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Mallee Family Care celebrates a decade of leadership from CEO Teresa Jayet

Mallee Family Care is celebrating a decade of leadership from its CEO Teresa Jayet, marking the milestone by highlighting ten major achievements that have delivered lasting impact for the community.

“It has been my absolute privilege to lead Mallee Family Care over the past ten years and I am grateful to our voluntary Board of Directors for entrusting me in this role,” Ms Jayet said.

“The decade has been marked with significant milestones and change, but what has remained constant is the collective commitment of our staff, carers and volunteers, supporting the children, families and communities across our region”.

Reflecting on her ten years at the helm, Ms Jayet shared ten defining achievements that have shaped Mallee Family Care’s growth and strengthened outcomes for the community.

1. Caring for vulnerable children close to home

Foster care placement and support has always been at the heart of Mallee Family Care’s work and that commitment has remained unwavering under Ms Jayet’s leadership.

“Prior to the organisation’s establishment in 1979, it was common for vulnerable local children who could not remain with their families to be placed in institutional care far from their home communities, including in Melbourne,” Ms Jayet said.

A founding vision of Mallee Family Care was to ensure these children could instead be cared for closer to home, maintaining vital connections to family, culture and community. More than four decades on, foster care remains central to the agency’s purpose.

During her tenure as CEO, Ms Jayet has strengthened this legacy, championing foster carers and the children they support, and embedding evidence-based programs such as SafeCare and KEEP to build carer capability and confidence.

Through both practice and advocacy, Mallee Family Care continues to work toward a future where every child has a safe, stable and nurturing place to call home.

2. Giving young people a chance to thrive

Continuing the legacy of Chances for Children - Mallee Family Care’s philanthropic foundation - is something Ms Jayet is extremely proud of. Over the past ten years, more than 400 young people across the Mallee have received a Chances for Children scholarship. This equates to more than \$1.5 million.



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Funded solely through donations, Chances for Children scholarships ensure that young people in our region have the chance to access further education and pursue their aspirations, regardless of financial barriers or personal circumstances.

“Chances for Children is a reminder of the ripple effect that occurs when we invest in people: families grow stronger, communities become more resilient and our region flourishes,” Ms Jayet said.

3. Strengthening our reach and reputation

Over the past decade, Mallee Family Care has significantly elevated its profile—both within the regional communities we serve and across the broader sector.

What began as a deeply place-based service has grown into a recognised leader in regional service delivery, known for innovation, collaboration and impact at state and national level.

“Despite our regional footprint, we have continued to exceed expectations,” Ms Jayet said.

“Our programs and initiatives are now regularly acknowledged as best practice, and our expertise is sought after by government, peak bodies and sector partners alike.”

4. Advocating for place-based impact

Continuing Mallee Family Care’s strong advocacy work was a key priority for Ms Jayet when she became CEO.

“The agency has always been committed to ensuring local perspectives and lived experiences are heard by decision-makers,” she said.

Over the past decade, Mallee Family Care has made around 100 submissions, offering a regional lens on social issues ranging from homelessness and family law to the NDIS and financial wellbeing.

In 2021, following more than seven years of advocacy led by the agency, the Victorian Government committed to installing cooling in existing and future public housing across northwest Victoria.

“This outcome recognised the unique challenges of the Mallee and validated the voices of residents who shared their stories in support of our campaign,” Ms Jayet said.

“It is a powerful example of how persistent, evidence-based advocacy can influence policy and deliver meaningful, life-changing outcomes.”

5. Investing in a sustainable workforce

Sustaining a skilled and passionate workforce is essential to delivering the best outcomes for Mallee Family Care’s clients.

Ms Jayet said building the agency’s workforce capabilities and addressing the ongoing challenge of skills shortages in regional areas had been a key focus during her time as CEO.



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“I’m incredibly proud of the targeted professional development, study support, internships and student placement programs that we’ve implemented,” she said.

Mallee Family Care has hosted interns, students and placements across many areas of the organisation, helping to build workforce capacity in professions including Solicitors, Allied Health, IT, Social Work, Mental Health and Accounting. These opportunities not only support students and emerging professionals to gain valuable regional experience, but also help strengthen the skills and knowledge within the agency itself.

Mallee Family Care’s strong partnerships with La Trobe University, SuniTAFE and Monash School of Rural Health play a vital role in building a sustainable regional workforce.

6. Employing the agency’s first four-legged team member

In 2023 under Ms Jayet’s leadership, Mallee Family Care welcomed its wellbeing dog, Winnie, to the workforce.

One of the first programs of its kind in the sector, the initiative is grounded in evidence-based research, through the support of Dogs Connect Australia.

Winnie’s presence in the workplace is already making a difference, with staff reporting improved mood, greater motivation, reduced stress, and stronger connection after spending time with her.

“Beyond boosting morale, Winnie has helped foster a more positive, inclusive environment, highlighting the powerful role of innovative, animal-assisted approaches in supporting staff wellbeing,” Ms Jayet said.

7. Sustainable growth to meet community need

Ms Jayet has overseen a period of sustained growth and expansion at Mallee Family Care over the past decade, significantly strengthening the agency’s reach and impact.

Staff numbers have increased by seven per cent since 2016, reflecting the growing demand for services across our region. In 2024 the agency opened a Community Legal Centre in Broken Hill, adding to its offices in Mildura, Swan Hill, Dareton, Wentworth and Kerang.

“Mallee Family Care is now servicing a catchment of more than 294,000 square kilometres, but this growth has been about more than numbers,” Ms Jayet said.

“As postcode injustice becomes more evident, we are deeply committed to making sure people in regional and remote communities can access the same quality support as those in larger centres.”

Through outreach and local presence, the organisation continues working to ensure equity of access across the Mallee and beyond.



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8. Supporting children and families early

Over the past decade, Mallee Family Care has strengthened its focus on supporting children and families early. Evidence shows that this is when interventions can have the greatest impact.

“By investing in prevention and early intervention, Mallee Family Care has developed a range of education programs that equip families with practical skills, knowledge and confidence to navigate challenges before they escalate,” Ms Jayet said.

“I’m extremely proud of the programs we deliver that build parenting capacity, strengthen relationships, and promote child wellbeing from the earliest stages of life,” Ms Jayet said.

“Our goal is to walk alongside families early, before challenges become crises.”

“By providing the right support at the right time, we can help build confidence, strengthen relationships and create safer, more stable environments for children to grow and thrive.”

9. Creating an integrated and co-located model

One of the defining achievements of the past decade has been the commencement of Mallee Family Care’s largest infrastructure project in more than 25 years — a new purpose-built facility in Mildura.

Backed by funding secured through the Australian Government’s Building Better Regions Fund in 2021, the development will bring six existing satellite offices together into a single, centralised location at 123 Ninth Street.

Ms Jayet said the building was about much more than bricks and mortar.

“This purpose-built space will mean we can provide a more integrated, multidisciplinary service, with dedicated spaces for offices, meetings, and client consultations,” Ms Jayet said.

“Co-location means people can access a range of supports without having to retell their story multiple times, which can be traumatic, and without the need for travel between office locations.”

As demand for services continues to grow, this community resource positions the organisation to expand its reach and respond to evolving community needs well into the future.

10. Amplifying the voice of the child

Mallee Family Care’s Voice of the Child project represents a significant investment and milestone in the agency’s ongoing commitment to place children at the centre of everything we do.

More than three years in the making, its purpose is simple but profound: to improve how we involve children and young people in decisions that affect their lives, across all programs and in our everyday practice.

“We want this to become second nature in the way we work,” Ms Jayet said.



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“We now have a Framework and Policy in place which affirm our dedication to promoting the wellbeing and rights of all children and young people.”

In 2025 and 2026, staff across the agency undertook Voice of the Child training, which encouraged reflection and explored how our environments can better support children’s comfort and safety.

This work is now being expanded and amplified at a national level through a newly funded research partnership.

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