

Fostering with Pride





We are

Key Assets Australia

Key Assets Australia has been operating in Australia since 2007 and is connected with the Martin James Foundation, an international not-for-profit organisation. We share our knowledge and experience which is mutually beneficial.

During this time we have developed a strong reputation as an innovative leader in the child and family welfare sector. We are proud to be recognised as an inclusive agency, we have a large group of experienced carers, children and young people who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. As a not-for-profit, we are passionate about delivering outstanding services that enable all children and families to achieve their potential.

We can draw on our group's wealth of knowledge, safeguarding and child protection practice, therapeutic models of intervention, academic research, and qualitative programs to continually strive to improve the support and services we offer our carers and families.

When we meet and talk with carers across the country where Key Assets Australia (KAA) operates, we hear such powerful stories that motivate people to become carers. We are always inspired by the positive impact that our carers have on the lives of each and every child or young person in their care.

Good caring requires preparation, training, and assistance from your support team and community to stay connected. Celebrating the big and the small wins together with your friends and family.

We look forward to supporting you on your carer journey and creating positive and lasting outcomes for children, young people, and families together.



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SERVING CHILDREN, FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES



Important Considerations about this document

To protect the privacy and confidentiality of children and young people, all names in this document have been changed, and stock images are used in the stories shared. These stories aim to reflect the experiences and impact of foster care without revealing personal information. Throughout this document, "Kids in care" refers to children and young people in foster care; "Carer" refers to foster carers, who provide support and care for these children and young people; "KAA" stands for Key Assets Australia.



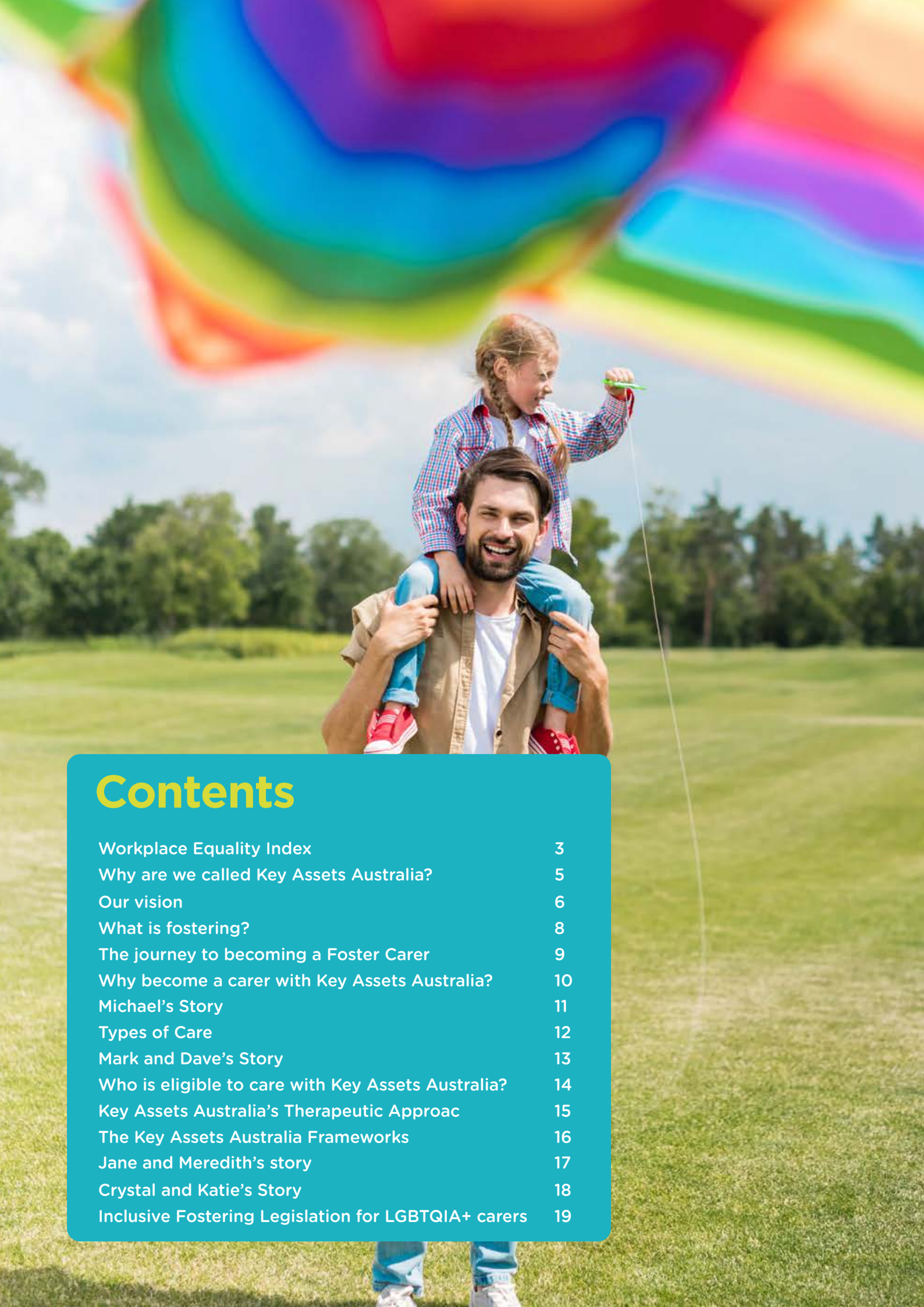
Workplace Equality Index

As an employer committed to LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the workplace and broader community Key Assets Australia has been an active member of Pride in Diversity since 2014. We have been recognised as Small Employer of the Year in the Australian Workplace Equality Index in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. In 2019 we achieved Silver Tier employer status in the Index. In 2021 Key Assets Australia, amongst 54 submissions, were named as a Bronze finalist in the Small Employer Section.

At Key Assets Australia, we believe that it is fundamental for our carers, children and young people to receive the support that they need because people matter to us. Resources and support services are available through various organisations across the country.



This booklet is aimed at people from the LGBTQIA+ community as it focuses on sexual orientation and gender identity. We are an inclusive organisation and welcome carers from all communities, embracing diversity in our workforce and in our recruitment and selection process.



Contents

Workplace Equality Index	3
Why are we called Key Assets Australia?	5
Our vision	6
What is fostering?	8
The journey to becoming a Foster Carer	9
Why become a carer with Key Assets Australia?	10
Michael's Story	11
Types of Care	12
Mark and Dave's Story	13
Who is eligible to care with Key Assets Australia?	14
Key Assets Australia's Therapeutic Approach	15
The Key Assets Australia Frameworks	16
Jane and Meredith's story	17
Crystal and Katie's Story	18
Inclusive Fostering Legislation for LGBTQIA+ carers	19

Why are we called Key Assets Australia?

The name 'Key Assets' reflects our belief that carers are the agents of change for children in their care and, therefore, each of our carers is a 'Key Asset'.

Good carers nurture a child's or young person's strength and resilience to grow. Carers can and do make a positive contribution to supporting children in achieving their potential.

We believe children and young people should have the opportunity to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy life and achieve their goals.

Our logo mirrors our purpose by a structured geometric pattern that repeats and strengthens each time a new piece is added. Each colour and piece represents the diversity of our services as well as the contribution each individual makes. The "heart shape" of our logo reinforces the message that people are at the very "heart" of what we do and why we exist.

The gap in the heart reminds us that no matter how far we have come there is always more we can do. Key Assets Australia continues to be committed to finding the solution to complete the shape.

Our culture and core values make us Key Assets Australia:

- ▲ Recognising everybody counts and is accountable.
- ▲ Providing high quality and safe services.
- ▲ Achieving excellence through continuous improvement.
- ▲ Cultivation of knowledge, innovation and learning.



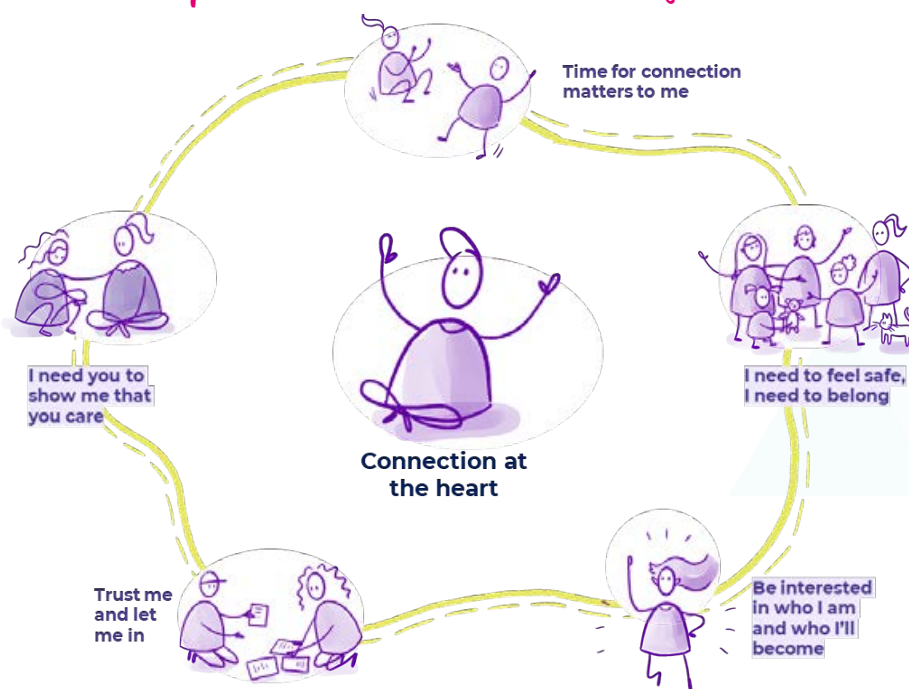
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SERVING CHILDREN, FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES



All children and young people thrive and connect to family, community and culture.

The vision of what matters to young people in care.



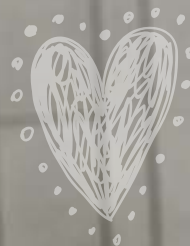
STRATEGIC ROADMAP

2025 - 2030

Our plan for the next 5 years, from the perspective of children and young people.



**Our purpose is to achieve positive and lasting outcomes
for children, families and communities.**





What is fostering?

Our dedicated carers look after children and in some situations will work to reunite them with their families. Where this is not possible, carers often provide long-term family based care and will help children move on to independent living.

Why do children come into care?

Children and young people may come into care as a result of a parent's illness, relationship problems, family breakdown or a situation where their well-being is not secure.

Many of them will have experienced neglect and physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and all will have faced loss and separation from their birth family.

Children in care may express their feelings through their behaviour and emotions. Some may be clingy or may experience outbursts of big emotion. Others will be withdrawn and find it difficult to build trusting relationships with adults. Even if they seem happy and smiling, their past will almost certainly have an impact on their experience, behaviour and development.



The journey to becoming a Foster Carer

Receiving this booklet is just the first stage in the process of becoming approved as a carer. The diagram shows the 'journey' that you will follow:

1

Call us or log onto our website keyassets.org.au to register your interest in caring with Key Assets Australia.

2

A Key Assets Australia worker will visit your home to answer any questions, check your home is suitable and help you to make an informed decision about becoming a carer with us.

3

You will attend training which covers all responsibilities, and obligations and to support you to develop as a carer.

4

A qualified assessor will carry out a full assessment of your household's suitability to be a carer. They will visit your home 4-6 times to collect information about you, your family and any skills and experience you have that will help you with fostering.

5

Once your assessment, all relevant checks and references are completed, we'll present your information to an authorisation panel.

6

If your household is authorised/ approved, we will begin to match children to your experience and best fit for your family.

The assessment process usually takes from 3-6 months, depending on factors such as your availability to attend training and assessor visits.

Key Assets Australia is committed to keeping your personal information safe in line with the Privacy Act 1988. Ask for our information sheet if you would like to know more about our commitment to you.



Why become a carer with Key Assets Australia?

We believe that our carers have the opportunity to cherish children and young people, help them to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy life and achieve their goals.

As a carer with Key Assets Australia you will be part of a community that:

- Values the role of the carer and family
- Places the carer and the child at the centre of practice
- Commits to working alongside carers
- Provides tailored support from a dedicated Social Worker
- Focuses on supporting carers through training
- Is inclusive and welcomes children, young people and carers from the LGBTQIA+ communities
- Is welcoming of all faiths and religions that value and respect children or young people's rights to choose their beliefs.

We will achieve our purpose by upholding the following pledges:

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

1. Set high **standards** for ourselves and the **care** and **support** we provide for you
2. Be on your side and **accept** you for who you are and what you want to be
3. Prioritise your **safety**, connections and build your **resilience**
4. Be **passionate**, **caring** and **respectful** in everything that we do
5. **Listen** to and **learn** from you so that we can do things better

CUSTOMERS, CARERS AND STAFF

1. Deliver **excellence** through **quality** service provision, **collaboration** and **measuring outcomes**
2. Act with **honesty** and **transparency**
3. Deliver **innovative** services in **cost effective** ways
4. **Challenge** the norm, ask questions and keep our promises
5. Conduct our business with financial **integrity** to achieve sustainability and **value**

COMMUNITIES

1. Build a **socially responsible** and **friendly** presence in each of our communities
2. Value **diversity** and **inclusion** and act with **cultural sensitivity** and **respect**
3. Be **creative** and **flexible** to respond to each community's unique **needs**
4. Recruit, train, support and retain the best **people** to deliver services
5. Contribute to **shared** learning through **research** and **partnerships**

Michael's Story



What's it like to be a child in foster care?

My name is Michael and I've been in care since I was eight years old, I'm 17 years old now and I've been with Key Assets Australia (KAA) since I was 14 years old.

I'm in foster care because my mum and dad didn't look after me well; it wasn't safe for me to live with them, so I came into foster care. I was very angry, and I found it really hard to trust adults. I've had a lot of different foster homes some of which I stayed a few days, others a few weeks or a few months.

I think it's 'cool' being with KAA because everyone listens to you and you get to know all the staff, as well as the other kids and their carers. Another kid told me that he

felt safe with KAA and they put on good activities which are always lots of fun. The staff are nice people. You don't feel like you are on your own in care with KAA and the social workers don't have 50 kids to look after which means you get lots more attention and support.

I was a bit worried when I moved in with my carers but now I would say, enjoy and embrace it, don't worry because carers at KAA take notice of you, as do the staff. I'd say to kids coming into care not to be scared as you will feel like a normal person and not a "care kid". My carers didn't tell everyone I was in care and they gave me the choice of whether to tell the neighbours or not, it was my choice and I felt like they listened to me. That shows that they put me first!

"I'd say to children coming into care not to be scared as you will feel like a normal person and not a care kid."





Types of Care

All children and young people are unique, so the care they require is different as well.

Emergency

Sometimes, we need to find a safe place for a child to stay at very short notice. Emergency care can be for a few nights, to a few weeks. Sometimes emergency care is needed in the middle of the night or on weekends.

Short-term or Restoration Care

Short-term care can be anything from a few months to two years. These arrangements are made for children for whom the plan is to return home to their families. Often carers assist the child's family to make the changes they need to be able to safely resume care of their child.

Permanent or Long Term Care

It isn't always possible for children to be returned to their families, so they'll need to stay in care until they reach the age of 18 years. This is the age young people usually


leave care, however, all states now offer the option to remain in care for a few years longer, so that they are mature enough and have the skills and supports required for them to safely live independently.

Children with Disabilities

There are many children and young people with disabilities who need a caring family. This can include children with physical or learning disabilities, sensory needs or a combination of these.

Occasional or Respite Care

Caring does not have to be full-time. Occasional carers look after a child on weekends or for a few days while their regular carer has a break. It can be difficult for a child to go to different people so we try to arrange for the child always to go to the same carer so they can get to know each other.



“What was good about KAA was that being a same sex couple was never an issue.”

Mark and Dave's Story

“Before starting our fostering journey we talked to our families and started to think about what we had to offer a child. Our lifestyles had gradually changed over time, a lot of our friends were having children and we were proud godfathers and uncles to nieces and nephews so it felt like a natural progression. We were aware that there were plenty of children who needed help and support and a loving family home. Our friends and family were very supportive and actively encouraged us throughout the process.”

Dave initially started to do some research online and he found Key Assets Australia (KAA).

The staff at KAA were very supportive and quick to answer all of our questions. What was good about KAA was that being a same sex couple was never an issue. We have been treated with total support and equality from day one. Everyone we have come into contact with, from support workers to social workers, has all been fully supportive of what we do.

We also have a lot of support from Dave's family, as well as a friend who is now approved to babysit for us on the odd time we want to go out to dinner or catch up with friends. Our eight-year-old boy, who is currently living with us is very fond of her. Sometimes it has been quite funny to see the reactions of other parents at football matches. Usually, they are not sure what to think and avoid the questions of who is who and deal with it well.

The young people we have fostered, 21 in total, have been amazing. The older teenagers at first find it a bit daunting but once they meet

us, any reservations about being placed with a same-sex couple soon vanish. At present, we also offer respite once a month for a 16-year-old; he is great and gets along really well with us and our other foster son.

Occasionally some birth parents are surprised, especially those who originally come from countries where being homosexual is illegal. Sometimes they look for failures in our care of their children, but these occasions are quite rare and most are in fact not because they are homophobic but because they are upset that they have lost the right to look after their own children. We have always been appreciative of the support our social worker and their team manager have given us during these situations.

We would advise any LGBTQIA+ single person or couple who are considering fostering to take each day as it comes and remember that you are matched carefully with the needs of the child or young person. Each child is an individual with different needs and requires consistency with effective boundaries to enable a positive childhood.

Who is eligible to care with Key Assets Australia?

At KAA, the carer, whether single or in a relationship, needs to be available to meet the individual needs of the child or young person and have a connection with them.

We focus on your ability to:

- provide a safe, caring and supportive environment for children and young people
- to work as part of a team and the local legislation.

We welcome enquiries from people from all cultures, sexual orientation and gender identities. Carers can rent or own their own home, be married, partnered or single. A carer is required to have an appropriate space for children and young people.

Our preference is for children to have their own bedroom and we can assess if it is suitable for children to share, for example, a sibling group.

Being a carer takes commitment, enthusiasm and a genuine desire to make a positive and lasting difference.

Once approved, KAA Carers experience the satisfaction of knowing that they support the child to remain connected to their family, culture and community.



Key Assets Australia's Therapeutic Approach

Recognising the importance of carers is a primary focus at Key Assets Australia (KAA) so that they can provide the best care to children and young people.

We offer the following supports:

1. Therapeutic support - Our staff are skilled and knowledgeable in the needs of children who have experienced trauma. We have therapists who can support children or carers directly.
2. Out-of-hours support - We provide KAA carers with 24 hours 7 days a week on-call service with one of our KAA social workers.
3. Carer buddy - KAA carers can be matched with a mentoring carer in their area to provide additional support and guidance.
4. Support workers - A pool of workers that may be utilised for additional support.
5. Respite - All full-time KAA carers are encouraged to access respite care.
6. External counselling and support are available when needed.
7. Financial support - A carer allowance is provided.
8. Carer Training - Online and face-to-face training arranged to meet the needs of KAA carers plus access to child specific resources.
9. Cultural Practice Lead - to provide support to carers to meet the cultural needs of First Nations People.
10. Carer Events - Family days for KAA carers with their children and activity days just for the children to give the carers a break in the holidays.
11. Carers' coffee mornings - We offer regular groups for KAA carers to get together and connect with each other, these can be offered online.
12. Recognition and awards - KAA likes to acknowledge achievements, milestones and anniversaries of KAA carers and children.
13. We consult with KAA carers regularly so we can constantly improve the services we provide including carer reviews, regular carer surveys and carer groups.



The Key Assets Australia Frameworks

The Framework for Excellence

KAA believes children everywhere deserve excellent care and this framework outlines the overarching aims and outcomes which we hope will be achieved for all children placed in our care. We are committed to working together with our children, our fostering families, the Department and other significant partners to strive for excellence, to build resilience and a sense of belonging for all children growing up in foster care.

The Key2Care Practice Framework

KAA introduced the Key2Care Framework to improve the way we work with KAA carers through their fostering journey. The Key2Care Framework will give more structure to the way social workers and carers collaborate to work on things that matter to them and so achieve the best outcomes for their families and the children they care for.

The Key Care Team

A team approach that achieves the best outcomes for children and young people in care. The Key Care Team Model is made up of the necessary and important services and people who work collaboratively to create a nurturing, caring and therapeutic environment to achieve safety, stability and well-being for the child.





Jane and Meredith's story

Jane and I had been together for six years when we decided to apply to foster. It had never really occurred to us until one night we saw a program on a gay couple who fostered.

I began the search to find a fostering agency that would welcome us, and I found Key Assets Australia. After being approved as carers for a few months, Key Assets Australia approached us about caring for Mary a 4-year-old. We had previously provided respite care for Mary and knew her well. She had moved several times in foster care and we were asked if we would commit to caring for her. We were excited to be called and agreed immediately. The moment Mary arrived, Jane and I wanted to learn more about kids like Mary with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and reactive attachment disorders to ensure we can provide a stable home. It was great that Key Assets Australia supported us with lots of information via their online Care2Learn training portal and library.

Key Assets Australia offers around-the-clock support, either from our worker during office hours or via the out-of-hours service in the evenings and weekends. This support enabled us to give the best care and guidance we could for Mary.

Building a relationship with a child who has experienced abuse and trauma takes time but is an important part of her development. Five years later Mary is thriving. She is doing well at school, forming strong relationships with our family and friends, and is now building a connection with her biological family.

Our role is to love Mary including her past, in the present and the future. Her family hears from us directly what is happening in Mary's life. Her family are happy with Mary's progress, and we have a positive relationship with them. This gives us better insight and understanding into what Mary's early years looked like. Mary has integrated so well into our family life and is now building relationships of her own, like with my parents who have just applied to become her respite carers.

We have since started to care for a very lively 3-year-old boy, James. We have contact with his maternal grandmother and his father every month. On one occasion, we took a short weekend holiday and stayed at a caravan park near his biological family. This allowed James to spend some quality time with his half siblings and grandmother. They are all lovely people and care for James deeply, but health issues and family circumstances have meant he needed to come into foster care.

Mary has taken time to adjust to James and they had their differences at first, but now she fusses over him like a little mother. James and Mary have found common ground and are now just like any other brother and sister.

We have a home with room to spare and are committed to providing Mary and James with a happy and safe childhood. We love them and want the best for them.

With the support of our worker, Jane and I realised that the only way for Mary to experience a sense of belonging was for us to make her family an extension of ours.



Crystal and Katie's Story

Crystal (35) and Katie (27) are a foster carer couple who began fostering nearly three years ago and have not looked back since. They enjoy a happy and active home life with their two cats Tinker and Tigra. Crystal and Katie became official civil partners in 2006.

Crystal explains: "The best part of being a foster carer is when you see a child grow and improve at something you have helped them with, it makes it all worthwhile. Guiding a child with their decision-making is one part of our role and when you begin to see them listen and act upon your advice, you feel you are making a positive impact."

"We are no different from other foster carers with managing the day-to-day life decisions of how you respond to a child or young person who has experienced emotional issues or from simple tasks like arranging haircuts, school trips or an overnight stay at a friend's house."

"Being a same-sex couple there are still a few negative opinions to overcome but this has never occurred with KAA staff and other carers. A few years ago on a sign language course, we were set individual tasks of signing a sentence. When I signed Katie as my wife, I was corrected to say Katie is my sister, since this is what they assumed I was trying to sign. There were a few red faces that day," Crystal jokes.

Crystal and Katie have enjoyed their fostering journey with enthusiasm and commitment. Working with KAA they have the full backing of professionals who are on hand to offer guidance and advice. Ongoing development is essential for carers and KAA provides a wealth

of different training opportunities, including online and in-person.

Katie explains how training and support have helped them develop their skills and confidence as carers: "This is a great agency to work with and the various training sessions we have attended have helped to improve our insight and understanding of the emotional or behavioural expressions foster children can at times use."

"Key Assets Australia organises local foster carer groups that connect carers regularly to share experiences, give advice to each other and chat about our day-to-day lives as carers."

"Anyone who is considering becoming a foster carer should have patience, understanding and heaps of love to give. Caring is a team effort, I have appreciated the support of my worker to give us new ideas and the support from family and friends. When you start to see improvements, it demonstrates to the child or young person that you will stick by them."

Katie concludes: "As foster carers, we aim to provide a safe and happy home environment for foster children and it is that level of stability which is so important to a child's wellbeing. At Key Assets Australia the aim is to deliver quality care in a family setting and that is exactly what they do."



Inclusive Fostering Legislation for LGBTQIA+ carers

Since the 1990s, the legislation and policy for fostering children by LGBTQIA+ people in Australia has progressed considerably.

Their valuable contribution is now fully recognised with the unique skills and care they can provide children and young people. This means that people from the LGBTQIA+ community are sought after and actively encouraged to care whether single or in a relationship.

Here is a list of the relevant Australian legislation in each jurisdiction:

- New South Wales, under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998,
- Queensland, under the Child Protection Act 1999,
- South Australia under the Child Protection Act 1993,
- Tasmania under the Children, Young Persons and Families Act 1997 (Amended 2009)
- Victoria under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, and
- Western Australia under the Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Australian Capital Territory Children and Young People Act 2008
- Norfolk Island Child Welfare Act 2009

The Value of Having LGBTQIA+ Carers

Carers from all walks of life, backgrounds, genders and sexual orientations are important to reflect the diverse communities in which we live. It is important for Key Assets Australia to recruit carers from diverse backgrounds as this provides children and young people with positive role models and helps reduce stigma and prejudice.

There are a number of circumstances where children & young people in care may especially benefit from being looked after by an LGBTQIA+ carer. They may offer a more consistent or familiar environment, for a child who has come from a birth family where the parents or extended family are lesbian, gay or bisexual or the child/young person identifies as part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Children who come into care will have experienced a variety of difficulties and LGBTQIA+ carers may have had their own challenges enabling them to understand the loss, anxiety and uncertainty a young person may feel. A child or young person may feel safer living with carers who are the same gender because of past experiences.



What next?

If you would like to take the next step towards becoming a carer with Key Assets Australia, then contact us at:

Tel: 1800 WE CARE (1800 93 2273)

www.canifoster.com.au

*Scan to
learn more*



If you have any feedback we would love to hear from you:
feedback@keyassets.org.au



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