



# CAFNEWS

5th Edition – July 2004

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## 1. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

CAFWAA continues to advocate for reforms of child welfare policy and services at both a State/Territory and National level.

Whilst recognising the primary role of State and Territory governments in child protection and out of home care, CAFWAA also acknowledges the important role to be played by the Australian Government in curbing child abuse and neglect. This responsibility extends to areas such as national programs and policy impacting on housing, health, employment and the distribution of wealth, all core aspects of the fight against family and child poverty. However, it also involves taking leadership in the co-ordination of national approaches to improving our out of home care systems and services.

To this end, CAFWAA continues to encourage the Australian and State/Territory governments in advancing agendas, including interventions in the early years and the national plan for foster children, young people and their carers. These national initiatives are important in achieving a cohesive and comprehensive approach to child and family welfare.

CAFWAA is seeking to further the national focus in this area through a proposal to establish a national quality strategy for out of home care. A detailed proposal has been submitted to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to undertake work on this quality strategy, aimed at lifting the standards in the provision of out of home care services Australia wide.

I hope by the time of the next CAFNEWS that we can provide a positive update on the progress of this proposal, together with further information on the focus of the CAFWAA Practice Symposium planned for 2005.



**Simon Schrapel**  
Chair  
June 2004

## 2. AROUND THE STATES

### New South Wales

Much of what is happening in NSW relates to the ongoing proclamation of the *Children & Young Persons (Care & Protection Act) 1998* (yes 1998!) and to the roll-out of a \$1b package announced by the Minister in December 2002.

The key Department of Community Services (DoCS) planning groups for out-of-home care and early intervention (Reference Groups) have been subject to recent criticism by community partner representatives. ACWA expressed frustration with the Early Intervention External Stakeholders Reference Group due to decisions by DoCS to unilaterally reshape the policy directions and the recent decision by the Minister to distribute early intervention funds without a transparent process and before the policy and program design has been finalised. The decision to fund new and existing non-government early intervention programs and the appointment of additional DoCS caseworkers mark the beginning of implementation of the funding package.

The work of the Out of Home Care Partners Reference Group (OOHC PRG) has been delayed with meetings cancelled while the Department prepares more draft papers. Reference group members are seeking clarification on earlier work that appears not to have been completed and information about a workplan that will produce the desired improvements in the out-of-home care service system. Outcomes from the expression of interest process for services for high needs young people (advertised in February) are anticipated before the end of the financial year.

The Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) met again to finalise a position on the voluntary care sections of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. The issue of how voluntary care arrangements should be regulated and reviewed has particular relevance for children and young people with disabilities in extended respite or other disability care and children in 'mainstream' voluntary care with agencies, including the significant number of Aboriginal children in voluntary care. The legislation may also have relevance to children (under 16 years) in SAAP services. Other work by the MAC has involved a new revision of s.148 dealing with the release of information about foster placements to birth parents. The revised draft has been prepared following the critical feedback from many foster carers about the draft that was released for consultation earlier in the year.

ACWA received funding from DoCS to employ OOHC Policy Officers to work with non-government agencies and with DoCS on reform of out-of-home care and the development of OOHC service and purchasing frameworks. Two staff have completed the first round of interviews with twenty seven program-funded OOHC agencies. Aboriginal agencies are to be supported and consulted through a separate project managed by the NSW Aboriginal Secretariat. The ACWA team is working with DoCS to undertake mapping of

the OOHC service system to inform service planning and the application of enhancement funds over the next three to five years. A report on the agency consultations highlights the barriers to growth in the non-government program funded out-of-home care sector and considers what systemic changes are required to support growth. ACWA is also pursuing issues raised by agencies in relation to payment of overdue outstanding accounts and problems in data collection.

ACWA met with senior staff at the Department of Aging, Disability and Home Care (DADHC ) following release of the Ombudsman's highly critical report on services for children and young people with a disability. The purpose was to discuss the DADHC Action Plan which, while limited in its scope, provides opportunities for ACWA to work with the Department to progress the plan and to encourage member agencies to be more inclusive of children with disabilities in their mainstream programs and services. The next meeting with DADHC will follow up the development of additional intensive family support and specialist out-of-home care programs for children with disabilities as well as possible joint training initiatives and specialist training for foster carers.

Finally, we are busy planning for the *Knowledge into Action* Conference, 2 – 4 August. All readers should now have received the conference brochure. A separate brochure has also been sent detailing the *Management and Leadership Institute* which occurs concurrently with the three day conference. Early Bird Registration is due to close 30 June – so don't miss out! Registration can be made for the full 3 day conference, 2 days or single day registration. (See item later in CAFNEWS)

*Provided by the Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies*

## **South Australia**

Over the last six months, the work of CAFWA(SA) has continued to focus on the provision of Alternative Care services in South Australia. The tendering process has been completed, with a number of new service providers commencing from 1 July 2004. All current CAFWA(SA) member organisations were successful in retaining some, or all, of the business which they have provided over the last five years.

In a bid to strengthen the membership of the Association, all organisations which will be delivering Alternative Care services from 1 July, have been invited to join CAFWA(SA). I am confident that the next twelve months will see the Association consolidate its standing as the Peak Body representing the non-government Alternative Care sector in South Australia.

At the same time, members of the Association have been aware that the aims and objectives of CAFWA(SA) give it a broader mandate than just those issues which relate to Alternative Care. In South Australia, the Family Support Association has been operating autonomously for a number of years, addressing issues and training needs of Family Support Workers across the State. However, for the past two years it has struggled to maintain its role

and appears to have lost the support of the Family Support sector. CAFWA(SA) has recognised that it could play a significant role in meeting the training and advocacy needs of Family Support Workers. To this end, we have initiated a meeting between both Associations for the purpose of discussing the benefits of combining under one Association, that being CAFWA(SA).

While the last six months has been difficult for members of CAFWA(SA), with the focus being on both the negative impacts of tendering, plus also the tenuous working relationship between organisations and the funding body, I am nevertheless excited about the future. With increased membership and a shift in focus away from Alternative Care to the broader needs of families, children and those that work with them, I believe that CAFWA(SA) will become more active as an Association to meet its stated objective.

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

## **Victoria**

### **Review Of The Child Protection System And Legislation**

During November 2003, the Victorian Minister of Community Services released the *Protecting Children* report outlining proposed reforms to the child protection system.

Peter Kirby chaired an expert panel to engage in community wide consultation on the *Protecting Children* report, the results of which were released in a report released in late May 2004. The Government is working on the proposals outlined in the Kirby report, including a legislative review of the Children and Young Persons Act and the Community Services Act. The Centre of Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (The Centre - formerly the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria) is actively working with the State Government in this legislative review process. After a further round of consultation during August-October, work on drafting the legislation is likely to commence later this year, with a view to presentation to parliament in 2005.

### **Placement And Support Sector Development Planning Group**

The State Government has established a Placement and Support Sector Development Planning Group under the auspices of the Ministerial Advisory Committee. This plan is specific for placement and support, but the Centre will continue to work with the government on this and seek to extend this to become a full industry development plan.

### **Budget Initiatives**

The Government's budget package of children and family welfare allocated a total of \$13.875 million per annum over the next four year for increased program funding. \$5.175 million per annum over the next four year has been allocated to increased payments to foster carers. The Centre has welcomed this as it almost equates with the Centre's recommended investment. A

further \$4.75 million per annum over the next four year was allocated to extend the roll-out of the Family Support Innovation projects to achieve 50% coverage across the State. These Innovations Projects are emerging as a major strategy for child protection demand management in Victoria and are also establishing critical linkages at the local level across service systems. There were smaller allocations for Aboriginal family group conferencing and adolescent mediation and diversion services for work with children and adolescents exhibiting sexually abusive behaviours.

### **Alfred Felton Chair In Child And Family Welfare**

On 27 May 04 the Alfred Felton Bequest announced funding for the establishment of a Chair in Child and Family Welfare. This is a joint initiative between the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and the University of Melbourne. The Chair will be based at the Melbourne University and will focus on linking practice and research in the child and family welfare sector. The Chair will also assist the child and family welfare sector to develop up its research agenda.

### **Training Initiatives**

There are several exciting initiatives underway within the Centre's training unit. These include Learning Circles on Quality Improvement, Youth Participation, CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) environments, and the LAC (Looking After Children) roll-out. The Centre also recently hosted five Child Wise™ "Choose with Care®" training sessions for our members and other peak body organisations in the community sector. We hope to be able to arrange more "Choose with Care®" training for our members in the future.

*Provided by the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria*

## **Western Australia**

Life in the child welfare arena in the west has been hectic over the last year. The government has introduced new Child Protection legislation to the parliament – not before time given that the current legislation is a 1947 Act. This Bill is a mixture of child protection, child care and community development provisions – mirroring the current legislation. The Bill has had a difficult passage through the lower house with the Liberal Opposition initially supporting it – and then declaring their opposition as it progressed. This is very disappointing as there has been a fair degree of consultation over the contents of the Bill during the last 15 years. CYFAA was prominent in lobbying around the Bill and was successful in prompting several of the clauses to be amended. However, the Bill is going to experience difficulties in the upper house as the government needs to rely on the Greens to pass legislation. CYFAA has been lobbying the Greens to support the Bill, since whilst the Bill continues to have some serious flaws, it is nonetheless better than the current legislative framework. WA goes to a State election by next February and if the Bill has not passed by the end of the year it could be 2 or 3 years before it is re-presented to the parliament.

Similarly to other states child protection issues have started to become highly politicised in WA. The Opposition has recently announced that it will introduce Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse into WA if elected, which is a reversal of their policy when in power. The current government continues to oppose Mandatory reporting and is standing by the Harries Report conducted in 2002 which found little evidence to show that Mandatory Reporting in other jurisdictions has improved outcomes for children.

The Government is currently introducing a limited form of Mandatory Reporting following up on a recommendation of the Gordon Inquiry into abuse in Aboriginal Communities. This is requiring medical staff who become aware of a sexually transmitted disease (STI) in a child under the age of 14 to report this to the police. This is to ensure that the police and child protection authorities investigate the safety of the child. There is now a public debate occurring about whether a full blown Mandatory Reporting structure should be in place. The local daily paper is becoming quite involved in the debate, allocating prominent opinion pieces to the issue.

CYFAA is still negotiating with the Department for Community Development to receive some secretariat support. The department initially offered a secondment from their existing staff but the staff who applied to do the work were unsuitable, and the department did not want to release the staff we suggested. We are now hopeful that the money will be released directly to CYFAA so that we can employ a part-time executive officer.

*Provided by the Children's Youth & Family Agencies of WA*

## **Queensland**

In January 2004 the Crime and Misconduct Commission released its report "Protecting Children – An Inquiry into abuse of Children in Foster Care". This report identifies a broad range of factors that contribute to abuse of children and young people in foster care and makes 110 recommendations designed to protect them.

Shortly after the release of the report and in the lead up to the state election that took place in February 2004 both government and opposition parties committed themselves to fully implementing all Inquiry recommendations. This meant, among other things, that the existing Department of Families would be dismantled and two new departments – the Department of Communities and the Department of Child Safety – would be created to take its place.

While the Department of Communities would assume responsibility for prevention and early intervention, the Department of Child Safety would focus exclusively on core child protection functions and be the lead agency in a whole of government response to child protection matters.

The release of the CMC Inquiry's Report and Gwen Murray's "Final Report on Phase One of the Audit of Foster Carers Subject to Child Protection Notifications" informed the development of a blueprint for implementing the significant number of recommendations contained in both these reports. This

document was released in March 2004. A significant injection of additional new funding was allocated in the 2004/5 state budget that was brought down in June to enable the Beattie government to implement this blueprint for reform.

At this point in time it is anticipated that the new Department of Child Safety will be operational at the end of this year. In the meantime, transitional arrangements are being worked out.

While recommendations from the CMC Inquiry provide a comprehensive, detailed framework for strengthening the Department of Child Safety, there is no concurrent framework in place for the range and mix of services required to prevent the need for a more intensive service response from developing or in relation to the out of home care and related support services system. Simultaneous strengthening in these areas must occur for the Department of Child Safety to maintain the gains it has achieved over time through this process of public Inquiry.

*Provided by PeakCare*

## **Tasmania**

The Tasmanian Ombudsman has been conducting a Review of Claims of Abuse from Adults in State Care as Children. The process carried out by the review team comprises

- retrieval of personal files from the archives and the Department of Health and Human services;
- verification of legal status of the claimant and other information relevant to the claim;
- interview with the claimant to provide the opportunity to tell his/her story, to add other pertinent information and to express his/her expected outcomes from the process; and
- assessment of the claim, including recommendations to DHHS for further action,

So far there have been more than 230 registered claims of abuse ranging over a period from the late 1930's to the early 1990's. The claims cover physical, emotional and sexual abuse during placements in foster care, departmental institutions and approved children's homes.

An Independent Assessor will assess all claims and decide whether *ex gratia* payments should be made to claimants. The Assessor has been given the power to determine payments up to a maximum of \$60,000 per person, or more in exceptional circumstances.

### **Looking after Children in Tasmania.**

Tasmania is the first state to implement LAC as a whole system using LACES (electronic based recording) and the first government body to introduce LAC

across the whole state's out of home care sector using LACES web based version.

**The North and Northwest Tasmanian F2F Committee** recently produced "I'm not a jigsaw puzzle – in care in Tasmania". It contains the stories of eleven young people and their experiences of care in Tasmania. The publication is the result of a two year community development process. The committee comprised three youth representatives, three foster carers, two Government representatives and two non-government representatives.

*Provided by the Child & Family Welfare Association of Tasmania*

## **ACT**

During the past months has been a time of significant change within the ACT. Like many other jurisdictions the ACT has a very high turnover of staff within the Statutory agency. At one point we lost all the Executive Staff from the Agency and the most Senior staff member had been in their position for only a few weeks.

During the latter part of 2003 and early 2004, the non-government out-of-home care agencies, CREATE, Foster Carers Association and the Government statutory authority worked together to develop a 'Framework for future success – Out-of-home care for children and young people in the ACT'. Values and Principles were developed and agreed upon. The guiding principles were: Putting children and young people at the centre; Maintaining family relationships; Valuing and Supporting carers; Responding to children and young people as individuals and Working together in the interests of children and young people. The values that were identified were: Respect, Openness and honesty; Trust; Flexible, creative and strengths-based practice; Innovation and Learning and Collaboration and shared responsibility.

Late in December 2003 the Chief Executive of the Department of Education, Youth and Family Services told the responsible Minister that the Department had failed to comply with s162 (2) of the Children and Young People Act 1999 since the enactment of the legislation in May 2000. This section of the legislation requires that the Department provides the Office of the Community Advocate with information of children and young people who have already been removed from their families for safety reasons but are subject to further child protection reports whilst coming within the parental responsibility of the Chief Executive.

As a result of this a comprehensive investigation was conducted into the Departments failure to fulfil statutory obligations and for a review of the departmental policies and resource allocations. The report on this was released in May 2004 and has made many recommendations as a way forward. The Review commended the Non-government agencies and the Department in the development of the Framework for Future Success. The proposed framework is child focused and aims for collective community

responsibility across the child protection system and puts into action the principles of good governance for care and protection services.

At present the non-government agencies are working with Family Services to progress the recommendations and to work out a way forward that will best meet the needs of the children and young people.

Family Services is now called the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support.

*Provided by Child, Youth & Family Agencies of the ACT*

## **Northern Territory**

The government has provided \$53.8 million over 4 years to assist Family and Children's Services to enhance their role in child protection. At the same time the Community and Welfare Act is under review and FACS is being restructured to assist in the reforms to be made in the area of child protection. It is unclear at this stage how much money may be made available to the sector to assist them in their role in the of providing services to children and families.

*Provided by Save the Children Qld*

## **3. 2004 AGM**

The 2004 CAFWAA Annual General Meeting will be held at 5.30pm on Tuesday August 3 at the ACWA/CAFWAA conference at Darling harbour, Sydney. Formal notice will be provided to all members in July but we urge you to put this in your diary now.

## 4. 2004 ACWA/CAFWAA Conference



### Knowledge into Action!

Effective Practice for Child and Family Services

The program for the ACWA conference: ***Knowledge into action, effective practice for child and family services*** is now available and, all being well, the booklet is included with this newsletter. The program is the result of a collaborative effort between ACWA, Family Services NSW, CAFWAA, Create and the Aboriginal Secretariat.

The conference brings together local and international experts, senior practitioners and researchers from across Australia to present and discuss leading practice in out-of-home care, family support, early intervention and work with Indigenous families and communities. Some of the program highlights include:

- Keynote address, workshops and a master class by eminent UK researcher and policy maker Roger Bullock;
- Major presentations from Dorothy Scott, Judy Cashmore, Muriel Cadd and Graham Vimpani on the key messages from research in relation to conference streams;
- International expert on family preservation services and foster care Professor Marianne Berry on strengthening families and achieving safe restoration;
- A choice of more than 80 papers and workshops from experienced practitioners from around Australia;
- Strong youth participation and commemoration of 10 years of participation since the Bill of Rights for children in care, as well as participation from parents who access family support services;
- Launch of National Aboriginal Children's Day 2004;
- An extended research forum to develop the national child welfare research agenda.

The ***2004 Management and Leadership Institute: leading organisations into the future*** will be held concurrent with the third day of the conference. The Institute is for managers, directors, leaders from non-profit organisations and includes keynote presenters: Gerhardt Pearson, Julian Disney, Dorothy Scott, Tim Costello, Moira Raynor and Mike Traill. Workshops and presentations deal with topics such as mentoring leaders, risk management, innovation, relationships & partnerships, change & growth, values.

Registration can be made using the form in the booklet or on-line at [www.acwa.asn.au/conf2004](http://www.acwa.asn.au/conf2004)

## 5. National Research Audit

Following receipt of a grant from the Ian Potter Foundation grant, work commenced on the **National Audit of Out-Of-Home Care Research**. This is being undertaken for CAFWAA under the auspices of the NSW Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies (ACWA) and an Advisory Group was established, consisting of (in alphabetical order):

- Dr Judy Cashmore, Chair, NSW, Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies (ACWA)
- Margaret Matters, Anglicare VIC, Child and Family Welfare Association (CAFWAA)
- Tony O'Hare, QLD, (CAFWAA)
- Assoc. Prof. Dorothy Scott, University of Melbourne, VIC, National Child and Family Welfare Research Coalition (NCFWRC)
- Nigel Spence, CEO, ACWA, NSW
- Professor Ros Thorpe, James Cook University, QLD, National Child and Family Welfare Research Coalition (NCFWRC)
- Michelle Townsend, CREATE (CAFWAA)
- Sue Tregagle, Barnardos, NSW (CAFWAA)

The data collection phase of this audit was completed on June 1st. A very rough draft report has been circulated to the Advisory Group.

A first report will be presented by the National Child and Family Welfare Research Coalition at the ACWA conference. This will be on Tuesday, August 3rd 11.30 to 1.00 and 2.00 to 3.30. Please enrol now - see p10).

At the morning session Prof. Roger Bullock will present an overview of child welfare research in Britain. This will provide a background against which to view the findings from the Australian audit.

For further information, contact the Consultant Researcher Dr. Frank Ainsworth on 02 8394 9821 or [frankainsworth@hotmail.com](mailto:frankainsworth@hotmail.com)

## 6. AMA Summit

Families Australia launched its campaign for a National Strategy on Child Abuse and Neglect in September 2003. The campaign achieved excellent media coverage at the time and positive responses from most of the States. (If anyone is interested in the campaign pack, it is available from Families Australia on 02 6273 4885).

Families Australia is continuing the campaign through the pre-election period. When the AMA announced their summit on 19 February, Families Australia postponed their planned summit to later in the year.

The AMA Summit was chaired by Dr Michael Rice, who heads the AMA's Child and Youth Health Committee. Approx. 100 people attended, a mixture of doctors, paediatricians, psychiatrists and people directly involved in child abuse and neglect. Sue Tregeagle (representing Barnardos) and I attended.

The speakers were Professor Graham Vimpani (Chair, NIFTEY), Muriel Cadd (SNAICC), Dr Terry Donald (Adelaide Women and Children's Hospital), Dr Louise Newman (NSW Institute of Psychiatry) and Professor Dorothy Scott (Melbourne University). I spoke about the Families Australia campaign on Child Abuse and Neglect.

At the press conference (which was very well attended and shows the "pulling power" of groups like the AMA), Dr Michael Rice spoke about child abuse and neglect as a "pandemic" and one that needs an urgent response. There was also agreement that it is useful to advocate for a "public health approach" to child abuse and neglect and that this gives us an opportunity to promote intervention at a number of levels.

In summary, it was a useful forum and underlined the benefits of strategic partnerships.

For more information, contact Coralie Mathews, AMA Child and Health Advocate on 02 6270 5447.

Sandie de Wolf, CAFWAA Board Member, Victoria