

Candidate Brief

Non-Executive Director
Australian Childhood Foundation



An invitation to help protect Australia's children

Join the Board of the Australian Childhood Foundation

At the Australian Childhood Foundation (the Foundation), we are guided by a clear belief: children and young people flourish when they are safe, respected and surrounded by adults and systems that are capable of responding to their needs with care and compassion. Yet for too many children and young people, experiences of abuse, violence and exploitation continue to shape their lives and limit their potential. More than two thirds of all Australian children and young people have been harmed by child abuse, neglect and exploitation. More than 40% of children and young people are the invisible victims of family violence. The risks of online exploitation are escalating rapidly with a 41% increase in reports in the last year alone. Child abuse and exploitation are not just an attack on a child or young person's safety, health and wellbeing, it is also a crime, a violation of their rights and a systems failure.

We know the abuse and violation of children and young people is not isolated and reflects deeper systemic challenges that require thoughtful, sustained and courageous leadership.

We believe in a different future, one where every child and young person is safe, respected, and surrounded by love. Guided by their voices, and grounded in their rights, we turn trauma into trust, complacency into compassionate action and hidden stories into a national movement for systemic change.

Our work recognises that recovery and change are made possible not only through therapeutic support, but through building skilled workforces, influencing policy and culture, and partnering with children and young people to ensure their rights are honoured and upheld in every setting. Looking toward 2030, our strategy is focused on deepening our impact, scaling evidence-informed practice and shaping systems so that children and young people are safer today and into the future.

We are now inviting experienced and values-aligned leaders to consider joining our Board. This is an opportunity to contribute strategic insight, support organisational sustainability and help guide a highly respected, national organisation that works at the intersection of practice, prevention, capacity building and advocacy.

As a Board member, you will support the Foundation's strategic direction, strengthen its governance and extend its influence. You will help ensure child safeguarding is lived as a responsibility that goes beyond compliance - embedded in decision-making, organisational culture and leadership. You will also play a role in amplifying our impact through relationships, stewardship and a shared commitment to creating lasting change.

You will join a diverse Board that approaches its role thoughtfully and collaboratively, guided by evidence and lived experience, grounded in respect and united by a shared determination to act with and for children and young people. Together, we seek to turn insight into action and ensure that a child's right to safety, dignity and care is upheld as a fundamental responsibility of our society.

If this purpose resonates with you, we warmly invite a conversation.

Because when we prioritise clarity and care in everything we do, we build a community where every child and young person is safe and all of us are stronger.

Mark Thomas
Board Chair

Janise Mitchell
Chief Executive Officer

Our vision and work

End the trauma of abuse, exploitation and neglect suffered by children and young people.

The Foundation was established in 1986 as the Victorian Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (VICSPCAN). Over the last 40 years we have grown to become a national leader in the fight to end child abuse and exploitation and heal the harm it causes children and young people, families and the community. Since we began, we have supported thousands of children and young people, their families and communities across Australia.

We believe every child and young person has the right to grow up safe, respected, and free from harm. We invest in therapeutic interventions that help heal children and young people from the trauma of abuse and empower communities to create a world where children and young people are safe. By working in partnerships with families, communities, governments, and businesses, we strive to create systemic changes that protect and support all children and young people.

Together, we imagine a world where every child is loved and protected and free to live without fear and violence and where protection is not a privilege, but a promise.

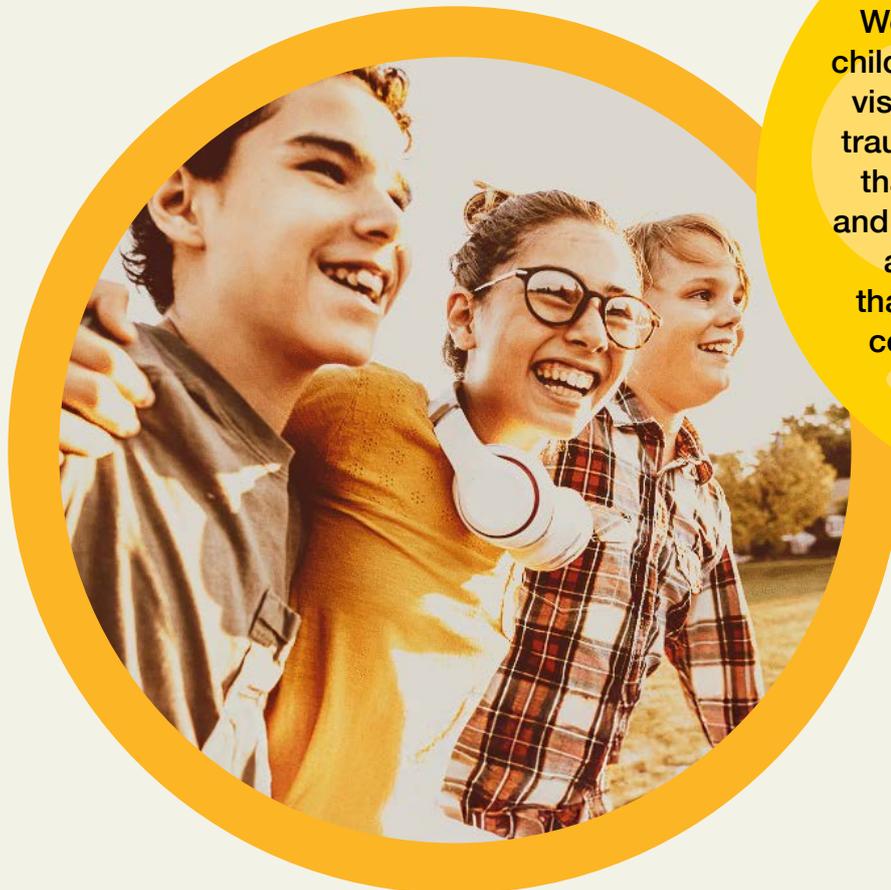


Guided by our Theory of Change, we work from the understanding that children recover and thrive when they are safe, believed, and supported by capable adults, strong services and just social conditions. Our work integrates therapeutic support for children and families, workforce development for professionals, community awareness raising and systemic advocacy to influence policy, culture and investment.

Through our efforts we seek to:

- deliver therapeutic, relational and community-based healing responses
- improve community engagement in the prevention and early identification of child abuse and exploitation
- shift public narratives to recognise children and young people as rights-holders and contributors with agency
- reform and build the capacity of legal and service systems to be child-centred, non-stigmatising, trauma-transformative and participatory
- ensure that digital spaces prioritise the safety of children and young people

We build programs, organisations, systems and communities where children and young people are safe, visible, heard and supported to thrive and where the conditions that allow abuse and exploitation to occur are fundamentally transformed.



We are committed to ensuring children and young people remain visible, their rights upheld, their trauma healed not compounded, that systems are accountable, and all children and young people are provided with supports that privilege relationships and connection and are culturally strong and inclusive.



Our values

Hope

We hold a steadfast belief in the possibility of change for children and young people, families, communities and systems. Hope fuels our commitment to creating environments where children and young people can thrive, where trauma can be repaired, and where cycles of harm can be broken through collective action and evidence-informed practice.

Compassion

We respond with empathy, care and deep understanding, recognising the trauma children, young people and families carry and the systemic conditions that shape their experiences. Compassion drives us to listen without judgement, act with humanity and ensure every interaction promotes safety, dignity and healing.

Courage

We do not shy away from uncomfortable truths but rather confront these realities and lead change in systems that have historically failed children and young people. We will drive innovation, to question entrenched assumptions and advocate boldly for reforms that create safer, fairer and more compassionate environments for all children and young people.

Respect

We honour the rights, voices and lived experiences of children and young people, ensuring they are visible, valued and central to every decision. We recognise cultural identity, autonomy and agency, and working in partnership with families, communities and those with lived expertise.

Integrity

We act with transparency, accountability and ethical clarity, ensuring our work is grounded in evidence, guided by children's rights and aligned with our purpose. We will challenge harmful narratives, confront inequity and uphold the highest standards in every aspect of our work.



Children and
young people
are at the heart
of all we do



Our Strategic Plan Strategy 2030



Our **2030 Strategy** is focused on scaling our impact through evidence informed practice, deep partnerships with children and young people, families, communities and governments, and building national capability to respond to childhood trauma. Our strategy positions the organisation as both a service provider and a change agent - committed to breaking intergenerational cycles of harm and ensuring every child and young person has the opportunity to grow up safe, supported and empowered.

We are focused on empowering adults and communities to protect children and young people, delivering locally tailored healing support, working constructively across complex systems and mobilising knowledge to improve practice, policy and system design.

Across all actions, the strategy centres children's and young people's rights, voices and relationships, recognising that meaningful change requires trauma transformative, culturally strong, knowledge-informed, and relational approaches that operate across multiple systems and contexts.

Our strategic plan is intentionally designed to strengthen our leadership and influence, allowing us to explore new knowledge, interventions, partnerships, and innovations as we move forward.



Our Goal

Children and young people experience safety and belonging, are supported to heal from trauma, and grow with hope in networks of safe and supportive relationships that empower them to shape strong futures for themselves.

Our executive team



Janise Mitchell (She/Her)

CEO

Adjunct Associate Professor, Southern Cross University

Janise is the Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation, a social worker, and founding Board Member of the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse. She has extensive experience in child protection and out of home care, high risk adolescents, public policy analysis, program development and evaluation.

Janise has led the development of innovative therapeutic programs for traumatised children and young people and is responsible for the development and implementation of a number of national and state-wide child abuse prevention and professional education training programs. She has a Master's degree examining the policy and practice underpinning therapeutic care initiatives in Australia. Janise is also an Adjunct Associate Professor with Southern Cross University, and author of academic articles and books on the topic of trauma, child abuse and out of home care.



Craig McMillan (He/Him)

**Chief Marketing and Fundraising Officer, Partnerships,
Fundraising and Marketing**

Craig is the Chief Marketing and Fundraising Officer at the Foundation. He has been working in the not-for-profit sector for more than 15 years and comes from a marketing/advertising and publishing heritage. Running his own creative marketing business for 10 years, he has been a contributing writer to the Financial Review Magazine and worked for Fairfax as part of a strategic and creative team on magazine development. He makes a great latte and is passionate about defending childhood.



Karen Flanagan (AM) (She/Her)
Executive Director, Therapeutic Services

Karen is a social worker with extensive clinical, managerial, training and research experience in child protection and safeguarding. She specialises in prevention and response to child sexual abuse and designed award-winning therapeutic programs for victim/survivors and perpetrators of sexual violence. She is known regionally and globally for her child protection advocacy work. In 2010 Karen was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for “Service to the community in the area of Child Protection through contributions to policy and program development and legislative reform”. Karen was a founding member of VICSPCAN in 1986 now known as Australian Childhood Foundation to which she has returned as Executive Director of Therapeutic Services.



Frank Borg (He/Him)
Chief Operating Officer, Organisational Capability and Operations

Frank has held senior executive positions in the areas of operations management, clinical services management, program design and evaluation, and clinical practice. He has a strong performance record in strategic planning, new business development, leading teams, clinical service design and operations modelling. Frank is a registered psychologist and board approved supervisor with over 20 years’ experience working within the forensic drug and alcohol sector. He has held sessional lecturing positions at Victoria University and presented at conferences on substance use, offending and clinical supervision.



Kelly Royds (She/Her)
Executive Director, Knowledge Mobilisation and Practice

Kelly holds a PhD in Social Science, specialising in childhood studies, media and international development, and has over 18 years’ experience across child protection, youth justice, education and international development in Australia, South-East Asia and the United States. Kelly has led cross-sector initiatives that advance trauma-transformative, rights-based approaches to supporting children, their families and the systems around them. She has held senior roles across government, research and not-for-profit sectors, with a strong focus on children’s rights, voice and systemic change.

Our board



Mark Thomas (He/Him) Board Chair

Mark Thomas has been involved with the Foundation since 2002 and became a Board member in 2004. He became the Chairperson of the Foundation in 2020. A former print, radio and television journalist, Mark is co-director at M&M Communications, a full-service media and communications firm based in Hobart. He spent six years with the Tasmanian Labor Government of the late Premier Jim Bacon, as a media and ministerial adviser. Mark is the president of the Tasmanian Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance and the author of former Test cricketer (and Foundation ambassador) David Boon's two successful biographies, *Under the Southern Cross* and *In the Firing Line*.

"What happens in childhood shapes our adult lives," says Mark. "I believe that all Australian children deserve our protection and support. Australia's mothers and fathers need support and education to be better parents, so that their children can become the best they can be."



Dr Ciara Earley (She/Her)

Ciara started with the board of the Australian Childhood Foundation in 2014. Ciara obtained her medical degree from the National University of Ireland, Galway in 2001 and spent the first years of her paediatric training in Ireland before moving to Melbourne in 2004. She trained in several hospitals, including Monash Medical Centre, Royal Children's Hospital, and the Royal Hobart Hospital. She obtained her fellowship from the RACP in 2012. Ciara has previously worked as a consultant in the Paediatric Forensic Medicine Department of the Royal Children's Hospital and Monash Children's Hospital and through her work there provided assessments for many abused and neglected children.

She has a Graduate Diploma in Forensic Medicine (2017), and a Master's in Bioethics from Monash University (2021). She is a member of the Clinical Ethics Response Group at Monash Children's Hospital.

Ciara is a general paediatrician and is currently working as a consultant at Monash Children's Hospital in the acute inpatient setting and the outpatient department. She is passionate about improving the care for vulnerable children.

"The wellbeing of children is an absolute priority for me as a paediatrician and I am very committed to the Foundation's work to support parents and prevent abuse from happening," she says.



Rod Naismith (He/Him)

Treasurer

Rod is a Chartered Accountant and a Graduate of the Institute of Australian Company Directors. Rod has worked in public practice for over 17 years and is a Partner at the global firm, BDO. He advises on a range of business, accounting and taxation issues for start-up, private and family-owned businesses and not-for-profit organisations. Rod is a father of two daughters and believes that all children have the right, not a privilege, to fully grow and develop in their childhoods in a safe, supporting and loving environment.



Rod Lamplugh (He/Him)

Rod is a commercial lawyer and company director. He has over 25 years' experience assisting organisations with legal and media related matters particularly in the areas of acquisitions, contractual matters and compliance issues. He has a keen interest in sport and travel and is married with two teenage children and a blue heeler.

Rod is very familiar with the Board of Director's environment and currently his other offices include:

- a director of all companies throughout Australia and New Zealand of the Dentsu Aegis Network a global media-based business headquartered in Tokyo
- a director of the Harold Mitchell group of private companies
- a director of the Melbourne Rebels Rugby Union
- Chairman of St Bernards College boys school in Essendon
- a director of Ochre Health, a commercial provider of health services throughout Australia and New Zealand
- a principal at Lamplugh McIntosh Lawyers
- a director of the Harold Mitchell Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation providing funds for those in need in the health and education sector
- a director of Mitrofanoff Australia, a not-for-profit organisation assisting people with urinary challenges

Rod has a degree in law and jurisprudence from Monash University and a current legal practicing certificate.



Claire Boussioutas (She/Her)

Claire has been working with global and Australian organisations over 25 years as they undergo business transformation enabled by technology. She is a Partner at EY, married with three children and joined the Foundation Board in August 2018.

“The work the Foundation does inspires hope – that any child has amazing potential and that when given the chance, it will shine through” she says. “The Australian Childhood Foundation reinforces my optimism that together we can build a better world and I want to be part of that”.

Our patrons and ambassadors



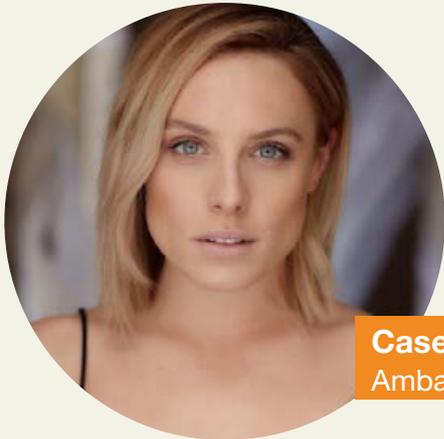
Chris Hemsworth
Patron



Rosie Batty
Patron



Clint Newton
Ambassador



Casey Burgess
Ambassador



Georgie Parker
Ambassador



Nadine Garner
Ambassador

Join the Australian Childhood Foundation Board

Make a lasting impact on the lives of children and young people across Australia.

The Foundation is seeking passionate, values-driven individuals to join our Board in a voluntary capacity. This is a unique opportunity to contribute your leadership, expertise, and networks to a world-renowned organisation dedicated to preventing child abuse, supporting trauma recovery, and advocating for systemic change.

Your role at a glance Strategic leadership and governance

Advocacy and fundraising

- Champion the Foundation as a philanthropic priority
- Help secure financial and pro bono support
- Promote our mission within your networks and communities

Sub-Committee engagement

Contribute to one of our active sub-committees:

- Finance, Risk and Audit
- Technology and AI
- Practice Governance and Integrity
- Partnerships and Fundraising

Board culture and commitment

- Attend bimonthly meetings and key events
- Uphold our Code of Conduct and commitment to diversity
- Embed the voices of children, young people, and survivors in all we do

Term and support

- Two-year term, renewable up to three terms
- Pro bono appointment with travel costs fully reimbursed



Board member opportunity: Help shape a safer future for children

We're seeking a compassionate, strategic leader from the corporate or government sectors—someone who brings their skills and experience, as well as deep values and a commitment to making a lasting difference with and for children and young people in Australia who have experienced trauma and abuse.

Core values

- Deep commitment to the rights, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people, especially those impacted by trauma and abuse.
- Upholds the highest standards of ethical governance and transparency, aligned with safeguarding principles.
- Ability to think long-term and contribute to shaping the Foundation's mission to create trauma-informed, child-safe communities.
- Respect for diverse backgrounds, including First Nations communities, with openness to learning and inclusive practice.

Professional strengths

- A strategic thinker with experience in complex decision-making
- Comfortable with board responsibilities—legal and financial
- Confident interpreting financial reports and assessing organisational health
- Skilled in managing risk, leading change, and navigating challenging systems
- Able to build bridges across sectors and influence policy for good
- Brings insight from corporate or government leadership or lived and living experience
- Advocates for child protection and systemic reform

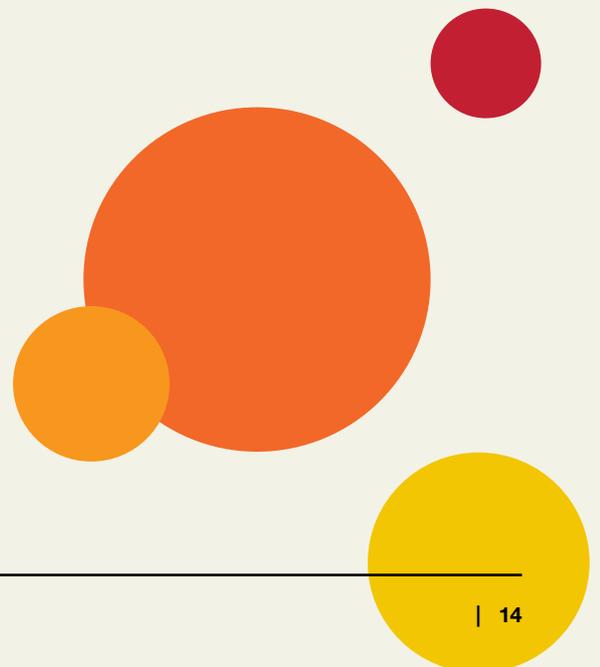
Personal qualities

- Grounded in integrity, able to champion child protection issues and child rights
- Courageous and curious and ready to engage in meaningful discussions and action
- Commercially savvy with sound judgement
- Fully engaged and deeply aligned with our purpose

Our commitment to safeguarding

As a Safeguarding Children Organisation, we hold ourselves and our Board Members to the highest standards. All members must uphold our child protection policies and Code of Conduct. Any breach, especially involving harm or exploitation, will be treated with the utmost seriousness.

This isn't just a governance role - it's a chance to stand up for children, to help shape a culture of safety, and to be part of a movement that puts love, respect, and protection at the heart of every decision.



How to apply

For a confidential conversation, please contact:



Mark Thomas
Board Chair

OR



Janise Mitchell
CEO

T: 0422 006 732
E: mark.thomas@mmtas.com.au

T: 0409 740 868
E: jmitchell@childhood.org.au

Applications are to include:

- A current curriculum vitae.
- A cover letter addressing skills, experience, and knowledge relevant to the role with a particular focus on the essential skills and competencies.

Applications should be forwarded to
boardrecruitment@childhood.org.au

1300 381 581
childhood.org.au
boardrecruitment@childhood.org.au



**Australian
Childhood
Foundation**