. He agreed to receive the letter from his birth mother and said he'd get back to us when he had collected his thoughts.

John's wife, Joanne, contacted the agency a couple of weeks later, concerned that whilst he'd been initially quite excited about receiving the letter from Rita, he soon became depressed and angry.

The adoption specialist explained that John might need some time and space to process all of his thoughts and feelings that the letter had brought up.

The following week, the adoption specialist reached out to John to see if she could be of any assistance, and he advised he'd finished writing a letter to his birth mother and asked if he could send it to us when he was ready.

A few weeks later, we received a beautiful letter from him, accompanied with some photos of John and his family, which we then forwarded on to Rita. "Thank you so much", she said. "You have no idea what this means to me. John's letter is the most beautiful letter I have ever read. He wants to meet me and he called me 'Mum'. He looks like my other sons (his half brothers) and his dad. I feel at peace now and I'm so very appreciative of all your assistance".

Following the letter, John and Rita met in person and sent us through an email titled 'Our Reunion', describing their encounter as "the most magical experience. It felt like we had never been apart".

**names changed to protect privacy*

You have no idea what this means to me. John's letter is the most beautiful letter I have ever read. He wants to meet me and he called me 'Mum'

Independence Found

When our Youth Team met Darcy* at the age of 22 he'd been living in a number of different short and long-term placements, youth crisis accommodation, and with friends and family. Prior to his 18th birthday he'd been in care from the age of three years.

Darcy came to live in the Rose Gallagher transitional accommodation program at 22 although he had a casual job, he wasn't in a position to pay rent on the private market. During his time there, he worked closely with one of our After Care Case Workers to increase his skillset, and to enrol in an employment coaching program to enhance his employment options. Darcy also participated in a number of living skills programs to build on his independence, including an Oz Harvest "Cooking on a Budget" workshop, and the "Rent it, Keep it" workshop.

With the assistance of his Family Spirit After Care Worker, Darcy made an application to Housing NSW for a studio apartment in the inner city, to be close to his biological sister. After 14 months of working with Family Spirit and residing at Rose Gallagher, Darcy was finally offered a studio apartment through Housing NSW. With the help of the After Care Team, Darcy moved into his new home. The team continued to keep in contact with him on an outreach basis to ensure he had a smooth transition into his new living situation. Having his own place has given Darcy a sense of independence, stability and security. Being situated near his sister was an added bonus, keeping him connected to his natural family and helping build a sense of community around him.



With the assistance of his Family Spirit After Care Worker, Darcy made an application to Housing NSW for a studio apartment in the inner city, to be close to his biological sister.

Family Spirit Limited Statement of financial position

2021 - 2022

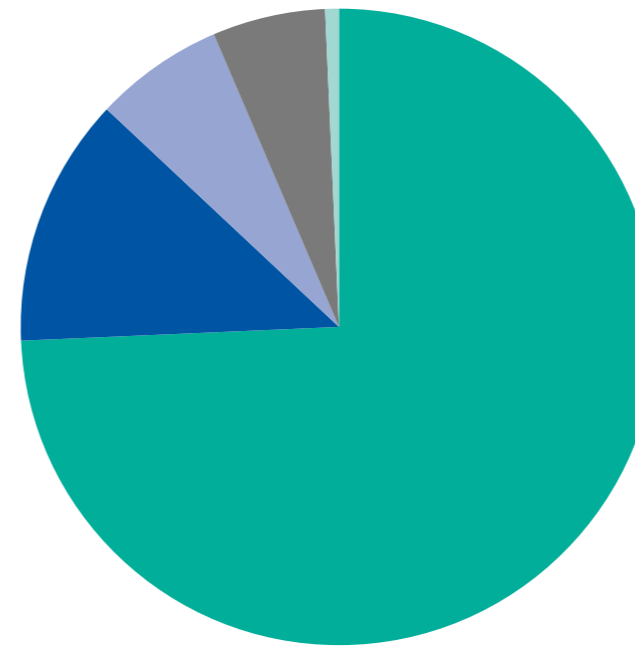
	2022	2021
ASSETS	\$	\$
Cash and cash equivalents	607,512	1,250,940
Trade and other receivables	944,103	373,196
Total Current Assets	1,551,615	1,932,682
Property, plant & equipment	188,645	168,125
Right-of-use assets	471,646	44,170
Total Non-current Assets	660,291	212,295
TOTAL ASSETS	2,211,906	2,144,977

	2022	2021
LIABILITIES	\$	\$
Trade and other payables	704,862	541,452
Lease liabilities	190,991	39,162
Employee benefits	323,995	246,524
Total Current Liabilities	1,219,848	827,138
Lease Liabilities	226,514	197
Provisions	93,695	101,398
Employee benefits	56,222	48,132
Total Non-current Liabilities	376,431	149,727
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,596,279	976,865

NET ASSETS	615,627	1,168,112
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	2022	2021
EQUITY	\$	\$
Accumulated Funds	615,627	618,442
Unexpended Funds	-	549,670
Total Equity	615,627	1,168,112

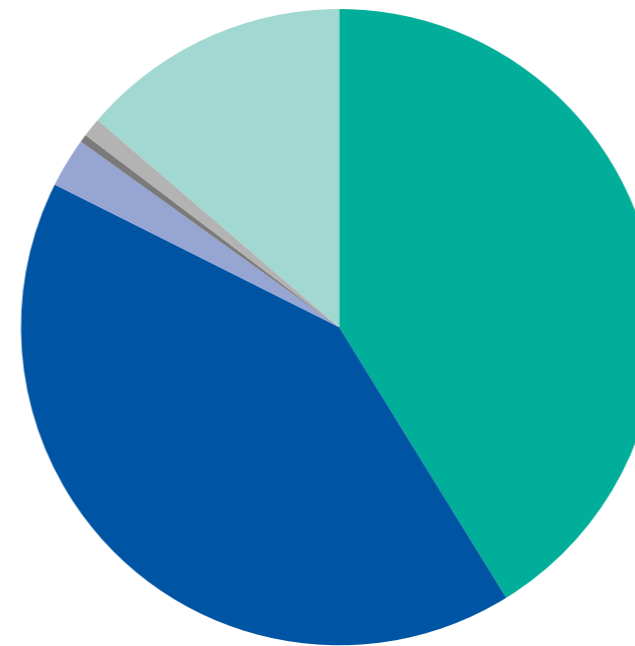
Source of Income



- Permanency Support Program
- Intensive Family Preservation
- Leaving Care After Care
- Adoption Services
- Other Income

2022	
Department of Communities & Justice Income:	
Permanency Support Program	8,362,765
Intensive Family Preservation	1,426,061
Leaving Care After Care	740,941
Adoption Services	645,450
Other Income	78,462
Total for the year	11,253,679

Expenditure




- Labor costs
- Client direct costs
- Depreciation and amortisation
- Occupancy costs
- Marketing costs
- Administration costs

	2022		
	OPERATIONAL	UNEXPENDED FUNDS	TOTAL
Labour costs	4,314,436	200,116	4,514,552
Client direct costs	5,284,509	78,000	5,362,509
Depreciation and amortisation	266,777	8,803	275,580
Occupancy costs	5,478	38,962	44,440
Marketing costs	42,947	62,943	105,890
Administration costs	1,447,368	55,825	1,503,193
Total for the year	11,361,515	444,649	11,806,164




Registered Office:

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