Family Relationship Services Program

Building an innovative and integrated service delivery system

Second Biennial Family Relationship Services Program Conference

Theme: Celebrate, Integrate, Innovate, Inform

Final report

Prepared by:
Family Relationship Services Branch
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Dated: December 2007
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview and summary of outcomes achieved at the Second Biennial Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP) Conference held at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre on 1-2 August 2007.

The then Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) and the Attorney-General’s Department (AGD) jointly hosted the conference.

The conference aimed to bring together the expanded service provider network across all service types (Early Intervention Services, Family Relationship Centres, Post Separation Services and the Family Relationship Advice Line) in a positive environment to reflect on the conference themes of celebration, integration, innovation and sharing of information.

The conference was attended by over 500 FRSP non-government services sector and industry stakeholders, including key note speakers, the then Attorney-General the Hon. Philip Ruddock MP, Matt Miller, CEO of Child Support Agency, journalist and social commentator Dr Norman Swan, CEO of www.ourcommunity.com.au Dr Rhonda Galbally AO, Founding Director of RPR Consulting Ms Penny Ryan and FaHCSIA Deputy Secretary Ms Glenys Beauchamp. Radio broadcaster and journalist Ms Julie McCrossin facilitated the conference.

The conference created the opportunity for:

- participants to network with other family relationship service providers and industry stakeholders through informal network meetings
- participants to celebrate achievements, share experiences of integrated service delivery and innovations, and to gain a better understanding of the challenges that lay ahead for the FRSP through plenary sessions and topic workshops
- resources and innovations in service delivery to be showcased in an special exhibition
- the new industry representative body, Family Relationship Services Australia (FRSA), to hold its first Annual General Meeting and to announce its new Board of Directors
the Australian Children’s Contact Services Association to hold its an Annual General Meeting, followed by a Board meeting.

The conference marked the commencement of the next phase of development of the FRSP Strategic Plan post June 2008.

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and AGD thank all those who helped coordinate the conference and facilitate the workshops to make it a success, particularly those from the sector who also participated. The conference could not have been a success without the attendance and participation of FRSP service providers and industry stakeholders. Special thanks goes to Julie McCrossin, Dr Norman Swan, Dr Rhonda Galbally AO and Penny Ryan.

Robyn Fleming     Sue Pidgeon
Branch Manager     Assistant Secretary
Family Relationship Services     Family Pathways Branch
## CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 2  
   1.1 PURPOSE ............................................................................................................ 2  
   1.2 BACKGROUND ................................................................................................... 2  

2. CONFERENCE OVERVIEW .................................................................................. 2  
   2.1 AIM ..................................................................................................................... 2  
   2.2 PARTICIPANTS ................................................................................................... 2  
   2.3 CONFERENCE FACILITATION .......................................................................... 3  
   2.4 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK ............................................................................... 3  

3. PRE-CONFERENCE NETWORK MEETINGS .................................................... 4  

4. PLENARY - DAY 1 .............................................................................................. 4  
   4.1 WELCOME TO COUNTRY ............................................................................... 4  
   4.2 SETTING THE SCENE AND PLAN FOR THE FUTURE .................................... 5  
   4.3 ATTORNEY GENERAL’S ADDRESS ................................................................. 7  
   4.4 KEYNOTE SPEAKERS 1 AND 2 ....................................................................... 9  

5. PLENARY - DAY 2 ............................................................................................. 12  
   5.1 ENTERTAINMENT ........................................................................................... 12  
   5.2 KEYNOTE SPEAKER 3 .................................................................................... 12  
   5.4 WHAT HAPPENED NEXT ............................................................................... 14  

6. CONFERENCE DINNER .................................................................................... 14  

7. WORKSHOPS .................................................................................................... 15  

8. CONCLUSION .................................................................................................... 16  

9. NEXT STEPS ..................................................................................................... 17  

## ATTACHMENTS

A. Performance Framework Plenary Questions and Answers
B. Workshops - Days 1 & 2
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose
The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Second Biennial Family Relationship Services Program Conference (2007) held at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre on 1-2 August 2007, together with a summary of outcomes.

1.2 Background
In July 2005, the FRSP Challenges and Change Forum was held in Melbourne. Over 200 industry stakeholders attended the forum, representing a range of FRSP stakeholders including government departments, non-government service providers and industry representatives.

The forum provided a platform for FaHCSIA and AGD to consult with FRSP stakeholders, which informed Program priorities and outcomes represented in the FRSP Strategic Plan 2005-2008.

The FRSP Strategic Plan 2005-2008 aimed to set a clear agenda and support the achievement of the strategic themes for service delivery:

1. Accessible and responsive
2. High quality
3. Integrated services.

2. CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

2.1 Aim
The conference aimed to bring together the expanded service provider network across all service types (Early Intervention Services, Family Relationship Centres, Post Separation Services and the Family Relationship Advice Line) in a positive environment to reflect on the conference themes of celebration, integration, innovation and sharing of information.

2.2 Participants
Over 500 staff from FRSP funded service providers, industry representatives, other relevant service providers such as legal aid and staff from the then FaCSIA, AGD and other related departments, including the Child Support Agency (CSA),
Centrelink, Department of Health and Ageing and the Department of Human Services (Victoria), attended the conference.

2.3 Conference Facilitation
Conference facilitator, Julie McCrossin, energised participants through her *Your Stories* segments throughout the two days. *Your Stories* allowed participants to share the passion they bring to their work with other industry stakeholders, highlight practical examples of integration and innovative practice in local areas and set the scene for an interactive approach throughout the conference.

2.4 Participant Feedback
To stimulate conference discussions that would inform the future direction of the FRSP, participants were invited to provide feedback via a suggestion box. The feedback was read out and addressed during the plenary sessions.

Participants were also asked to complete a survey to measure the conference’s success and assist in the preparation of future FRSP conferences. (164 questionnaires were returned).

Overall, feedback was consistent and positive. Issues raised included participants preferring longer workshops to discuss solutions as opposed to lecture-style seminars, more opportunities to network, specialised training sessions and more information prior to the conference.

The survey found the conference achieved its objectives to:
- celebrate the sector’s achievements
- address challenges that lie ahead for service provision
- provide the sector with an opportunity to give and receive feedback
- promote networking among stakeholders across Australia.

The survey also found:
- 84 per cent of participants agreed the content of the workshops was relevant, however, some felt the workshops could have been longer for more in-depth discussions
- 79 per cent rated the exhibition as good to excellent
- 86 per cent preferred electronic communication between key departments and the sector.
Overall, the conference was rated by the participants as good to excellent.

3. PRE-CONFERENCE NETWORK MEETINGS

Prior to the conference, 12 network meetings were convened at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre at the request of the FRSP non-government services sector. Topic areas discussed at the meetings is set out below.

1. Family Relationship Centres Chief Executive Officers’ (CEO’s) Performance Measurement Meeting
2. FRSP CEO’s Strategic Conversation
3. Specialised Family Violence Network Meeting
4. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Network Meeting
5. Adolescent Medication and Family Therapy Network Meeting
6. Men and Family Relationships Network Meeting
7. Family Relationship Education and Skills Training Network Meeting
8. Combined Parenting Orders Program and Children’s Contact Services Network Meeting
9. Compulsory Family Dispute Resolution Workshop
10. Family Counselling Network Meeting
11. Regional, Rural and Remote Network Meeting
12. Indigenous Workers Network Meeting

These meetings provided an opportunity for service providers from across Australia to come together to share information, knowledge and ideas to enhance conference outcomes by setting the scene for an interactive approach.

4. PLENARY - DAY 1

4.1 Welcome to Country
The traditional owners and elders of the land on which the conference was held were acknowledged. At the opening plenary on the first day, One Fire Dance Group Aboriginal performer John Tye celebrated Indigenous culture with dance, music and song.
4.2 Setting the Scene and Plan for the Future

A panel of Australian Government departmental officers with responsibility for the funding and administration of the FRSP addressed conference themes and engaged in a panel discussion on policy, progress and future directions of FRSP.

David Hazlehurst, Families Group Manager, FaHCSIA, spoke about the primary challenges of day-to-day service delivery, with particular need for government to better support joined up FRSP service delivery rather than funding a series of separate, stand alone services.

David discussed the growing need within Australian Government to improve integration across its agencies. Recent integrated initiatives, such as the Family Relationship Centres, Family Relationship Advice Line (FRAL) and the Family Relationships Online (FRO) support this new operating environment.

David identified future challenges for the sector, such as a need for more information sharing to support sector growth, particularly in the areas of Indigenous need, complex cases and non-mainstream groups. The Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse website initiative supports this need.

Robyn Fleming, Branch Manager, Family Relationship Services Branch, FaHCSIA, commended the FRSP non-government services sector on its capacity to maintain quality services throughout a period of rapid expansion and at the same time, participate in the development of products to support a new infrastructure, particularly those relating to Indigenous communities and Father Inclusive Practice.

Major achievements included:

- the continuing development of FRSP Online. An ongoing challenge for FaHCSIA is communicating the benefits of FRSP Online development to FRSP service providers and its capacity to provide real time service data useful to both government and non-government sectors
- the integration of services across the sector. For example, the networking between Family Relationship Centres, Early Intervention Services and other Australian Government departments that fund human services to provide an integrated response to those people affected by drought, mental health, etc
- the sector networking with other programs across government to integrate a broad range of services to clients with complex needs.
A specific challenge identified was creating stronger links with other Australian Government services and State and Territory Government funded programs and services. Where effective links of this nature were in place, FRSP had been able to develop a suite of programs to meet the needs of disadvantaged families in a holistic way, moving the family through a series of supports to break the cycle of disadvantage (e.g., unemployment, financial stresses, homelessness, etc.). The development of a suite of home-based resources was also achieved through effective links, such as the *Keys to Living Together* DVDs and booklets.

Other areas identified for further development included Indigenous program strategies, products, and tools, developing guidelines and principles with the FRSP non-government sector for Father Inclusive Practice, improving communication between all agencies, and developing a robust strategic plan to see the FRSP through the next phase.

*Sue Pidgeon, Assistant Secretary, Family Pathways Branch, AGD,* acknowledged the significant effort all stakeholders had made to improve levels of cooperation and collaboration across the FRSP.

Within three years, FRSP has tripled in size and funding, and new service models have evolved quickly. Instead of competitive rivalry, service providers have worked in collaboration to meet growth and service delivery demands.

This has been particularly evident in the development of consortia across the country to deliver new and expanded services. The increase in the number of consortia since 2005 has been an unexpected but welcome development, as it means much greater ability to share innovations and integrate service delivery.

Other challenges identified and linked to growth included the need to attract, retain and support suitably qualified staff. The rapid expansion of the service system has made this a critical issue.

*Matt Miller, General Manager, Child Support Agency, CSA,* spoke about a growing need to integrate services for separating and separated families across government and non-government.
The CSA comes from a customer service delivery perspective and has done much work to build on AGD’s recent innovations, such as the Family Relationship Centres.

CSA wants to work holistically to improve collaboration across the Australian Government so the sector sees a more ‘joined up’ government approach. However, there is a need for greater understanding of CSA’s role to achieve this integration.

The traditional role of government service delivery is changing. Feedback from CSA customers identified a need for less paternalism and additional help for separated families to become more child focussed. This theme mirrors the new family law system reforms. CSA’s July 2008 milestone to roll out the new child support system creates service integration opportunities.

CSA recognises not only the financial implications for separating and separated families, but also the emotional issues involved and the need to treat its customer base as a ‘whole’ rather than as individual cases/transactions. CSA is now looking to work holistically and improve collaboration to ensure that those parents with complex needs receive the referrals and assistance they need.

The efficacy of self-help education tools and support services in helping families with relationship difficulties was seen as an area where significantly better outcomes could be achieved through more collaborative effort, both within government and with the non-government sector.

Challenges for the future are how to work collaboratively and share information across the Australian Government to encourage innovation in service delivery and to strive for continuous improvements.

4.3 Attorney General’s address

The then Attorney General the Hon Philip Ruddock opened his presentation by acknowledging FRSP as changing significantly since it was first introduced in the early 1960s, in response to changing needs in the community. He discussed a number of key topics.

Family law reforms - FRSP is central to the family law reforms and these aim to create a new culture where the interests of children come first and parents can access support to care for their children and their relationships. Mr Ruddock
acknowledged the services provided by the sector as vital to this cultural shift and expressed his appreciation of the sector’s efforts to improve outcomes for Australian families.

Integrated services – Mr Ruddock emphasised the reforms were in fact an integrated package aimed at promoting healthy family relationships, preventing conflict and separation, encouraging agreement rather than litigation and promoting the rights of children to know both their parents. He reiterated integration was best achieved by working together to develop cross-sector links that open access to all family relationship services. The Family Relationship Centres assist in this referral process.

Compulsory family dispute resolution - from 1 July 2007, separated parents wishing to take their disputes to court must first try to resolve issues outside of court with the help of a family dispute practitioner (excluding family violence and child abuse cases). This represented another step in the shift away from separation being seen as a legal and emotional battle between parents, towards a culture of cooperation.

Family Pathways Networks - in response to a need for a more integrated family law system, AGD had been providing funding of up to $30,000 to Family Pathways Networks to improve coordination across the system. Ten Pathways Networks are operating in various parts of Australia. These networks had been integral to developing links between service providers in the family law system (both government and non-government), to promote information sharing and discussion. Mr Ruddock encouraged practitioners working with separating or separated families to become involved in the network, if they had not already done so.

Innovative services - one of the strengths of the FRSP is its capacity to develop and deliver innovative services. Mr Ruddock acknowledged the importance of the sector remaining flexible, responsive to change and open to new practices. Two new programs to be rolled out across regional Australia are the results of such innovation. The first is a counselling service for children of separated parents that will let them participate in decisions which impact on them. The second is an educational support program, Post Separation Cooperative Parenting, designed to help separated parents understand the impact their conflicts have on their children.

Evaluation of the new system - the Australian Institute of Family Studies has been consulted by AGD to evaluate both the changes to the law and the effectiveness of
the new and expanded services funded under FRSP, to measure policy outcomes. Mr Ruddock encouraged the sector to participate in this evaluation.

4.4 Keynote speakers 1 and 2
Dr Norman Swan and Dr Rhonda Galbally AO addressed the following:

- the need to celebrate successes
- Australian leaders are rigorous innovators
- pilot project difficulties
- integration should have simple rules and allow for gaps/errors
- how the past can inform the future.

Dr Norman Swan is best known for his wide broadcasting experience, including the award-winning Health Report for ABC Radio National. He talked about celebration, innovation and integration.

Celebration - Dr Swan discussed Australian’s perception of the word ‘success’ and how Australians have a unique sense of success compared to the United States. In the US, success means achieving a target. Failure along the way is allowed as long as the target is achieved and if this happens, Americans often consider themselves ‘heroes’. In Australia, failure on the road to success is less accepted, it is important not to fail along the way. Good leaders make sure the road to success is clearly laid out and make clear the tolerance for failure along the way. Australians tend to be sceptical of celebration and embarrassed about being praised for small achievements. Dr Swan emphasised the need to celebrate, but only when it is appropriate and real measurable outcomes are achieved.

Innovation - Dr Swan compared the Australian style of leadership to that of the US. Australians use a maternal/paternal approach to leadership, as opposed to American leaders who set directions and then step back. Despite many complaints about the inefficiencies inherent in our federation, it may be that Australian public sector innovation is more sustainable because it’s harder to achieve and requires deeper levels of consultation and buy in.

The difficulties with pilot projects in Australia were highlighted. Pilot projects are often created without commitment to their continuation. Dr Swan considered it more appropriate to call them experiments. Dr Swan argued that we are a nation of pilot projects with insufficient translation of success into systemic action.
Safety and Quality - Dr Swan described the work of Professor James Reason and his description of safe systems as being like a Swiss cheese, with “many holes that don’t go all the way through”. That is, the design of safe systems should assume that errors will occur but make it hard for those errors to navigate their way through the cheese to cause a disaster. Safety and quality cannot be achieved unless there is a fundamental understanding about how a system is designed. An integrated system requires a simple set of rules. Even complex systems can be based on a simple set of rules. Generally, these rules should not make organisations feel good, but rather should make them feel uncomfortable because they set boundaries, rules and goals.

In terms of measuring the success of integrated systems, the principal focus is the journey itself. Central, national level setting is very important and so too is the awareness that there can be some inequities between areas. The big challenge is to define roles clearly.


In her keynote speech, Dr Galbally reflected on the significant changes and transitions in family relationships over the last 50 years. She spoke of contraception and choice, including infertility and abortion, the growing acceptance of diverse families, including single parents and gay parents, and birth itself - technology, maternal control, mental and physical health and wellbeing, readiness to go home. She covered gender role changes, including roles in families and maternity and paternity leave, community support – formal and informal and the growing importance of playgroups and parenting support. Dr Galbally also talked about early learning and pressure cooker children, children with disabilities and the impact on families and child rearing practices, including corporal punishment. Domestic violence – public recognition, sanctions and prevention, mental health issues and acknowledged impact on families was also covered.

Clearly 50 years have seen a transformation in the very nature of families. Today there is greater acceptance of the vast diversity in types of families, however, many diverse families are still treated with ambivalence by the state (eg, same sex families). While the contraceptive revolution provides more choice on whether or not
to have a baby, still abortion remains under the criminal code in most states. While we acknowledge the need to support families of a child with disability to keep their child at home rather than in an institution, there is inadequate support for these families. While there is some community infrastructure for parental support, such as playgroups, this infrastructure is not universally available and is weaker in disadvantaged areas (fewer playgroups and not on Saturday to accommodate working parents etc). While childcare is part of community infrastructure, there is insufficient supply and long waiting lists. While both women and men now work, there is a dearth of genuine commitment to family friendly work places.

Having children in 2007 is, in common with the whole society, a more highly individualistic act. As the future generation of Australia, children are not presently seen as a community responsibility. Rather they are considered to be the responsibility of individual families, including when things go wrong. This is symbolised by the constant stream of public disclaimers in the media by single people angrily rejecting any responsibility via the taxation system for families with children.

Envisioning a family friendly Australian society 50 years hence would generate the necessary debate about the very importance, the centrality, of families for Australia’s future.

One scenario (the one I would favour) includes ensuring that family life is not a lonely, impoverishing experience – that families do not live in isolation having to resolve problems on their own. Key aspects of my preferred scenario would include only the birth of wanted babies, with IVF available to all family types. Family support would be universal - seamless and immediate when there are special needs. Family violence, including smacking children, would be rare because of a highly developed ethos of community responsibility, targeted sanctions and network of accessible and inclusive support systems.

The take home message is that when developing policy or implementing programs we need to reflect on history and the key transitions to the present in our analysis of what works for families, what doesn’t and why. The next step is to look at what we want for the future of families and allow for robust debate about a numbers of alternative scenarios, including a thorough analysis of the consequences of different scenarios. Then we can plan and develop the timeframe, the programs, the systems
and the budget needed to achieve the desired future for Australia’s family relationships.

5. PLENARY - DAY 2

5.1 Entertainment

Paul Huggart is a talented Gordan Care Centre social worker from Melbourne. He opened the plenary session with a song about a single divorced father who sees ‘every Saturday as father’s day’. The song acknowledged the role of separated men and fathers.

Paul also performed the song Trust Your Cape, which resonated with delegates who had taken a leap of faith into new and expanded services.

5.2 Keynote speaker 3

Penny Ryan of RPR Consulting provided participants with a progress report of a revised FRSP Performance Framework. The current FRSP Performance Framework (available online at www.fahcsia.gov.au) expires on 30 June 2008 and is currently under review. For Early Intervention Services, FaHCSIA is aiming to replace the current framework with an updated version prior to 30 June 2008.

The revised FRSP Performance Framework aims to provide an integrated reporting system that allows government to monitor both effort and effect in delivering services. It was developed in consultation with the sector, the Attorney-General’s Department and other stakeholders.

The reporting system should allow FaHCSIA to report at both a program level and at an individual service level, to enable both government and non-government to improve service outcomes and quality, noting the importance of striking the right balance between information collected versus the burden of reporting.

Achievements so far include the development of:

- a working party to refine the Program Logic (held in March 2006)
- a national FRSP meeting of service providers (held in May 2006)
- several data modelling workshops (held in June to September 2006), with over 200 practitioners from all service types participating
• new data collection, reporting tools and supporting documents.

The next steps for the FRSP Performance Framework are to:
• ensure the revised framework is available to all stakeholders at the termination of the current framework
• consider the timing and extent of piloting the proposed new data collection and reporting tools.

A current reporting weakness includes the inability to identify the focus of an individual FRSP intervention - prevention, early intervention, dealing with entrenched issues and post separation work to make informed policy decisions. There is also no capacity to measure complex cases, which has a significant effect on outcomes for clients. In the proposed system, a simple case complexity tool could be implemented to measure relative complexity across FRSP services. In the revised framework, practitioners could also indicate case complexity.

In addition to these tools, the following reporting tools may be included in the revised FRSP Performance Framework.

• A revised Annual Status Report - one report per organisation covering all service outlets. Organisations would be asked to include short anonymous case studies in a similar format, to allow a qualitative method of highlighting significant outcomes for individuals, families and communities. The Annual Status Report would include a Statement of Ongoing Compliance with the Approval Requirements. All organisations would need to have compliance signed-off with Approval Requirements each year and both the Chair and CEO would be required to sign the checklist statement.

• Simplified client feedback focusing on measuring client satisfaction (in both individual and group settings).

• A stakeholder feedback survey that would seek feedback from other organisations - around 20 stakeholders would be asked to complete the simple survey via a meeting or mail.

New standardised reports would allow service providers to get detailed data about their own organisation to help in performance monitoring and improvement.
Information collected would enable the production of standardised 'dashboard' reports summarising key performance. With this information, FRSP would be better informed to make policy and program decisions. It would also enable FRSP to profile each organisation for performance effectiveness (eg, market trends, geographic service needs, intervention focus, etc).

5.4 What happened next
After the presentation by Penny Ryan, participants were invited to contribute to an interactive discussion about the future of the FRSP Performance Framework, with a panel comprising Robyn Fleming (FaHCSIA), Sue Pidgeon (AGD) and Penny Ryan (RPR Consulting).

Participants asked a number of clarifying questions about reporting and program logic (refer to Attachment A). Sue Pidgeon clarified that the current work to develop a revised framework was focusing on Early Intervention Services. There are no plans at this stage to adopt it for Post Separation Services. Family Relationship Centres and the Family Relationship Advice Line have outcome based performance frameworks already in place.

6. CONFERENCE DINNER
At the end of the second day, over 400 participants enjoyed an opportunity to get to know each other better at the conference dinner.

Ms Glenys Beauchamp, Deputy Secretary, FaHCSIA, welcomed delegates to the dinner. She discussed the broader role of FRSP within FaHCSIA’s program and the opportunities open to the FRSP non-government providers to build on what will be a national service delivery framework by the end of June 2008.

On behalf of the then Ministers, Glenys announced the recently extended new funding arrangements available for three-year terms to all FRSP service providers. This announcement was warmly received.

Another milestone in innovation and integration is the new industry representative body, Family Relationship Services Australia. Glenys announced the new FRSA Board of Directors:

- Dr Luke Rumbold, CEO, Upper Murray Family Care
- Tony O’Hare, Managing Director, Community Services Australia
- Tony Pietropiccolo, Director, Centrecare Inc
- Jennie Hannan, Executive General Manager Services, Anglicare Western Australia
- Jo Cavanagh, CEO, Family Life
- Mary Mertin-Ryan, National Director, Relationships Australia
- Susan Holmes, CEO, Relationships Australia Tasmania.

7. WORKSHOPS

Eighteen workshops were held during afternoons of the two day conference. They enabled the FRSP non-government providers and government stakeholders to come together to discuss a variety of high priority topic areas and address conference themes.

These facilitated workshops included presentations from highly experienced service providers sharing their knowledge and highlighting innovative practice for consideration and discussion.

Conference Workshops
1. Keeping Children in Focus
2. Violence
3. Family Relationship Services in the Community
4. Working with Complex Families
5. Rural Service Provision
6. Intake, Screening Assessment and Referral
7. Counselling
8. Education and Skills Training
9. Working with Involuntary Clients
10. Working with Men
11. Working with Young People
12. Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
13. Responsive and Accessible Services
14. Recruitment, Retention and Remuneration
15. Good Service
16. Research – Informing and Forming Practice
17. Data and Reporting
18. Culturally Appropriate Service Delivery

For more comprehensive information on each workshop, including facilitators, panel members, topics discussed, objectives and action items, refer to Attachment B.

The workshop notes at Attachment B of the Report are based on minutes taken at the Second Biennial FRSP Conference and not on transcripts of presentations or discussions and may reflect the interpretation of the minute takers. FaHCSIA or any person involved in the preparation of this material as part of the Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP) accepts no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of any of this material or the opinions, advice or information contained in this material, or any consequences flowing from its use. This material provides general information only.

Information contained in this material are Copyright © 2007 and are reserved apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to Commonwealth Copyright Administration, Attorney General’s Department, Robert Garran Offices, National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600 or ANZ Community Relations, 22/100 Queen Street, Melbourne VIC 3000’.

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the conference retained a clear focus on the key themes of celebration, integration, innovation and information sharing.

It provided ample opportunity for FRSP government and non-government stakeholders to come together to celebrate program achievements, inform FRSP progress, show appreciation for sector input, showcase innovation and integrated practices, and to network with other industry stakeholders.

Celebrate achievements
Conference participants celebrated FRSP achievements since July 2005 and acknowledged service provider achievements in managing the expansion of the FRSP while maintaining service standards and good practice.

Inform FRSP progress
Key government departments provided FRSP service providers with an update on the progress of the FRSP 2005-08 Strategic Plan and informed them of emerging directions and new initiatives within the FRSP. The conference provided FRSP service providers with an opportunity to identify and discuss challenges in meeting program expectations.

**Show appreciation for sector input**
The departments appreciated the opportunity to hear FRSP service providers' views on FRSP policy and program directions, including the challenges that service providers face in carrying out their role.

The FRSP services sector was generous in its feedback about what worked, as well as lessons learnt.

**Showcase innovative practices**
The conference enabled the departments and FRSP service providers to showcase their efforts in continuous improvement, including service innovation. The merits of adopting newly developed approaches to service delivery and practice were also discussed.

**Network with other FRSP**
The conference allowed both FRSP service providers and stakeholders to reflect on integrated practice. Participants networked, shared ideas and explored ways to work together to achieve positive outcomes for target client groups.

**9. NEXT STEPS**

The information presented and feedback collected at the conference will be used to inform future policy and program development for the FRSP and assist in the development of a new FRSP Strategic Plan post 2008.
Performance Framework Plenary - Questions and Answers

What is a status report?
Every year organisations provide responses to the Annual Status Report, which compliments online data reporting. The new look Annual Status Report was trialled in 2007. FaHCSIA is looking for feedback on the revised format from services, which will form the basis of the Annual Status Report.

What point was Phillip Ruddock trying to make in his presentation on changes to Family Law Courts re relocation?
Mr Ruddock was trying to explain that changes to the Family Law Act will not go away. The changes to the law (for example the need to try to resolve disputes with the help of a family dispute resolution practitioner before a dispute can be filed in the court) are not just another speed hump on the way to court, but a massive change to the way separation is dealt with.

Where is AGD up to on Key Performance Indicators?
Family Relationship Centres have Key Performance Indicators because the Australian Government wants to see what outcomes are achieved and what difference the Centres make to families, rather than focusing on inputs and throughputs. The Government is shifting to an outcomes/KPI focus.

The Government does not intend to tell services how to do their business, but it does need programs to be accountable, which is why the performance of the first 15 centres is being closely monitored. The Government wants to know the difference they make to the families.

Do we have to report on exceeding targets?
*Question by: Denise Bassick, Centacare Melbourne*
Yes. There is still a need to know sources of income and for organisations to report on when they achieve beyond agreed targets. Service providers are required to have a fee policy and to report on how the fees are used, and whether or not their targets are being met. When organisations bid, they must understand their obligations and bid accordingly.
Are the case complexity tools designed around group activities?

*Question by: Colleen Dowd, Tweeds Heads*

No. The tools are aimed at individual clients only.

Was funding for FRSP services taken out of funding from the Family Court?

*Question by: Gail Westcott, Relationships Australia, NSW*

FRSP funding is new money, including funding for Family Relationship Centres. No money was taken out of Family Court.

Will the approval requirement remain static or will there be a process for improvement and renewal?

*Question by: Sam Page, Family Relationship Services Australia*

Approval requirements assist to separate FRSP services from other FaHCSIA services. If there is a need for additional approval requirements, we will work with the sector on this.

Re FRSP not having overlapping catchments – are any Family Relationship Centres overlapping with existing services?

*Question by: Anthony Grimes, Family Mediation Centre Victoria*

The Family Relationship Centres were always intended to be a referral point for other services in the same area. It is important that there are a range of services so that people can receive the service that best suits their need. AGD sees services working together as part of an integrated service delivery system, not overlapping with existing services as a matter of competition.

Is there a review to changes re issues relating to privacy and sharing of information between services?

*Question by: Sam Page, Family Relationship Services Australia*

FaHCSIA has commissioned a Privacy Impact Statement on FRSP Online and the results and report will be shared with the sector when finalised.
Workshops – Days 1 & 2

1. KEEPING CHILDREN IN FOCUS

Mary Mertin-Ryan, Relationships Australia, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives

- To provide information and facilitate discussion on how service providers can better focus on meeting the needs of children.
- To identify any related issues arising.

Panel members

Jennie Hannan, Executive Manager, Anglicare
Karen Morris, Deputy CEO, Interrelate
Dawson Ruhl, CEO Marymead,
Gina Ralston, Lifeworks, Victoria

Presentations

Jenny Hannan presented a brief overview of child centred, child focused and child inclusive practice. She provided a rationale for focusing on the needs of children and stressed the importance of ascertaining the impact of service delivery on children. The importance of relationships and protocols with other services, including state/territory and Australian Government bodies, was noted and an example of child focused practice in Indigenous communities was provided.

Karen Morris gave a presentation focusing on child friendly services. She provided practical strategies to ascertain how child friendly services and their premises are and identify specific improvements. She also discussed the value of using a parenting wheel to help parents change their behaviour by understanding how it impacts on their children.

Dawson Ruhl presented on Marymead’s Circle of Security initiative. He described the early intervention approach and its benefits for addressing parent-child attachment issues through the Circle of Security program.
Gina Ralston presented on Lifeworks’ approach to working with children. She outlined processes for child inclusive practice and strategies to help protect children from parental conflict when providing Family Dispute Resolution services.

Discussion Points

- Although the primary focus of child centred practice is on adults, interventions and client decision making take into account their impact on children.
- Child focused practice involves practitioners working with adults on interventions that focus on children’s needs.
- Child inclusive practice involves practitioners working directly with children as the client.
- Senior staff need to have a good understanding of children’s needs, drive a focus on children through training and supervision, allow more time for practitioners to undertake this type of work and provide resources to assist staff to determine the needs of individual children.
- It is important to directly ascertain children’s experiences of services and interventions. This can be achieved through interviews, pre and post service feedback, and when reviewing parenting plans.
- Walking through work premises on the knees helps practitioners and management see their service from a child’s viewpoint.
- It is important to consider if all items of interest to children are within their reach (eg, whiteboards, drawing utensils, chairs, toys). Children like environments that allow them access to many child friendly items.
- Organisations seeking to become more child friendly need to be comfortable with some disarray. Working with children can be messy and their concentration span is often much shorter than many practitioners anticipate.
- Relationships with other key services, such as courts and child protection authorities, have been important to obtaining good outcomes for children.
- Accessible child care on and outside premises allows parents to focus on the intervention.
- Intervening in parent-child relationships at the early stages helps prevent future difficulties.
- Successful parenting is critical to children’s mental health and social development.
- Research shows that for every $1 spent on early intervention, $17 is saved in health and welfare costs.
Actions
Practitioners requested:

- guidelines and/or training in Child Inclusive Practice, especially as it applies to dispute resolution
- a list of strategies to increase a service’s child friendliness
- training for legal practitioners in child focused and inclusive practices, as it would significantly enhance outcomes for children in court matters
- access to more resources for children, such as books and DVD’s to support them in their work with families.

2 VIOLENCE

Anne Hollonds, Relationships Australia NSW, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives

- To assist FRSP service providers to improve system responses to families experiencing violence.
- To support best practice by:
  - presenting current research
  - providing examples of screening practices across the FRSP
  - providing examples of how different practice models are applied.

Panel members

Fiona Tulloh, Office of Women, FaHCSIA
Daniel Moss, UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide
Paul Crowley, Manager and Clinical Services Coordinator, Roundtable Dispute Management, Victoria Legal Aid

Presentations


The survey found that violence experienced by men is very different from that experienced by women. The majority of men experience violence perpetrated by a
male stranger, whereas the majority of women experience violence by a known male perpetrator and more often in a domestic environment. The survey revealed that the majority of women who experienced intimate partner violence told a family member or friend rather than a support service.

Daniel Moss presented on Working with Family Violence – a Whole of Service Approach. The misuse of power is not segregated in society and hence all practitioners should be confident in identifying and responding to this issue, rather than leaving it in the hands of a small number of specialists. Organisations should also support their practitioners in dealing with intimidation between clients so they are confident in their approach.

Paul Crowley presented on how Legal Aid Dispute Resolution services manage the issue of family violence and provided an overview of the dispute resolution services offered by Australian Legal Aid Commissions.

Discussion Points

- The number of women experiencing violence and not accessing services. It was noted the service system was already strained and if more women accessed services, there were concerns that the system would not cope.

- There is no qualitative evidence to illustrate the differences between the women who accessed services and those that did not because of the survey design. One participant noted that some women did not access services because they did not understand Australian family law, and an information program is being piloted by this service.

- The use of a spouse visa to maintain control and power over the non-visa holding spouse. Some service providers had come across this situation and said that it was not dependent on gender. This scenario still fitted in under the theories of power/control in relationships and the sense of entitlement.

- Men as victims of family violence. It was noted that in terms of family violence, women were predominantly victims rather than perpetrators. However, this does not mean that the violence towards men is any less significant or less deserving of assistance.
Actions

- Agencies should engage in more inter-professional collaboration with other community service agencies, such as police, courts and the legal profession. At the moment very few FRSP providers actively engage police in their service provision.
- Australian Family and Domestic Violence Clearinghouse Issues Paper No. 12 is particularly useful and all practitioners would benefit from reading it.

3. FAMILY RELATIONSHIP SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY

Tracey Whetnall, Tracey Whetnall Consultancy, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives

- To assist FRSP service providers to build an integrated service delivery system.
- To raise awareness and encourage broader views of integrated practice within the sector (intra-service delivery) and/or outside the sector (inter-service delivery) through exploring the concept of integrated service delivery and its applications and limitations.

Panel members
Karen Barker, Joondalup Family Relationship Centre
Jo Cavanagh, CEO, Family Life
Rachel Evans, Interrelate, Port Macquarie

Presentations
Karen Barker presented her experiences as the Manager of the Anglicare WA Joondalup and Mandurah Family Relationship Centre, in creating awareness and delivering services of the FRSP in the community.

Jo Cavanagh presented her experiences with regard to establishing a new Family Relationship Centre.

Rachel Evans presented her experiences in the establishment of the Frankston Family Relationship Centre and Early Intervention Services in the area.
Discussion Points

- The fundamental importance of relationship building with other service providers, academia, legal practitioners and the community to ensure that services are well positioned to reach target client groups. Specific relationship building initiatives can include the following.
  - Developing consortia to cover a broad service delivery range and facilitate effective referrals. This may be as simple as establishing reference groups that can meet to discuss community needs and what all members of the reference group can deliver to meet those needs.
  - Using referral networks – while establishing Memoranda of Understanding, protocols and committees are important, building effective relationships at the management and practitioner level within the network are the key to success.
  - Building relationships between all levels of networked organisations. If practitioners across organisations have met, know each other and know what each can provide to the client, then resistance is reduced and referrals are more effective.
  - Having staff members and not just managers develop networks and attend networking meetings. This helps demonstrate the diverse range of skills, expertise and qualifications that an organisation has at its disposal to assist the community.
  - Letting staff members explore through networking, a particular community issue about which they feel strongly as it helps empower staff. Consider also spreading staff across committees within the community.
  - Having a Community Development Worker who spends a large amount of their time dedicated to promoting services across the community. Ideally this person would be a highly skilled communicator.
  - Identifying natural partnerships and service gaps in the community. This will help you grow and connect with the community.
  - Taking a bottom-up approach with clients and establish a feedback loop to ensure services are delivering on what the community wants and needs.
  - Identifying and understanding what other service providers are doing so that organisations can complement each other and deliver a more integrated suite of services across the community.
- Taking note of differences in needs between and across communities, and then adapting service provision to meet those different needs. The underlying assumptions about what services are relevant for what communities need to be challenged (e.g., the issues that are relevant to a mainstream community may not be equally relevant or important to a particular CALD community).

- Considering every opportunity for marketing (e.g., approach community radio stations as they can be keen to facilitate interviews and community discussion).

- Establishing a relationship with a community member and asking that member who else to talk to, and so on with the next person and the next.

- Co-locating different service types with other different services providers (e.g., with a training organisation for the then DEWR initiatives) in the interests of having a holistic suite of services available to the client.

- Relationships are vital, but establishing effective relationships is time consuming. The time spent establishing these relationships cannot be represented by statistics, however the effort taken may actually have positive impact on communities and the families within them. Therefore in the absence of statistics it can be argued that organisations have imparted their skills and expertise to the community and services have actually been delivered. But, in the absence of statistics, how can this be proven?

- In regard to assessing outcomes in the community at large, independent researchers are essential. The evidence base for improved outcomes for the community must be evident to Government if funding is to continue and researchers are vital in that endeavour.

- There are three challenges for integrated service delivery.
  - Organisational design – how do you move from having discrete services within an organisation to having an integrated model on a horizontal platform? You need a flexible and accountable service delivery model that is highly accountable and considers hierarchal and collaborative boundaries.
  - Empowerment model – how do you empower the community by taking expertise into and sharing it with the community so that it can be self determining?
Programmatic tools – for a seamless service delivery system to be successful you still need “stitching”. You need funding that is innovative and flexible, while still enabling accountability. How do you develop programmatic tools that will measure outcomes by what is happening in the community at large rather than specifically by targets and key performance indicators? If we want to nurture innovation there needs to be freedom to move.

Actions

- More discussion is needed around how, if services are to be shared across organisations, there can be an effective balance between the benefits of collaboration and competitive pressures. For example, how can organisations equitably share statistics for the purposes of performance reporting?
- There is a need for outcomes research, particularly around how activities that do not produce statistics for performance reporting can contribute to the attainment of positive outcomes for communities and the families within them.

4. WORKING WITH COMPLEX FAMILIES

Benny Hodges, Wis-Wei Consulting Pty Ltd, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives

- To assist FRSP service providers to improve service delivery response to families experiencing complex issues.
- To explore how service providers respond to families experiencing complex issues through:
  - exploring current research
  - providing examples of models for working with complex, high needs families.

Panel members

Kris Robertson, Senior Social Worker/Program Manager, ASWA Family Services
Jonathan Toussaint, Interrelate
Presentations

Kris Robertson presented on working with men in prison.

Jonathan Toussaint presented on the Building Connections for My Kids Program.

Discussion Points

• The challenges and opportunities of pooling resources from different programs, such as the Family Relationship Services Program, Reconnect and Prison Release Program, to provide integrated and holistic assistance to clients with complex needs.
• The capacity of the Building Connections for My Kids Program as a platform for working with conflicted families to shift the focus of parents from inter-parental conflict to the best interests of their children.
• The development of evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Building Connections for My Kids Program, including how structured observations and feedback have provided data to support and inform further program development.
• By engaging with key stakeholders such as prison authorities and developing specific interventions designed to respond to the needs of men in prison, effective activities can be delivered to this client group.

Actions

The workshop acknowledged the successes of the presenting programs but did not identify any further immediate actions for follow-up.

5. RURAL SERVICE PROVISION

Trish Munn, University of South Australia, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives

• To assist FRSP service providers to improve service delivery in regional, rural and remote (RRR) areas.
• To explore how RRR service providers optimise available resources to respond to families living in RRR areas through:
  o exploring current research
  o providing examples of models for working in RRR areas.
Panel members
Neil Hamilton, Executive Manager, Organisational Direction and Strategy, Centacare
Dr Peter Munn, General Manager, Centacare Catholic Family Services
Barry Sheehan, Director, Centacare Townsville

Presentations
Neil Hamilton presented on the impact of clients with mental health issues on services in rural areas.

Dr Peter Munn talked about the challenges of operating Family Relationship Centres in SA - Wudinna, Ceduna, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Port Lincoln and Whyalla.

Barry Sheehan spoke of the challenges of operating the Family Relationship Centre in Townsville.

Discussion Points
Mental health issues
- The Urbis Keys Young Report commissioned by the then FaCSIA identified a large unmet need for mental health services in RRR communities.
- Mental health issues are often connected to core family relationships, creating a need to integrate mental health and family relationship services.
- Mental health issues impact on the whole family, particularly those who end up being the primary carers of family members with a mental illness. Carers are at risk of suffering from anxiety resulting from lack of appropriate mental health support services.
- Mental health issues lead to greater levels of marriage breakdown.
- There is limited access to mental health services in RRR Australia. Undersupply in RRR communities risks inappropriate care.
- One size service does not fit all clients - rural clients have different needs to city clients.

Family Relationship Centres - Wudinna, Ceduna, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Port Lincoln and Whyalla
- Women who use outreach services prefer to talk to women about family violence issues. Outreach services include monthly day/night trips, telephone conferences and counselling, and keep in touch via letters. They have tried email, but it does not work due to privacy issues.
• The agencies share after hours servicing to work within financial constraints. Agencies also partner with other providers to integrate services.
• When clients don’t fit into a single service type, rather than turn clients away, staff try to service them under counselling.
• Staff are encouraged to multi-skill and deliver services across areas, as there are limited hours to designate to a single service.
• Attracting and retaining staff is a major problem in rural communities. They attract new staff by word of mouth and promote a family friendly, social work environment with good training, supervision, work flexibility and team reflection time. They have also been re-employing retired staff and placing students.

Family Relationship Centre, Townsville

• The Family Relationship Centre in Townsville covers a region of 450,000 km.
• Using networks in the Townsville area is very important. Indigenous staff and Indigenous Liaison Officers help build and maintain local connections.
• Service success in a new area depends on having effective links within that community and flexibility to work with people across a broad range of services.
• They retain staff by looking after them and offering housing options and offer packages to attract graduates. Barry felt there was a need to talk to the Australian Government about staffing issues such as salaries, accommodation, etc.

Actions

• Need for integrated mental health and family relationship program funding in RRR communities.
• Need for practitioner training to address the increasing need for mental health services.
• Need for community contacts lists on hand to ensure duty of care and responsive services.
• Need to negotiate with funding bodies to make positive changes in service delivery, fee structure, staffing salaries, accommodation, etc. In particular, the need to address service demand in the Port Lincoln area.
• Need to encourage service providers to talk more with their local members and not be afraid to voice their opinion.
6. INTAKE, SCREENING ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL

Les Stahl, Facilitation Plus, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives

- To raise awareness of screening and assessment processes and their value to FRSP service delivery.
- To examine current intake and referral processes through:
  - presenting current research about screening and assessment
  - providing examples of screening and assessment models in the FRSP and other human service sectors
  - discussing referrals and referral processes of screening and assessment.

Panel members

Dr Gail Winkworth, Australian Catholic University, Institute of Child Protection Studies
Pam Lewis, Director of Client Services, Relationships Australia NSW
Christine Ockenfels, Manager FRSP Programs, Anglicare WA

Presentations

Dr Gail Winkworth presented on:

- the commissioning of her organisation by the AGD to develop a Screening and Assessment Framework for Family Relationship Centres and Family Relationships Advice Line. This has now been reviewed and amended to reflect practitioners’ feedback
- a framework based on practice principles including child centred, accountability, collaborative and preventing harm
- defined screening and assessment, timing, type, family violence, risk of self harm, child abuse and or action required
- screening for risk – universal questions:
  - safety
  - concerns about children
  - safety of anyone else
  - how would ex/partner answer?
- prevention of harm and duty of care – listen to and believe what the client says about harm
- combine tools with professional judgement
• screening and assessment should never be part of the data collection process
• screening and assessment is an ongoing process at each point of contact
• plan for safety including supervision.

Pam Lewis presented on:
• the need to know what we’re looking for
• whether the service was going to fit the need of the client
• drilling down about the risk, what is the risk to the client, significant others (eg grandparents)
• the need for policies, and procedure to back it up
• intake as the beginning of the engagement process, first screening opportunity (eg, level of conflict), Apprehended Violence Order (AVOs).
• snapshot of client concerns - there are often many steps before you can move to Family Dispute Resolution
• the need to have a complete picture and understanding of legal responses; and have a collaborative and consultative approach
• the opportunity to triage on urgency – be responsive
• assessment including relationships between partner and children, level of capacity and complexity (eg, mental health), co-operation/communication, level of respect, disparity of stories, is it voluntary?
• the assessment of individual/couple or family - can they be in the same room, capacity to reflect, power differential, fear of harm, should the children be interviewed?
• assessment being ongoing
• the fact that tools are only as good as the people using them – useful as guides
• considering the level of response, including legal response, and reporting, including assisting clients to a safe haven
• whether the client was ready, can the organisation provide the service, do they need some other intervention/referral/exclusion?
• collaborating with other services ensures the best service
• staff expertise as the key to successful assessments.
Christine Ockenfels presented on:

- why do we do what we do? What does it mean to the client? How do we do it?
- what are the client’s needs? – need to hear the story – relationship is the key to assessment
- is this person suitable for our services? Can we fill the needs? Reflection and supervision
- how does this client fit into the big picture, family and community?
- child safety, partner safety and family safety
- need to be innovative on the safety issues, assessment does not stop at the Family Relationship Centre
- integrated service delivery - what is the best service solution for the client?
- personal values and skill base and get help if required
- ethical and boundary issues – potential to meet clients in the local community – what impact would this have on the client?
- Referring out and the need to link with other agencies – developed Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) with other agencies. Warm referrals (eg, through telephone calls) to support the client’s transition to another agency
- making use of tools and the need to be flexible. Tools need to be adjusted to suit the client and their location (eg, working with an Aboriginal worker and client)
- the use of action research to improve and continue to refine tools and practices.

Discussion Points

Service Provision

- Relationship building is the key to assessment.
- Staff expertise is a key to screening and assessment. Some providers send administration or intake staff to introductory counselling courses along with ‘managing difficult clients’ training sessions.
- Co-operation between providers, developing MOU’s with various organisations.
- Practitioners undertaking self-reflection, values and ethical issues.
- Assessing the client’s personal strengths.
- Get a full picture as soon as possible.
- Assess the level of danger:
o legal response
o CAR (Child at Risk)
o be prepared to seek assistance from peers
o be prepared to ask the hard questions as it may just assist in building relationships.

**Program Management and Policy**

- Assessment tools should be used in partnership with the right professional - respectful approach. They are only as good as the level of experience and skill brought to the process by the practitioner.
- Assessment is a continuum. It can take up to four sessions to get an understanding of the issue and individual perceptions.
- Screening and assessment is an ongoing process. Review tools regularly and objectively.
- Mapping client history, background and cultural context assists with referral and working with the issues that the client presents with when accessing the service.

**Hot Discussion Points**

- Time and resources associated with intake and assessment as well as ongoing service delivery.

**Actions**

The workshop acknowledged service flexibility should be in the assessment, not just the tools. Using one tool is not the answer and there is a need to review assessment tools regularly.

7. COUNSELLING

Mary Mertin-Ryan, Relationships Australia, facilitated the workshop.

**Objectives**

- Facilitate reflection on counselling and its role as a therapeutic intervention when working with families, couples, individuals and groups.
- Raise awareness of innovations in counselling and of how counselling is used across the FRSP service delivery system.
Panel members
Vicki Booth, Australian Greek Welfare Society
Irene Gerrard, Stepfamily Association of Victoria
Carmel Shellie, Social Worker, Customer Service Centre, Centrelink Shepparton

Presentations
Vicki Booth presented on how to encourage specific cultural groups, particularly Greek men, to effectively access counselling.

Irene Gerrard presented on the architecture of Stepfamilies - the importance of differentiating structure from biological families.

Carmel Shellie presented on delivering services to drought affected individuals and families.

Discussion Points
- The challenges and opportunities of delivering counselling and other support services to diverse client groups such as NESB men (in particular Greek speaking men), drought affected families in rural and remote Australia and step or blended families.
- The need to inform the development of service models with an understanding of the distinctive characteristics of diverse client groups by drawing information from sources such as demographic data and community consultation.
- The development of tailored service interventions for diverse groups, through techniques such as outreach, adjusting language and engaging with the community, provides a platform for successfully delivering counselling to these groups.

Actions
The workshop acknowledged the successes of the presenting programs but did not identify any immediate actions for follow-up.
8. EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

Tracey Whetnall, Tracey Whetnall Consultancy, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives

- Assist service providers to keep abreast of current models and practices in Family Relationship Education and Skills Training.
- Raise awareness of innovations through:
  - reflecting on the role of education and skills training as a key early intervention model in family relationship work
  - providing examples of innovative and integrated practice
  - exploring current practice and future directions.

Panel members

Chris Barca, GordonCare
Kerrie McFadden, President, Marriage and Relationship Educators Association Australia (MAREAA)
Andrew King, Training Manager, Family Practice Institute, UnitingCare Burnside

Presentations

Chris Barca presented on services for separated families provided by GordonCare, including individual parent/children sessions, Children Contact Services, child focused mediation and the Stand by Me Program. Client outcomes being sought are to improve children’s relationships with their parents and for parents to gain better understanding of their children’s needs. A point was made that the Relationship Education and Skills Training can also be done post separation.

Kerrie McFadden presented on the general principles of relationship education, creating learning opportunities rather than teaching, and balancing support and challenge in a supportive environment. Future challenges were identified as being further integration across programs, evaluations and research, shared best practice models/principles, workforce and further development of creative approaches. Kerrie also provided an overview of Marriage and Relationship Educators’ Association of Australia (MAREAA) - an association that comprises practitioners who are often employed in funded FRSP organisations. Information about MAREAA is at www.mareaa.asn.au.
Andrew King presented on five strategic developments for education and skills training.

1. Expansion of workplace projects.
2. Development of innovative media.
3. More user friendly benchmarking, improvement of standards in training and program development.
4. Increased use of structural change learning - greater emphasis on evolutionary development of service user to practitioner transformation.
5. Addressing the missing gap, recognition and training of educators to work with a wider counselling skill set to ensure learning for disadvantaged communities is maximised.

Discussion Points

- Inadequate funding.
- Workforce capacity.
- How to allow client needs to drive program development.

Actions

- MAREAA to have discussion forum on website.
- Create a national network to implement accreditation framework.

9. WORKING WITH INVOLUNTARY CLIENTS

Jennie Hannan, Anglicare WA, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives

- To assist FRSP service providers to respond confidently to the challenges of working with involuntary clients.
- Raise awareness and exchange ideas, knowledge and resources about the challenges of working with clients who are obliged to receive services through the FRSP.

Panel Members

Jonathan Toussaint, Interrelate
Clive Price, Executive Director, UnitingCare Unifam
Akivra Bouris, Children’s Contact Services, Relationships Australia Newcastle
Presentations

Jonathan Toussaint presented on the Building Connections Program and its focus on assisting parents to understand the consequences of words and actions on their children.

Clive Price presented on the need for clear protocols with Parenting Orders and Family Dispute Resolution Programs, routine involvement of children, and working closely with courts and encouraging them to refer all family members to program services.

Akivra Bouris presented on Children’s Contact Services in Newcastle and the need for practitioners to focus on client engagement, organisations to focus on parents’ problems and to consider the circumstances that have brought the clients to their current position, forward planning to help clients understand their current position and how to address issues and engaging parents through their connection/concern for their children.

Discussion points

- Similarities with children at risk and Children’s Contact Centres client group, and the high likelihood of domestic violence which necessitates working with statutory authorities and the family courts.
- It is important to have very clear protocols in the Parenting Orders Programs. Work closely with the courts and strongly urge them to refer all family members to the program as it is easier if they start off together. It is the issues in relationships which initially make court orders appear unworkable. Routinely meet with children to involve them in the process.
- Working with involuntary clients has required a cultural change in the organisation. Training and recruitment are major challenges because of the different skill sets required. Having to work with all family members with varying needs and work with a more extensive support system. The system includes elements of social control, therefore supervision and support are essential to prevent burnout.
- Practitioners should focus on the importance of engaging clients and building an ongoing relationship. Akivra’s organisation focuses on parents’ problems and the circumstances that have brought them to their current position. It then works on a plan to enable them to understand their position and how to address issues.
• Clive’s organisation’s experience has been that if they engage with involuntary clients flexibly too early, involuntary clients will often accuse the worker of bias. It’s important to be very clear at the beginning.

• With voluntary clients you can begin to explore issues at the beginning of the process. With involuntary clients you have to take time to develop trust and your relationship with the client, before they will open up.

**Actions**
Practitioners were encouraged to:

• take time to develop trust with involuntary clients to enable them to build an open, working relationship with program staff
• undertake an intensive assessment at intake incorporating AVOS/DVOs to screen for background issues of abuse, substance abuse, etc.

10. WORKING WITH MEN

Les Stahl, Facilitation Plus, facilitated the workshop.

**Objectives**

• Share examples of innovative and integrated service delivery to men and their families.

**Panel members**
Grant O’Sullivan, Mensline Australia
Tony Hataier and Andrew Hadert, Men’s Sheds
Richard Fletcher, Family Action Centre
Lyn Slocombe, Centacare Broken Bay

**Presentations**
Grant O’Sullivan presented on services provided by Mensline.

Tony Hataier and Andrew Hadert presented on services provided by the Men’s Sheds.

Richard Fletcher presented on current research regarding the value of father involvement in the lives of children.
Lyn Slocombe presented on men’s services delivered through Centacare, Broken Bay, including Hey Dad! for Indigenous Dads, Uncles and Pops.

Discussion points
- Current research indicating improved health, social and educational outcomes for children when fathers are involved. This includes:
  - a positive influence on children’s social, emotional and cognitive development
  - the crucial role fathers can play in the establishment and maintenance of breastfeeding patterns (the benefits of which are well documented)
  - less social difficulties experienced by children with secure attachments to both parents
  - the importance of healthy father-child relationships, especially during the first seven years of a child’s life.
- Further information is available on the Family Action Centre website on:
- The importance of ensuring work premises are father friendly, for example by:
  - creating a space on premises where men can gather
  - regularly asking staff how they have included fathers in their practice.

Actions
The workshop acknowledged the successes of the presenting programs and current research findings but did not identify any immediate actions for follow-up.

11. WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Jennie Hannan, Anglicare WA, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives
- Enhance service responses to young people.
- Assist FRSP service providers to explore how:
  - family relationship issues impact young people
  - family relationship issues impact young parents
  - innovative service delivery models.
Panel members
Angela Ryder, Albany Schools Project, Relationships Australia WA
Lyndal Power, Relationships Australia NSW
Carolyn Ashcroft, Therapeutic Services Coordinator, Youth and Family Service
(Logan City) Inc

Presentations
Angela Ryder presented on the Albany Schools Project, which provides relationship education in schools. While students are the primary clients, the project also provides training and access to resources for teachers. Schools are funded to develop innovative strategies and resources suited to their individual needs and their local community. There are a significant number of Aboriginal students at these schools. The program has a particular focus on raising awareness of the effects of family violence and engaging students around these issues.

Lyndal Power presented on RAPS (Resources for Adolescents and Parents), a service delivered under the Adolescent Family Therapy and Mediation funding. The target group is young people aged 12-20 years old with serious difficulties, such as conflict between parents and teenagers, truantaing, school suspension, running away, violence, drug use and criminal behaviour. Teenagers, siblings and parents are seen together at the first appointment, although working with family members separately may occur. RAPS was set up in 1990 in recognition of the fact that although there were services for homeless youth, there were no prevention services for youth at risk of becoming homeless. Although most of the work is family therapy, the program also provides group work, parenting seminars, joint parent-teenager sessions and working in schools.

Carolyn Ashcroft presented on services for young people offered by the Youth and Family Service (Logan City) Inc, where legal services as well as family relationship services are available. The approach is to involve all family members so it does not seem as though the young person is the only one that needs ‘fixing’. Group programs are tailored to the specific needs in the community. An eight week program for primary school age children whose parents are separated was developed because so many of this group were using the service. The program has a ‘fantasy space’ theme interwoven throughout exploration of family change and grief and loss issues. Parents join children for a celebration at the conclusion of the program. The Healthy Family Relationships Project, in partnership with three other
agencies who recruit the families, focuses on addressing issues of family violence within the community. The project explores notions of a healthy family, Australian family laws and family roles. This project is currently being evaluated.

Discussion points

- Engaging a young person if parents make contact.
- Single session therapy model.
- Creative ways of working with young people, for example, engaging outreach workers to meet young people in ‘their spaces’ such as shopping centres.
- Significance of engaging with schools and legal services.
- Important to be flexible when working with young people.
- Relationships have primary importance for young people and with their teachers as well.
- Working with technology, for example, email and telephone counselling for families living in remote areas. Children also respond quite well to DVDs.
- Working with young parents, for example, working with an adult education provider to engage them, parenting training, support groups, help with practical issues (homelessness, poverty, education).

Actions

The workshop focused on exchanging ideas and presented a number of innovative ideas and practice models on working with young people in different situations and in different settings.

12. WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS

Benny Hodges, Wis-Wei Consulting Pty Ltd, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives

- Enhance service responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to achieve better outcomes.
- Take stock of current ideas, activities and challenges that impact on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Panel Members

Muriel Bamblett, Chairperson, Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care
Christine King, Manager Indigenous Practice and Coordination, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services, ACT Office for Children, Youth and Family Support
Anita Vosper, Manager North Region, Relationships Australia NSW

Presentations
Muriel Bamblett presented on meeting the cultural needs of Indigenous people in service delivery.
Christine King presented on the kinship system - How Indigenous systems can support practice.
Anita Vosper presented on building collaborative relationships with the Indigenous community.

Discussion points
Muriel Bamblett

- Need to have an understanding that the land is where an Aboriginal person’s soul comes from.
- Meaningful relationship begins with being respectful. Services should not employ Aboriginal workers merely to tick the Indigenous box. These relationships (exploitative) should be examined so there can be meaningful collaboration and co-operation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous services.
- Need to have an understanding of the broader reasons for Indigenous services, cultural development and maintenance, education and independence.
- Many Indigenous clients have experienced racism in mainstream services and do not trust them. The cultural background, including the stolen generation and policy of assimilation, has been passed down.
- Indigenous services aim to allow Indigenous people to access essential services. They are different due to the assertion of Indigenous status, the mark of kinship which in turn influences accountability structures. It is also different because of the way Indigenous services relate to community disadvantage.
- Historically, Indigenous services grew out of the needs of Indigenous communities. The majority are focused on the early intervention. For a long time Indigenous people could not get services until the crisis point (eg, when child had already been removed from home).
• Need to build the infrastructure by increasing such things as tertiary availability for Indigenous people.

• How to have meaningful partnerships:
  o acknowledge and accept the Indigenous communities’ role to self determine
  o show high levels of respect in all aspects of engagement
  o premised on equity and careful consideration
  o acknowledge that Indigenous services do not have the same finance and resource capacity as non Indigenous services but have much to offer in community knowledge
  o acknowledge that community development is key and this will take different amounts of time in different communities
  o acknowledge that Indigenous communities have difficulty in trusting government services, accepting their voices and seeing them as partners
  o non Indigenous services should explain to Indigenous communities the ethics base of their service and their attitudes towards community development.

• In moving towards cultural competence, recognise culture and connection to community is in the best interests of the Indigenous people and being a culturally safe organisation.

• To develop a cultural framework, including cultural safety, cultural competence and awareness, you need to live and breathe the culture.

An example of cultural competence - Victoria has worked with building cultural competence standards into child welfare services. It is useful to look at the varying levels of cultural competency ranging from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency.

To improve cultural competence, integrate awareness of diverse Indigenous communities into policy, procedure and practice. Involve the Indigenous community in these developments and recruit and retain Indigenous Board leaders and staff.

It is essential to understand why Indigenous people feel they are swimming against the mainstream. This has significant effects on Indigenous people and is combined with the conflict and power dynamic established throughout history.
Christine King

- Learning circles - use to teach children and pass on knowledge from elders who have been trained in the history and stories of the children.
- Need to understand that Indigenous people have their own complex system of laws, kinship etc, which was ignored and destroyed because it was not based on western thinking. Although Indigenous people thank you for contributions and acknowledge the good hearts of people, this does not allow others to speak for Indigenous people – they are competent in this.

What is the kinship system? It is a system of social relationships given as law to Aboriginal people from the creator during dreamtime that told them how to care for each other and others they come into contact with.

How does it work? It is the system by which Aboriginal people live their lives. It is based on ties through ceremonial law and marriage/ families. It is the basis of safety and structure for Indigenous people. It is the key to a broad multi layered network of support which also gives cultural connections to the past and present, and gives hope for the future.

How is the knowledge passed on?

- Family knowledge and practice.
- Story makers - person that has the stories passed from the dreamtime and brings them to the present to make relevant comment on the current situation to empower Indigenous people. An ancient tool that could be revitalised to strengthen Aboriginal families.
- Dreamtime stories.
- Learning circles - being revitalised and we encourage you to take part in these to build resilience in the people you are working with.

How can knowledge of the kinship structure help with practice and assist children and families?

- Act as a guide to building connections with Aboriginal people.
- Recognition of client’s background to build trust and to take into account the reality of Aboriginal families in order to help them more appropriately and effectively.
- Reminder of cultural obligation.
- Teaches protective behaviours.
• Builds resilience through gaining knowledge about how ancestors overcame the issues they faced.
• Building of identity, self esteem and pride.

How will knowledge and use of kinship improve relationships with Aboriginal communities?
• Shows a willingness to learn.
• Foundation for building trust.
• Recognises the existing strengths of the families.

Key challenges to providing services to Indigenous people:
• government policy across the board – Aboriginal people are closing their doors to services as they see them as a representation of government policy
• resources – need additional resources to keep services going and allow them flexibility to meet needs of the community
• racism – expectations of the Indigenous communities/ stereotypes.

How can we attract Indigenous staff into the services?
• Identify how Indigenous students can be supported to be Indigenous social workers, not just a social worker.
• Need to invest more in training young people about what it is to be an Indigenous person.

This crisis has been going on for many years. Many programs that Aboriginal people have developed are not initiated because Aboriginal people have continued to be ‘colonised’ throughout history so they have little empowerment or economic resources.

Racism in Australia has taken the policies full circle and returned to the old rhetoric. Aboriginal people accept they need help but they don’t want it to be ‘done’ for them. Rather, assist them to do it in their way themselves. It will not be done blind; there are systems that can support them within the community.

This is not an Indigenous person’s shame – it is Australia’s shame. Indigenous people don’t necessarily see the provision of services as being to support them or protect their families. They can see the role of services as giving them the things they need because otherwise it would be shameful to have to ask.
Indigenous people need services that support the culture, not services to take children or put Indigenous people into towns. The need is to restore the pride of NT Aboriginal people about being Indigenous. We need to fight not only for their basic rights, but also for their pride.

Approximately 60 per cent of children are with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families so there is a need to allow them to bond/connect with their culture and embrace and accept non-Aboriginal culture. Children should be taught to be strong in their Aboriginality as this is what can ground them and to accept and embrace non-Aboriginal culture.

Aboriginal people need to move beyond being victims and be empowered. The Aboriginal situation could be a lead model for other communities.

The FRSP needs to establish a culturally safe service. Staff should have culturally appropriate training. Services should adapt service delivery according to changing needs and be willing to learn.

There are silent voices of fathers of Aboriginal families whose family heads are either wives or grandmothers because men are in gaol. Services need to consider this in addressing the needs of the family, as this will not necessarily be revealed unless the intake officer asks the right questions.

This FRSP program has not addressed prisoner reintegration services for Indigenous communities. In response to this issue, it should be noted that practitioners are often women and many family services are focused on women and often working with women as the head of households. There is a need to look at how to transition boys into manhood (initiation, ceremony) – this is a big gap in services and we need to understand the important stages of boyhood/manhood from seven years of age. Without a man, a child is further at risk as they have no positive guidance available for these stages in their life connection to their culture.

Anita Vosper
The relationship with the Indigenous community began six years ago, via research by a PhD student who contacted the local services in Redfern. So began an informal relationship with Mudgin-gal Women Services Corp. This relationship was formalised
in 2006 with an MOU. The relationship is built to develop collaborative working projects and includes an ongoing Indigenous working party.

The Healthy Families Project - the service understood there was a need for a families project to assist the community. For example, over 70 per cent of families are affected by family violence. There is a need to establish opportunities to empower Indigenous workers to respond to community needs.

The following questions were asked of the Indigenous community:

- What would you want if you had unlimited resources to address the needs of the community?
- How can we help you to obtain the resources?
- How are we going to share the roles and responsibilities? - vital to ask at the beginning.

Project aims:

- healthy relationships in Indigenous communities living in the Redfern area
- promote parenting and relationship skills
- promote physical, emotional and mental wellbeing in Indigenous families and connections to their culture and community, and to strengthen these for the benefit of future generations.

Project achievements:

- improved self confidence, communication and self esteem
- accidental counsellor, parenting, sexual assault workshops
- healthy families’ circles calendar
- future direction/career for Indigenous people.

Challenges:

- negotiating roles and responsibilities
- reporting requirements (verbal in Indigenous communities rather than written records)
- measuring progress
- developing trust
- mainstream services need to prove that they are trustworthy.
Opportunities:
- support to be sole agency applying for project funding
- trained project coordinators
- developing cross cultural competency in the mainstream agency
- shared resources and knowledge.

Actions
No actions identified as most of the workshop focused on presenting and exchanging ideas and practice models for working effectively with Indigenous individuals, families and communities.

13. RESPONSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

Benny Hodges, Wis-Wei Consulting Pty Ltd, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives
- Explore the issues of responsiveness and accessibility of FRSP services.
- Raise awareness and exchange ideas, knowledge and resources about the responsiveness and accessibility of FRSP services, especially to groups who have barriers to access.

Panel Members
John MacDonald, Director Family Relationships Online, AGD
Cathy Rainsford, National Program Manager, AGD
Pam Lewis, Director of Client Services, Relationships Australia NSW
Jeremy Hearne, Manager of Programs, Mensline Australia

Presentations
John MacDonald presented on Family Relationships Online and the review process. He provided an overview of the website content and research on help seeking behaviours.

Cathy Rainsford presented on the Family Relationships Advice Line (FRAL). FRAL services the entire Australian community with 200 rostered staff across several locations. A range of challenges including professional development, supervision and managing extended operating hours were discussed.
Pam Lewis presented on increasing service accessibility. To achieve this, RA NSW reflected on two key questions: Who are our clients? and How can we better reach the communities in our catchment? This assisted the organisation to implement new initiatives, including the establishment of:

- three internal Indigenous scholarships
- a partnership with a local Indigenous community centre
- improved service delivery to families experiencing domestic violence
- online counselling to respond the needs of people with barriers to accessing face to face counselling.

Jeremy Hearne gave an overview of services delivered through Mensline. He noted the Mensline Callback Service, which provides follow-up support with a focus on crisis support for high risk callers threatening self harm. He also noted the introduction of telegroups for separated fathers. In Mensline’s experience, clients benefit by informing the service if they are receiving other counselling support.

Discussion points

- Family Relationships Online is being reviewed through the Family Relationships Online Improvement Project. Stakeholder consultation occurred in July and August 2007.
- The Family Relationship Advice Line is addressing service access barriers for CALD and Indigenous communities, with the support of interpreter services and a network of Indigenous practitioners.

Actions

There were no new program management issues raised through this workshop.

14 RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND REMUNERATION

Louise Lamont, Catholic Social Services, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives

- Assist service providers to respond proactively to the changing workforce environment.
- Raise awareness and exchange ideas, knowledge and resources about workforce development strategies through:
exploring current research, practice and future directions about workforce issues.

Panel members
Lyn Fletcher, Director of Operations, Relationships Australia
Emma Silvester, Project Coordinator, Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council
Clive Price, Director Unifam

Presentations
Lyn Fletcher presented on issues associated with the FRSP workforce.

Emma Silvester presented on the Community Services and Health Industry.

Clive Price presented on the FRSP workforce’s ability to respond to the Family Law Reforms.

Discussion points
- More than one million people work in the Community Services and Health Sector.
- The biggest barrier to acting on the family law reforms and accepting the challenges they pose is how to recruit, retain and remunerate staff appropriately in the current job market.
- The ageing FRSP workforce is a significant issue. With many workers retiring in the next 15 years, this trend could impact negatively on the sector’s ability to deliver a full range of services.
- The number of retirees is expanding by 3 per cent each year and replacing them is a significant challenge.
- The specialised nature of work in the sector requires more than just academic qualifications, it also requires significant experience post graduation. Nevertheless, the sector’s work is generally not recognised by society as essential, which diminishes the sector’s ability to seek better outcomes for its workers.
- Current organisational structures and functions, with relatively fixed job roles and a tendency to reward loyalty and experience, probably work well for the current workforce. A key question is; are they appropriate for the workforce of the future?
• There is a ‘war for talent’ within the sector. In the words of Clive Price, "Managers are fighting over the custody and residence of valued staff". This can create impediments to inter-professional practice and the ability to offer broad career paths.

• It is becoming increasingly prevalent for prospective employees who are genuinely attracted to the sector, to seek work elsewhere due to better pay in other jobs. That is, financial imperatives are increasingly important to the choice of work.

• Competition with the public sector for staff is exacerbated by private sector employer contributions to superannuation set at 9 per cent, whereas the public sector is at 15 per cent.

• Competitive tendering processes for services to government may be contributing to poor remuneration provided by organisations to their workers. This may be due to a perceived need to deliver services at a lower unit of cost in order to remain competitive.

• Regardless of government’s impact on salaries, much of the onus is on organisations to provide appropriate salaries for staff. The 30 per cent funding increase provided by government for existing services came with no strings attached and service providers were free to pass on that 30 per cent increase to their staff through salaries.

• The type of work within the sector is by its nature difficult, therefore people will/can be reticent to do the work for the level of remuneration on offer.

• There is an acute skills shortage in rural areas. One problem, which is also common to many city locations, is that many workers do not live in the locations where services are most needed.

• There has been some success in attracting Indigenous and CALD workers to the sector.

• The current labour force does present some opportunities:
  o over the last five years, 40 per cent of labour market growth has come from the 45+ age bracket (ABN Amro). That is predicted to grow to 80 per cent in the next 10 years. The sector may be attractive to this group.
  o new graduates from Generation Y are seeking opportunities to advance their careers, but they are also, quite often, seeking meaningful work. The sector can provide this.

• To respond proactively to the changing workforce environment, organisations need to encourage portability, provide opportunities and encourage entry.
To recruit and retain staff organisations need to:
  o ensure they and the sector are attractive to, and provide career pathways for, employees (particularly Generation Y). At a higher level, career pathways across professions and sectors should be explored (eg, from social work to education and vice versa)
  o orientate staff effectively and demonstrate that a career path exists within the organisation and the sector
  o value the work staff do
  o recognise the importance and benefits of good supervision
  o offer good training
  o offer good, flexible work-life balance arrangements
  o improve salary structures and consider having indexation that at least considers increases in the consumer price index.

Priority areas for workforce development include rapid entry into the sector for all occupations, rapid and appropriate skills formation, and the identification of new and expanded roles.

The Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council have developed seven family relationship qualifications, which at the time of the conference were expected to be officially endorsed within 20 days. The qualifications will become part of Australian standards. They will not be compulsory and are not intended to replace established university qualifications required by the sector. They simply represent an opportunity for workers in the sector to have their skills recognised.

Actions
  • Government and the sector need to further engage and discuss the development of a consolidated strategy for addressing workforce issues experienced by the sector.

15. GOOD SERVICE

Les Stahl, Facilitation Plus, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives
  • Assist FRSP service providers to reflect on the systems and processes concerned with the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of their organisations.
• Raise awareness and exchange ideas, knowledge and resources about what makes a good service.

Panel members
Robyn Fleming, FRSP Branch Manager, FaHCSIA
Anne Hollands, CEO, Relationships Australia NSW
James Swansson, National Institute of Governance, University of Canberra

Presentations
Robyn Fleming presented on Australian Government requirements relating to managing funding agreements, including requirements of the Financial Management and Accountability Act (1977), Department of Finance and Administration, the Chief Executive’s Instructions and recent compliance processes established in FaHCSIA. The implications for funded services in relation to issues such as acquittal of funds, accountability and use of client fees were also discussed.

Anne Hollands presented on key aspects of good organisational governance from a service provider’s perspective.

James Swansson provided a summary of good organisational governance models that have been developed specifically for not-for-profit organisations.

Discussion points
• A greater level of rigour is now being applied to compliance with funding agreements and contracts.
• These are not new expectations, but a greater level of consistently is now required in order for FaHCSIA to meet obligations under the Financial Management and Accountability Act (1977).
• Some examples of how this will apply to FRSP funded organisations include:
  o acquittal of funding from previous years will now be required before further funding is provided
  o milestones must be fully met unless adequate reasons for not doing so are provided
  o client fees from FRSP funded programs must be recorded and its expenditure accounted for, as Funding Agreements require this public money to be spent on FRSP service delivery.
• Compliance with FRSP Approval Requirements helps ensure service quality across the sector. Individual organisations are expected to constantly review and improve service quality.

• Government will work closely with the sector in developing and implementing mechanisms to achieve these results.

• In order for this to occur, organisations need to be supported by good governance practices. This is the process whereby decisions important to the future of an organisation are taken, communicated, monitored and assessed. It also includes the processes organisations have for holding managers accountable and measuring performance.

• An organisation’s governing body is responsible for the governance of the organisation rather than service delivery. They are essentially interested in the question, Is the organisation achieving its mission?

• To be effective, a governing body should have representatives from the community, practitioners and the client base. If these stakeholders are not represented, organisations should consider why this is the case.

• In line with this, it is good practice for organisations to have a short protocol that allows practitioners to raise issues directly with the governing body.

• The National Institute of Governance at the University of Canberra has a range of resources and services available to support non-profit organisations achieve good governance. It’s contact details are:
  
  Phone: 02 6201 5607  
  Fax: 02 6201 5608  
  Email: nigov@canberra.edu.au  
  Post: National Institute for Governance, University of Canberra ACT 2601  
  Internet: www.governance.canberra.edu.au/

• Templates designed to help organisations further develop governance practices in the context of their own culture, mission and operations are also available through the Institute.

• It is also important for organisations to evaluate the effectiveness of their own governance processes.

**Actions**

• When all new services have been established, a strategic conversation between FaHCSIA, AGD and the sector will occur to consider the issue of funding versus purchasing services.
A strategic conversation will also occur with the FRSP sector to develop processes and mechanisms for reporting on the use of client fees collected.

Consideration will be given to developing protocols and documents to be made broadly available that can assist organisations in meeting service delivery and governance requirements.

16. RESEARCH – INFORMING AND FORMING PRACTICE

Lawrie Moloney, Australian Institute of Family Studies, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives

- Inform service providers of current research that impact on the FRSP.
- Showcase FRSP action research and other sponsored research.

Panel members

Frank Quinlan, Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Australia, Mapping Social Disadvantage in Australia
Kelly Hand, Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)
Michael Voumard, Family Relationship Centre Hobart

Presentations

Frank Quinlan presented on Catholic Social Services Australia, which partnered with Jesuit Social Services and mapped social disadvantage in Australia. The results of the mapping exercise were presented in a publication, *Dropping off the Edge*.

This project expanded on data from Victoria and NSW using the smallest statistical area for analysis that data permits - that is postcodes, statistical local areas and local government areas.

Research took place to collect data from governments and agencies to develop a large pool of statistical data for analysis. This involved no direct data collection.

Research tried to avoid subjective measures and used measures associated with social distress, health, community safety, economic, education and community engagement.
Research findings found there were concentrations of disadvantage within small spatial areas and recurring themes such as:

- limited computer/internet use
- criminal convictions/imprisonment
- low family income
- unemployment
- disability/sickness
- early school leaving
- child maltreatment (when several of the above indicators present).

Analysis suggests that various indicators are tightly bound, providing a strong statistical case to reinforce the messages of those working in the community sector.

Social cohesion is protective against the disadvantage indicators and importantly, can break the correlation between clusters of variables.

Principle message - one indicator cannot be addressed in isolation - broad based initiatives are necessary.

Research indicates that broad based programs that have been run have been effective. Nevertheless, they need to be provided for an extended period of time to avoid a ‘boomerang effect’, where disadvantage slowly returns.

For more information see www.australiandisadvantage.org.au

Kelly Hand presented on AIFS, which was established in 1980 to promote identification and understanding of factors affecting marital and family stability.

AIFS was commissioned by AGD and the then FaCSIA to evaluate recent reforms to the family law system:

- legislative changes
- service provision
- studies of families.

Service Provision Projects (SPP) aim to explore the extent to which the new system is meeting the objectives of the reforms. Key components of the SPP are service
provider studies (manager interviews, staff focus groups, staff surveys and service provision data) and client surveys.

- Manager interviews - first 15 Family Relationship Centres, eight Early Intervention Services and eight Post-Separation Services.
- Staff focus groups – eight with Family Relationship Centres, three with Family Relationship Advice Line and four to eight with Post-Separation Services.
- Staff survey – web based self-completion survey combining of open ended and closed questions. Staff across the FRSP will be invited to participate.
- Other data - organisational data, Family Relationships Online web statistics and possibly FRSP Online data.

Surveys with face-to-face clients regarding help-seeking reasons, modes of referral, expectations of service, satisfaction with service and suggestions for improvement.

AIFS sees an ongoing partnership with services as crucial to the success of the evaluation – success is reliant on the participation and support of services. Input is sought on collaborating with services and data collection methodology.

Michael Voumard presented on Action Research and the need to undertake research “if we are curious”.

Action research (AR) is a relatively new field, but perhaps just a new term for something we have been doing for a long time. Many of our AR questions have come out of hot topics from staff meetings.

For example, we have two waiting rooms, but usually we just use the front one. One morning there were many children in the waiting room and the client service officer was overwhelmed with keeping an eye on them all and looking after reception. What to do with the children? Several ideas were thrown around and gradually consensus was reached. If we are looking after the interests of children, shouldn’t we be setting the benchmark?

The action research question we decided on was, What would it take for the Hobart Family Relationship Centre to better engage with clients and their children?

So far, it has become a regular agenda item, as have several other AR questions. Some things trialled to date include:
• employed staff with childcare experience and expertise
• offer unlimited adjunct care at certain times of the week
• consent from both parents for the child to attend
• started to count how often clients bring children with them to figure out resourcing needs
• developed children’s activity packs that can be used in the centre and taken home
• experimented with using artwork/drawings that children can complete while waiting at the centre and put them on display in the centre.

Key components for those doing action research in the Family Relationship Centre context:
• curiosity
• interest in what makes people tick
• desire to make a difference to people
• interest in customer service
• understanding the interaction between research and practice.

Having staff who are also researchers is very helpful in shaping questions.

**Actions**
In the next AFRC newsletter we will be asking service providers for information about research they are involved in.

17. DATA AND REPORTING

Karen Morris, Deputy CEO, Interrelate, facilitated the workshop.

**Objectives**
• Raise awareness among service providers of the level of information being collected, its intended use and what is available to the sector.

**Panel members**
Michael Brett, Section Manager, FRSP Online, Family Relationship Services Branch, FaHCSIA
Tammie Horton, Assistant Section Manager, FRSP Online, Family Relationship Services Branch, FaHCSIA
Presentation
FaHCSIA’s FRSP Online – data collection and reporting
The workshop aimed to give participants the opportunity to ask questions about FRSP Online, and provide feedback and input into system and processes.

Discussion points
- Why data needs to be collected?
- What questions does the data help answer?
- How does the data collection benefit clients?
- How does the data benefit organisations?
- How does the data benefit government program managers?
- What reports are able to be generated from the data set?

A demonstration of the reporting portal prototype was given and questions from the floor were taken and answered.

Actions
A question was raised about how to record clients’ locations when they are living overseas. This was taken on notice and once a solution has been devised, the sector will be notified through the FRSP Online newsletter.

18. CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICE DELIVERY

Tracey Whetnall, Tracey Whetnall Consultancy, facilitated the workshop.

Objectives
- Assist service providers to develop culturally appropriate models of service delivery across different service types.
- Raise awareness and exchange ideas, knowledge and resources about enhancing culturally appropriate service delivery.

Panel members
Marian Brown, Centacare
Lyndal Power, Relationships Australia NSW,
Muktesh Chibber, Programs Manager, Brotherhood of St Laurence
Presentations

Marian Brown presented on looking back to the future and how families can maintain their ethnic identity in Australia.

Lyndal Power discussed Strength to Strength and Resources for Adolescents and Parents (RAPS).

Muktesh Chibber presented on the African Humanitarian Entrants Program.

Discussion points

- The alien nature of traditional Western concepts, such as professional counselling, to many families that have recently arrived in Australia or are from non-English speaking backgrounds and how services are overcoming these barriers by working with communities.
- The need for service interventions to operate in a whole of family context that can respond both to the different gender roles within and across generational issues experienced by families from non-English speaking backgrounds. For example, the development of information resources for non-English speaking families.
- The challenge of developing effective cross cultural models of service delivery that maintain quality and reflect Australian legal requirements and cultural values, while respecting the cultures of families from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Practical Tips

- All cultures want to create good citizens who contribute to a common good.
- The paradox of family surviving starvation, torture and trauma and then breaking down in times of peace.

Innovative Practice

- Effective translation techniques.
- Use of scenarios to encourage participation without shame.
- Strength to strength a bridge to mainstream program (RAPS).

Integrated Practice

- Focus on homeland parenting practices and integrating these with Australian practices.
Strength to Strength is integrated with RAPS. It is a culturally appropriate program that is able to shape mainstream service.

**Actions**

The workshop acknowledged the successes of the presenting programs but did not identify any immediate actions for follow-up.