



CAFNEWS

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1. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

CAFWAA Working on Many Fronts

The agenda and the outcomes of the CAFWAA Board's most recent meeting in Sydney, reflects the Association's capacity to contribute to and work on several issues simultaneously. Supported by the State based peaks in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales, the Board has been able to engage in a broad range of activities consistent with our mission.

Following the release last year of the CAFWAA policy position paper, 'A Time to Invest', the Board is now ramping up the Association's advocacy activity. Negotiations continue with the Commonwealth Government regarding the support of a national system of practice standards for the provision of out of home care services.

The push to engage the Commonwealth Government in taking a more active interest and leadership in child welfare matters will also be boosted by the work being undertaken by Families Australia in preparing a discussion paper on child welfare, in consultation with the Department of Family and Community Services. The CAFWAA Board has spent some time briefing the author of this report; drawing out a rationale and opportunities for enhanced Commonwealth involvement in prevention and early intervention, out of home care and learning care policies and resourcing.

At the same time, CAFWAA has, and in some instances is in the process of, responding to a number of important Commonwealth Inquiries and Reports impacting on the child and family welfare sector. These include:

The Senate Inquiry into Poverty in Australia: The CAFWAA submission for this inquiry was prepared by PeakCare, Queensland and will be posted on the CAFWAA website once cleared by the Senate Community Affairs References Committee.

The Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care: The CAFWAA response will draw from input from State and Territory Peak and organisational members and CLAN.

The Commonwealth Task Force on Child Development, Health & Well-being's Consultation Paper entitled "Towards the Development of National Agenda for Early Childhood"

On the practice front, planning is well underway for the CAFWAA Practice Symposium, scheduled for the 17-19 September 2003 in Canberra. The Planning group, led by Jane Hague, has prepared a comprehensive program and CAFWAA will be conducting its AGM on one of the evenings during the symposium.

In keeping with CAFWAA's stated objective to promote and undertake research, the Board recently commenced negotiations with the National Child and Family Welfare Research Coalition, with a view to re-establishing a formal collaboration between the two bodies. A small working party, including members of CAFWAA and the Coalition are preparing a more detailed proposal for how such a collaboration could best be managed.

All in all, it has been a demanding, but exciting, time for the Association as we progress issues on these three key fronts of improving practice, influencing public policy and enhancing the sector's research capacity.

I look forward to keeping all members informed on our achievements in each of these areas over the coming months.

Simon Schrapel

April 2003

2. AROUND THE STATES

New South Wales

Following an election in NSW which saw the Carr Labor government returned for its third term the Minister for Community Services Carmel Tebbutt retains her portfolio. Many in the sector were pleased to hear that there will be stability at the top given the changes over recent years and especially at a time when some progress is being made in the long process of implementing the 1998 (yes – 1998!) legislation. Another big issue is the planning and roll out of a major funding package (\$1b over five years) announced in December 2002 to increase capacity on protection, family support and out-of-home care.

Prior to the election, the Minister for Community Services announced her intention to commence significant sections of Chapters 8 and 10 the ***Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*** by 1 July 2003. These chapters are the out-of-home care and Children's Guardian provisions of the Act.

The Children's Guardian has written to CEOs of non government out-of-home care agencies to encourage them to participate in the OCG **accreditation and quality improvement** program. Accreditation involves an application phase followed by a 'gap analysis' and development of a quality improvement plan, if required. Undertaking the gap analysis and preparation of a quality improvement plan involves evaluating an agency's service against the updated NSW Standards for Substitute Care Services and preparing a plan to address any identified deficiencies. The gap analysis and development of the

quality improvement plan is undertaken jointly by the OCG and the agency and depending on the results an agency will either prepare a self study report or undergo a period of quality improvement. While there was some anxiety around the commencement of a voluntary process with no clear undertaking and timetable for the legislated accreditation process to begin accreditation is now about to become a reality and ACWA is encouraging agencies to engage with it as soon as possible. see www.kidsguradian.nsw.gov.au

The Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies (ACWA), the NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS), the Family Support Services Association (FSSA), the Youth Accommodation Association (YAPA), the Women's Refuge Movement and UnitingCare Burnside have combined to host a forum on April 30 to discuss and promote **a vision for family services** that can be effective for families at risk in NSW. The findings of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Child Protection Services and the recent announcement of a \$1b funding package for DoCS and non-government community services provide the context for the forum which will examine:

- * effective service models for families with complex problems
- * organisational capacity, viability and other conditions necessary for effective service delivery
- * service location and distribution
- * inter-agency collaboration and links between different government programs

It is anticipated that outcomes and recommendations from the forum will be used to inform and influence service planning.

Keynote Speaker will be Dr Dorothy Scott OAM, Executive Secretary of The Ian Potter Foundation and Associate Professor School of Social Work, University of Melbourne.

The autumn edition of **developing practice** is due out soon and will feature an interview with Australian of the Year Professor Fiona Stanley looking at early intervention and prevention. This is coupled with an opinion piece by Dr Graham Vimpani on *Theoretical frameworks for promoting children's healthy development in the early years*, Other articles include *The First Five Years; Child protection and the postnatal ward; Good Practice Guidelines for Domestic Violence and Child Protection; Domestic violence, sexual assault and health of Aboriginal people; Characteristics of effective programs; The Learning Organisations in a human services context and Establishing Permanency for children*. See www.acwa.asn.au

Provided by the Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies

South Australia

The last six months have proved to be a frustrating time for CAFWA South Australian members. Meetings continue to be dominated by issues relating to the provision of Alternative Care services, with the working relationship

between service providers and the Department of Human Services continuing to be tested.

Negotiations over the 2002/03 **Alternative Care Contract** continued for a number of months. CAFWA(SA) lobbied both the Department and the Minister for Social Justice to ensure that indexation was passed on to Alternative Care service providers. It surfaced that previous governments and administrations had failed to pass on to Alternative Care agencies indexation awarded by the Department of Treasury and Finance to the Department of Human Services. As a result the base funding to Alternative Care Services had in real terms reduced by up to 12% over 5 years when taking into account statutory cost increases. As a result of the lobbying by CAFWA (SA) the 2002/03 funding did receive indexation, however there was no additional increase in the base funding levels to allow for the lack of indexation over the previous years.

The stance by CAFWA (SA) members to not sign the contracts until the issues of inadequate base funding levels was addressed, was made inconsequential when the Minister announced early in 2003 that the Alternative Care services would go out to open tender, with the process culminating in the announcement of successful tenderers in June 2003 (as of early April the tenders have not been advertised making for a July commencement of any new providers almost impossible). The Minister stated that operating an Alternative Care system without signed contracts was an untenable position. A process of open tenders would allow for a transparent process which allowed all interested organisations to lodge a tender.

This development came as a surprise to CAFWA (SA) members especially when the Review of Alternative Care in South Australia (March 2002) recommended that a period of stability and relationship building between the Department and the service providers was critical to the well-being of the Alternative Care system. It quickly became evident that not only the non-Government sector but also Family and Youth Services would also be tendering for the services. CAFWA members have found themselves trying to improve the working relationships with the Government sector, during a time of competitive tendering. These are interesting times.

In furthering the recommendations of the **Review of Alternative Care in South Australia**, CAFWA SA was invited on to the Alternative Care Ministerial Advisory Committee. This was convened under the following Terms of Reference:

- Advice on policy, service and system development for Alternative Care arising from implementation of recommendations of the *Review of Alternative Care in South Australia* (March 2002).
- Monitor the progress of implementation of review recommendations.
- Advise the Minister of Social Justice and the Department of Human Services on implementation and funding priorities.

The decision to put the Alternative Care services out to tender was made before the Advisory Committee had its first meeting. A critical opportunity to deliver on its Terms of Reference was not afforded to the Committee. This was an unfortunate bit of bad timing?

A second major review, that of **Child Protection**, has been completed in South Australia (March 2003). As an Association CAFWA (SA) did not submit comments or proposals to the draft papers, but rather relied on individual members to respond. We are grappling with the problem of how to ensure that the voice of CAFWA (SA) is heard, especially in such significant reviews, when workloads of individual members prohibit contributing on behalf of CAFWA at the expense of their own organisations.

The last six months have been frustrating, the next six months will be challenging. Assisting to implement the recommendations of both the Alternative Care and the Child Protection reviews will occupy CAFWA (SA) members. This will be done during an environment of competitive tendering when agencies, both Government and non-Government, will be endeavouring to develop partnerships and deliver services. We trust that the best interest of the children, young people and families whose needs we compete to meet will remain paramount in this process.

Provided by the Child, Adolescent And Family Welfare Association Of South Association

Victoria

The Children's Welfare Association of Victoria has moved into new premises in Melbourne as part of its plan to establish a **Children's Centre for Excellence** by October 2003. The new Centre for Excellence will lead the field in delineating increasing measures of wellbeing for vulnerable children, young people and their families by establishing benchmarks and driving Government accountability and will be recognised as:

- the CfE for community services' resources, publications, best practice projects and training;
- a source of commentary on the sector, driving public opinion and government policy;
- the place to go for groundbreaking evidence based research; and
- the place where children are listened to.

The new premises are located at level 5, 50 Market Street, Melbourne 3000. Telephone and fax numbers have not changed. CWAV extends a warm welcome to CAFWA members visiting Melbourne to drop in at the new premises for a cuppa and a grand tour of the premises!

The Department of Human Services in Victoria will be launching its new **Intensive Therapeutic Services (ITS)** program across the State shortly. The

ITS program is being established with initial funding of \$5.5 million (from the 2002- 2003 budget) and aims to provide comprehensive and integrated therapeutic services and treatment that is currently unavailable to meet the needs of children and young people in the child protection system. The funding is recurrent for four years.

The program aims to provide ITS through teams established in each region to provide therapy and treatment services based on referrals directly from Child Protection Services. A Statewide specialist service will also be established to conduct evidence-based research, provide policy advice, clinical supervision to regional ITS teams, establish linkages to consumer representative body and peak organisations and enhance secure welfare services.

The Australian Labor Party was returned during the **November 2002 elections** with a landslide majority. The Labor Party's election promises towards child and family welfare falls short of CWAV and industry expectations. The following are the ALP's commitments:

- Review of the Children and Young Person's Act.
- Increase in foster care reimbursement by \$4 million per year for four years. (CWAV's recommendation: an increase of \$10.65 million per year).
- No funds have been committed to strengthen capacity of foster care services. (CWAV's recommendation: investment of \$14.5 million per year).
- Mentoring program for young people leaving care. The Government has not indicated the funds it will commit for this program. (CWAV's recommendation: \$2.6 million per year to programs supporting young people leaving care).
- There is no clear Government commitment towards:
 - investment in fully funded family support programs
 - establishing the Standards Australia International ABEF Quality Improvement Framework; and
 - the establishment of a Children and Young People's Commission.

The Department of Human Services undertook a **review of the home-based-care system** in Victoria. Based on the election promises and the Government's budget commitments, CWAV does not anticipate any significant change to the out-of-home care system. The increase in reimbursements to foster carers announced by the Government (\$4 million a year) amounts to an increase in carer reimbursement of \$15 per carer per week.

During 2001/2002, CWAV developed a set of risk management strategies and associated tools for the prevention and management of **occupational health and safety** in residential services for children and young people in Victoria. CWAV will be training about 80 Program Managers and Supervisors over the next three months, in the effective use of the strategies and the tools developed.

Provided by the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria

Western Australia

During the latter part of 2002 the agencies providing placement, prevention of placement, and reunification services renegotiated their Service Agreements with the Department for Community Development. The consultation process leading up to the offers to existing providers was not acceptable to the sector and CYFAA played a strong advocacy role in ensuring that the department consulted more fully.

However, the renegotiation parameters were restrictive in that the department had no extra funding to offer and yet wanted to see extra services delivered. The new services will be an Aboriginal Tertiary Family Preservation Service and a Professional Foster Care Service. These services are being offered on a tender basis limited to existing OHAC providers.

The results for existing services is that some providers have received lower funding levels or have had to provide more service for their money. Yorganop, the Aboriginal foster care agency has received a funding boost, which has long been supported by other providers.

The current State Labor Government has committed to placing a new Child Welfare Bill before the parliament. This process is about a year behind schedule, but appears to be on track for a June/July introduction. The non-government sector has been involved in consultation earlier in the process, but the final Bill will be only shown to the sector just prior to its introduction to parliament. .

The Department for Community Development in WA restructured through 2001-02, and has been readvertising all its positions since then. This has created a high degree of instability in its operations during the last year. This has meant that some processes such as the implementation of LAC have been compromised and prolonged.

Provided by Children's Youth & Family Agencies of WA

Queensland

The state budget 2002/3 allocated an additional \$42m over four years to the Department of Families for a range of initiatives designed to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and their families. These new monies built on an earlier increase of \$40m over four years that was allocated in 2000/2001.

Shortly after the budget was brought down, the Government launched *Queensland Families: Future Directions* a major policy initiative that outlined the Government's vision for Queensland's future.

Key initiatives outlined in this vision included increased investment in prevention and early intervention and a program of time limited trials aimed at

rigorously assessing the effectiveness of proposals approved to receive new monies. These trials are currently underway across Queensland

While the shift in emphasis towards prevention and early intervention has been widely welcomed, the fact that this budget did not contain a funding strategy to simultaneously address the range of pressures that are impacting negatively on existing services is a major concern.

Without this, the risk is that any benefit that flows from an expansion in capacity in prevention and early intervention will be offset by a contraction within the existing service system. Service providers are clearly indicating that escalating costs of providing services, increasing demand and complexity of client need are leaving them with little choice but to reduce the level of service they are currently able to provide.

Other matter of major concern is the funding of individualised responses for children and young people with high support needs out of child related costs. While this practice has developed from a lack of capacity within the existing service system to meet these needs, the Government's recently released preferred provider approach does little to deliver a longer term solution to this issue.

Within the last couple of days, the Queensland Government also released a discussion paper "Stopping the drift - Improving the lives of Queensland's children and young people in long term care". This discussion process will be particularly important in that it raises the issue of adoption as an option for securing the long-term stable and secure care of children and young people in the child protection system.

At the present time the first round of licensing foster care services is coming to a close. While the initial process for licensing both residential and foster care services has been challenging at times for everyone involved, Queensland can be justifiably proud of the fact that these core out of home care service delivery components are meeting foundational standards

Provided by PeakCare

Tasmania

The Division of Children and Family has announced that the Looking After Children (LAC) program will be implemented by the State Government from July.

The Department has also been undertaking a review of all out of home care payments - The Funding Methodology Project. The project has been referred to the Minister of Health and Human Services and following his endorsement will be released for comment. The Strategic Framework for Out of Home Care 2002 - 2004 was endorsed by the Minister last year. An implementation co-ordinating committee made up of carers, Create, non- government and

government representatives has begun meeting to discuss priority areas, what is achievable and what would require additional resources.

Provided by the Child & Family Welfare Association of Tasmania

ACT

Not available

3. Symposium

A reminder that the 2003 CAFWAA Symposium ***When Care is Not Enough*** will be held at Rydges Eaglehawk Resort (just north of Canberra) on 17, 18 and 19 September.

It will feature keynote addresses, practice papers, extended workshops, showcase presentations and hot topic debates, exploring the theme of the potential of treatment models in out of home care.

To make sure you get the Registration Brochure due out in late May/early June email your details, including postal address, to cafwaacwa.asn.au