searchlight group
EXECUTIVE SEARCH & ADVISORY

Candidate Briefing Pack

QEC | tweddle child & family health service since 1920

BRINGING TOGETHER

Kinhaven

Chief Executive Officer

November 2026 ·

Kinhaven

ABOUT KINHAVEN

Kinhaven is a new Victorian public health service, established through the voluntary merger of the Queen Elizabeth Centre (QEC) and Tweddle Child and Family Health Service (Tweddle), two of Victoria's longest-standing specialist early parenting services. From 1 April 2027 Kinhaven will be a standalone, Victorian Government-funded early parenting service and public hospital under the Health Services Act 1988.

Kinhaven exists to improve the health and wellbeing of babies, children, families, carers and communities. It will deliver safe, timely, effective and consumer-centred early parenting services that support parent-child relationships and strengthen family and child wellbeing, behaviour and development. The name brings together "kin" (family, connection and belonging) and "haven" (safety and support).

Two founding organisations

Queen Elizabeth Centre. Founded in 1917, when Dr Isabella Younger Ross established Victoria's first Infant Welfare Society in North Richmond to tackle preventable infant deaths. Recognised as a public hospital in 1986 and based at Noble Park since the 1990s, QEC describes itself as Victoria's largest provider of early parenting services. It delivers day stay, residential, home-based (in-person and telehealth) and group programs, parenting assessment and skills development, family preservation and reunification support, and the ForWhen perinatal mental health navigation service, across metropolitan Melbourne, Gippsland and northeast Victoria. In May 2026 it opened the purpose-built QEC Baabak Hastings Early Parenting Centre.

Tweddle Child and Family Health Service. Established in Footscray in 1920 by Dr John Springthorpe, Sister Maud Primrose, James Hume-Cook and Joseph Thornton Tweddle, again to reduce infant mortality. Tweddle is a statewide early parenting centre and specialist public hospital, accredited against the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards. It operates the redeveloped Footscray centre and a new Wyndham centre, and delivers residential and day stay programs, in-home and telehealth support, parenting programs in prisons, childbirth education and peer support.

Kinhaven – relevant numbers

- More than 200 years of combined service to Victorian babies, children and families.
- More than 6,500 families supported each year across the two founding organisations.
- Specialist early parenting centres at Mundi Noble Park, Footscray, Wyndham and Baabak Hastings, with partnership roles in the health-service-run centres at Ballarat, Casey, Bendigo and Geelong.
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing-funded programs for families referred through child protection, delivered from sites in Melbourne, Geelong, Morwell and Wodonga.
- A multidisciplinary workforce of nurses, maternal and child health nurses, lactation consultants, psychologists, social workers, family violence practitioners and early parenting practitioners.
- Combined annual income circa $32.2m
- More than 370 staff, families, partners and sector stakeholders consulted on the merger; 76 per cent of staff agreed it could strengthen their work.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Why the merger

Both boards recommended the merger in June 2026 after five months of consultation, due diligence (financial, clinical, workforce, legal and ICT) and independent analysis, and the Minister for Health approved it in September 2026 as being in the public interest. The rationale for the merger included: making it easier for families to find and access specialist early parenting support; consistent, high-quality, evidence-informed care at every location; a stronger, more sustainable early parenting workforce; and better use of public resources. QEC and Tweddle have already worked closely together on research, workforce development, digital health and sector leadership, including a shared Research Strategy.

The commitment to families is clear: services will not be reduced, families keep the teams and locations they know, and staff transfer on their existing terms and conditions. As a public health service, Kinhaven will work with both the Victorian Department of Health and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

A growing early parenting system

Victoria has invested heavily in early parenting through the Early Parenting Centres Expansion and Upgrade program, which is more than tripling the state's capacity and has built new centres in Wyndham, Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat, Casey, Whittlesea and the Mornington Peninsula, many run by regional and metropolitan health services in partnership with QEC and Tweddle. Kinhaven will be the largest specialist provider in that network, and its leader will be expected to strengthen the whole system, not just its own services.

The benefits Kinhaven must deliver

The merger business case sets out a benefits framework against which the Board and government will judge success:

- **Equity and access:** fewer barriers to support, and stronger support for Aboriginal families and Aboriginal-led services.
- **Service quality and integration:** consistent, evidence-informed care across every location.
- **Sector leadership:** a credible leader for best practice across Victoria's early parenting centres.
- **Research and evidence:** coordinated research, teaching and evidence-informed practice.
- **Workforce development:** lasting early parenting careers and sustained investment in staff.
- **Advocacy and public stewardship:** a strong voice for babies, children and families, and effective use of public funding.

A progressive integration under way

Integration is well advanced. A structured transition and change program, with dedicated work streams and a clear work plan, is already in place, and teams from both organisations are working well together to establish and integrate Kinhaven.

Integration is progressive, reaching full integration by December 2028 under an agreed implementation plan. The two organisations currently run separate systems with a good deal of crossover, and are moving towards a single integrated client system and a joint finance function. A proposed executive structure is in consultation. Kinhaven's vision, values and culture will be developed by the inaugural Board and Chief Executive in the first year, shaped by staff, families and community, and drawing on the strengths of both founding organisations.

THE BOARD AND KINHAVEN'S CULTURE

The Board

Kinhaven's inaugural Board is drawn from the current QEC and Tweddle boards. It has convened prior to merger as a Board Designate and will be officially in place and elect its Chair when Kinhaven is established on 1 April 2027. Until then, a Chief Executive recruitment panel drawn from the Board Designate is leading this appointment, working with the Department of Health.

For the incoming Chief Executive, that timing is an opportunity: the inaugural Chief Executive and Chair will begin together, and will build the organisation's governance, culture and direction side by side.

The culture

This is a merger of equals, and the language of both boards reflects it: "both founding organisations", "the strengths of both", "equality and partnership". Each organisation brings more than a century of history and a workforce with deep professional pride. QEC's values speak of listening and learning, embracing cultures, communities and families, and nurturing kindness and the joy of play. Tweddle's are Connection, Curiosity, Respect and Courage. They have much in common and the staff consultation validated this with three in four staff believing that the merger can strengthen their work.

The inaugural Chief Executive will not inherit a ready-made culture. They will build one, with the Board, from two good ones, while keeping services steady for families who are often at a vulnerable time in their lives.

What the Board is looking for

In briefing this search, the recruitment panel was clear about the skills and qualities that they are seeking:

- Proven transformation leadership, with outcomes to show for it. Kinhaven needs someone who has led significant transformation and can demonstrate what it delivered, not simply that they were involved.
- A unifier first and a builder second. A collaborative, inclusive leader who earns the trust of two established workforces and is accepted by both.
- A co-creator, not a leader with a ready-made answer. Someone who will shape vision, values and culture with the Board, staff and families, and who sequences change carefully so confidence grows as integration proceeds.
- Health service executive depth. Oversight of clinical governance, accreditation, financial stewardship and statutory board experience that a public hospital requires.
- A person-centred leader who fosters a positive workplace culture, and who will build on the strong working relationships already forming between the two teams.
- A genuine understanding of infant and early childhood development, including relationships and attachment, applied to service quality and strategy.
- A connector and advocate. Credible with government, Victoria's early parenting centres, Aboriginal communities and ACCOs, CALD communities and the wider sector, and a strong public voice for babies, children and families.
- The Victorian health service CEO qualities of Capacity and Stewardship: self-awareness, empathy, resilience, purpose, courage, integrity, curiosity and accountability.

Kinhaven

THE OPPORTUNITY

Reports to. the Kinhaven Board, through the Board Chair.

Direct reports. the Kinhaven executive team, the Executive Assistant to the CEO and the Board Secretariat. A proposed executive structure is currently in consultation.

Scale. more than 6,500 families a year across four specialist early parenting centres and partnerships with health-service-run centres across Victoria. Combined revenue circa $32.2m.

Location. across Kinhaven's sites, including Mundi Noble Park and Footscray, with travel as required.

Contract. full-time (1.0 FTE) executive contract under the HEER Policy, for a term of up to five years.

Commencement. appointed and in place by 1 April 2027, when Kinhaven is established.

Working arrangement. flexible, with a visible presence across Kinhaven's sites.

Package. Set within the HEER Policy and subject to Secretary approval.

Kinhaven is seeking its first Chief Executive, to bring two of Victoria's most respected early parenting services together as one, lead a public hospital with confidence, and set the direction for early parenting in Victoria for the next decade.

What the inaugural Chief Executive will do

- **Lead integration and organisational change:** take leadership of the change program already under way, and progressively align systems, processes and teams to full integration by December 2028.
- **Protect trust through transition:** keep workforce confidence, service continuity and stakeholder trust high throughout integration, with no disruption to families.
- **Build a shared culture and identity:** develop Kinhaven's vision, values and culture with the Board, shaped by staff, families and communities, and foster a positive, person-centred workplace.
- **Realise the benefits:** drive delivery against the benefits framework across equity and access, quality and integration, sector leadership, research, workforce, advocacy and stewardship.
- **Assure safe, high-quality care:** lead clinical governance and accreditation across every program and location, with family and community needs at the centre of decisions.
- **Steward the sector:** work in partnership with Victoria's early parenting centres, government and ACCOs to build a strong, connected early parenting network.
- **Hold financial and operational stewardship:** deliver a sustainable, compliant and well-governed organisation, using data and technology to improve care.

WHAT YOU WILL BRING

Kinhaven is not looking for a candidate who satisfies every line below. It is looking for depth across the essentials, the trust-building instincts the moment requires, and a real commitment to babies, children and families.

Essential

- Extensive senior executive leadership, ideally as a Chief Executive or equivalent, in health or community services, setting and delivering strategy in a complex environment.
- Proven leadership of organisational transformation, change or merger integration, with demonstrated outcomes.
- Demonstrated understanding of infant and early childhood development, including relationships, attachment and the conditions that help babies and children thrive, applied to service quality and strategy.
- Strong command of governance: clinical governance, risk, quality and accreditation, and working with a statutory board within public sector governance.
- A strong record in financial and resource management.
- Person-centred, collaborative leadership that builds trust and a positive workplace culture, with highly effective communication across boards, staff, government and partners.

Highly desirable

- Broad knowledge of the early childhood, parenting and family services sector.
- Experience of genuine engagement and co-design with Aboriginal communities, ACCOs and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- Familiarity with the Victorian health system, the Health Services Act 1988 and the HEER Policy.
- Postgraduate qualifications in management, health or a related field.

Working at Kinhaven

- A collaborative, inclusive leadership style that values diverse perspectives and both founding organisations equally.
- A commitment to diversity, equality, inclusion and cultural safety.
- Appointment is subject to Secretary approval, a current Working with Children Check, a National Police Check, compliance with the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct and vaccination requirements set by the Department of Health.

THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Searchlight Group is managing this appointment on behalf of the Kinhaven Board Designate and its Chief Executive recruitment panel. The process is open, rigorous and confidential, and every candidate is assessed against the same agreed criteria. The selection decision rests with the Board Designate, and the appointment and remuneration are subject to approval by the Secretary of the Department of Health.

Stage	What happens	Indicative timing
1 · Apply or enquire	A CV and cover letter to Searchlight Group, or a confidential conversation first.	From 2 November 2026
2 · Applications close	Applications are reviewed as they are received.	Monday 23 November 2026
3 · Searchlight interviews	Structured, competency-based interviews with Michael Holdway.	As relevant applications are received.
4 · Shortlist	Written assessments and a shortlist presented to the recruitment panel.	WB Monday 7 December 2026
5 · Panel interviews	Interviews with the Kinhaven recruitment panel in Melbourne.	Monday 14 December 2026,
6 · Referees and checks	Structured referee checks, probity and pre-employment screening.	15 to 22 December 2026
7 · Approval and offer	Secretary approval of the appointment and remuneration under the HEER Policy, then contract.	January 2027
8 · Commencement	Induction with the Board and both founding organisations.	By 1 April 2027

Timing is indicative and will be confirmed with the panel. Please tell us early about your notice period: the preferred candidate will need to be in place by 1 April 2027.

HOW TO APPLY

Please send a CV and a cover letter of no more than two pages, setting out what you would bring to Kinhaven as its first Chief Executive, through https://searchlightgroup.com.au/jobs/chief-executive-officer-8/

Applications close at midnight on Monday 23 November 2026. If you have any questions prior to applying, please contact Michael Holdway on 0400 006 513. All enquiries and applications are treated in strict confidence.

Kinhaven welcomes applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability and people of all genders.

About Searchlight Group

Searchlight Group is a Melbourne-based executive search firm working exclusively with the public and for-purpose sectors. We have led Chief Executive and board appointments across Victorian health, community health and child and family services, including for organisations formed through merger. Michael Holdway leads this engagement personally, and every conversation is confidential.

Contact

Michael Holdway · Managing Director, Searchlight Group

Mobile 0400 006 513 · Direct (03) 9600 1137 · michael@searchlightgroup.com.au

Suite 5, Level 5, 118 Queen Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

This pack is provided in confidence for candidates considering the Chief Executive Officer role at Kinhaven. It remains the property of Searchlight Group.

Kinhaven

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position: Chief Executive Officer · Employer: Kinhaven · Reports to: Kinhaven Board, through the Board Chair · Hours: 1.0 FTE

Purpose

The inaugural Kinhaven Chief Executive will combine strong health service executive leadership with the ability to lead a newly established organisation through significant change. Reporting to the Board, the Chief Executive is responsible for the leadership and day-to-day management of Kinhaven and the delivery of high-quality services for babies, children and families, consistent with Kinhaven's purpose and the strategic direction set by the Board.

In the foundational years, the Chief Executive will also lead the work of bringing two established organisations together as one: building a shared culture and identity, integrating systems and operations progressively, and realising the benefits set out in the merger business case, while ensuring no disruption to the families and communities Kinhaven serves.

Key accountabilities

› Shaping the future

- Lead the development and implementation of Kinhaven's strategic direction, in partnership with the Board, and set long-term goals, priorities and policies.
- Shape and articulate a shared vision, and build with the Board a shared culture that draws on the strengths of both founding organisations.
- Identify and respond to emerging trends and system pressures across the early parenting sector.

› Cultivating relationships

- Build trust with the Board Chair and Board, staff, government, sector partners, Aboriginal communities and ACCOs, CALD and diverse organisations and the community.
- Establish strong two-way partnerships with the Victorian Department of Health and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, and with Victoria's early parenting centres.
- Act as Kinhaven's key spokesperson and advocate for babies, children and families at local, state and national level.
- Lead and develop the executive team, strengthen workforce engagement and build staff capability, and champion co-design with First Nations and CALD colleagues, communities and families.

› Delivering service quality

- Ensure safe, high-quality, best practice services across all programs and locations, in line with clinical and regulatory standards.
- Maintain a culture of continuous improvement, excellence in clinical governance and quality accreditation, with family and community needs at the centre.
- Champion diversity, equality and inclusion, and commission and support research, learning and evidence-informed practice.

Kinhaven

› Activating operational excellence

- Oversee the effective and compliant day-to-day management of operations, and ensure financial sustainability through sound planning, budgeting and management.
- Ensure transparent financial governance, reporting and compliance, and manage risk within Board-endorsed tolerances.
- Align people, structures and systems to strategic priorities, and foster innovation, data, digital change, cybersecurity and privacy.

› Inaugural priorities

- Integration and organisational change through to full integration by December 2028.
- Realising the benefits set out in Kinhaven's benefits framework.
- Sector stewardship of a strong and connected Victorian early parenting centre network.
- Protecting trust through transition: workforce confidence, service continuity and stakeholder trust.

Key selection criteria

Essential

- Extensive senior executive leadership, ideally as a Chief Executive or equivalent, in health or community services, setting and delivering strategy in a complex environment.
- Proven leadership of organisational transformation, change or merger integration, with demonstrated outcomes.
- Demonstrated understanding of infant and early childhood development, including relationships, attachment and the conditions that help babies and children thrive, applied to service quality and strategy.
- Strong command of governance: clinical governance, risk, quality and accreditation, and working with a statutory board within public sector governance.
- A strong record in financial and resource management.
- Person-centred, collaborative leadership that builds trust and a positive workplace culture, with highly effective communication across boards, staff, government and partners.

Highly desirable

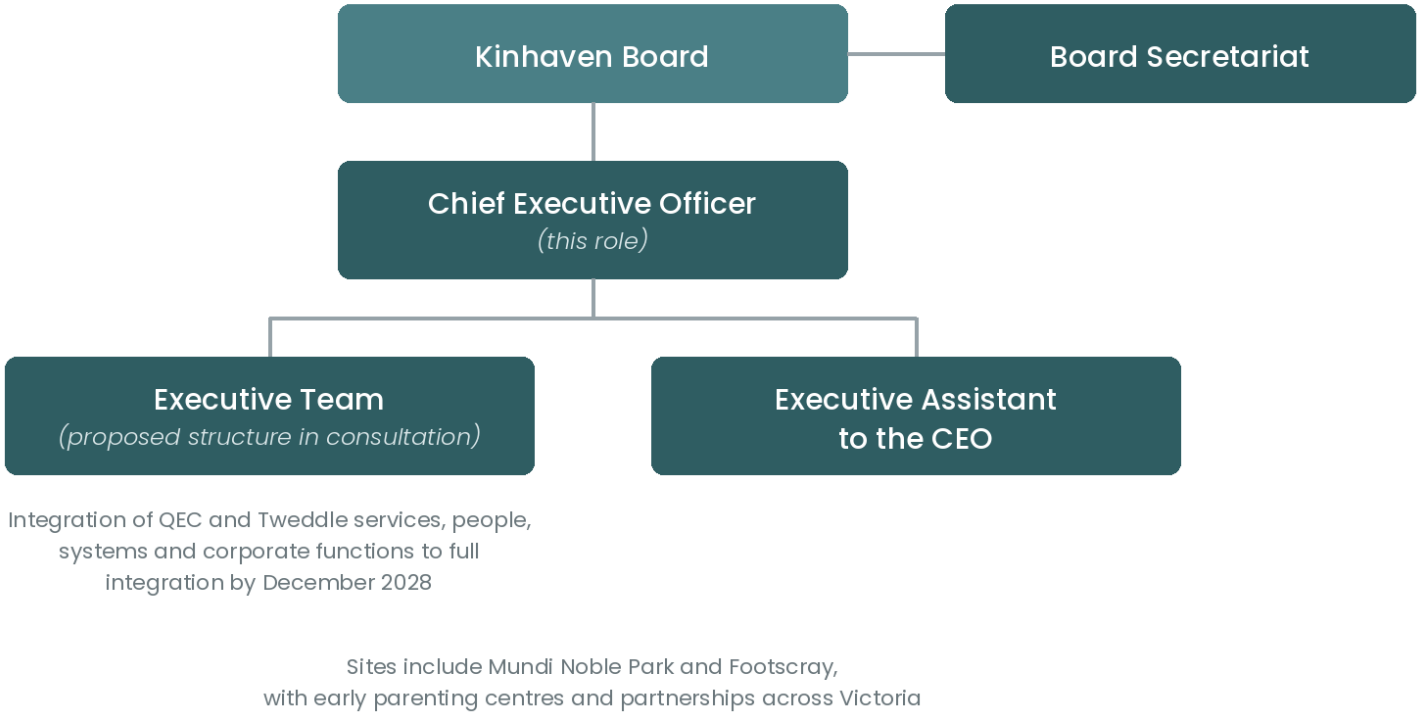
- Broad knowledge of the early childhood, parenting and family services sector.
- Experience of genuine engagement and co-design with Aboriginal communities, ACCOs and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- Familiarity with the Victorian health system, the Health Services Act 1988 and the HEER Policy.
- Postgraduate qualifications in management, health or a related field.

A clinical background is not required.

Statutory and compliance requirements

- Appointment and remuneration subject to Secretary approval under the Health Services Act 1988 and the HEER Policy.
- Performance of the statutory functions of a Chief Executive Officer under section 40I of the Act, subject to the direction of the Board.
- Current Working with Children Check and police check; compliance with the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct; vaccination status as required by the Department of Health.

ORGANISATION CHART



Adapted from the Kinhaven draft Chief Executive Officer position description, October 2026.

A proposed executive structure for Kinhaven is currently in consultation and will be confirmed as part of establishment. The chart shows the Chief Executive's reporting lines as set out in the draft position description.