



CAFNEWS

4th Edition – November 2003

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1. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Since the last *CAFNews* there have been Board meetings in person at the Symposium and by telephone in October. We have also had the AGM and I am pleased to welcome new members to the Board (see page 4)

It has been a busy time with CAFWAA especially with the Symposium (see report on page 10) participation in the Families Australia campaign, feedback on the draft National Plan for Foster Children and Carers, a response to the Charities Inquiry and work on our relationship with the National Child and Family Welfare Research Coalition (see page 11). There was also a media release on the issues raised by the CREATE Report card on education. Most of this material, along with links to the various partner organisations, is on the CAFWAA website for which we now have our own domain name www.cafwaa.org.au

In this edition you will find some information on Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN). CAFWAA is supportive of the issues being addressed by the work of CLAN and is planning to have them present at a board meeting in 2004.

Simon Schrapel

November 2003

2. AGM REPORT

The Hon. Larry Anthony MP, Minister for Children and Youth was the guest speaker at the meeting which took place at the Symposium in Canberra on 17 October.

As a result of elections and the nominations for positions the 2003 - 2004 CAFWAA board is as appears overleaf:

The Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia Inc. (CAFWAA)	
OFFICE BEARER POSITIONS	
Position	Name
Chairperson	Simon Schrapel – CAFWA(SA) (SA)
Vice- Chairpersons	Marion Rainsford – CAFWAT (TAS) Graham Jackson – Marist Youth Care (NSW)
Treasurer	Frances Lynch – CYFAA WA
Secretary	Sandie de Wolf – Berry Street (VIC)
ORDINARY MEMBERS	
Lisa Hillan – Save the Children (QLD)	
Sue Tregeagle – Barnardos (ACT)	
Margaret Matters – Anglicare Victoria (VIC)	
Tony O'Hare – PeakCare (QLD)	
Sue Ash – Wanslea Family Services (WA)	
Michelle Townsend – CREATE Foundation	
Garry Matthews – SNAICC	
STATE PEAK REPRESENTATIVES	
Tony O'Hare – PeakCare	
Simon Schrapel – CAFWA(SA)	
Graham Jackson – ACWA	
Francis Lynch – CYFAA WA	
Marion Rainsford – CAFWAT	
Annette Kelly - Egerton – CYFAACT	
Anne Condon – CWAV	
Vacant - N.T.	
Ex officio members	
Coleen Clare - CWAV	
Nigel Spence - ACWA	
Carole Marsden - PeakCare	

A copy of the 2002 - 2003 CAFWAA Annual Report is enclosed

3. AROUND THE STATES

New South Wales

With the tabling of Annual Reports at this time of year we are able to get a snapshot of some key areas in care and protection in NSW. Recently we have seen Annual Reports from the Ombudsman and the Office of the children's Guardian and a significant report on fatal assault from the Child Death Review team.

The **NSW Ombudsman's Annual Report** was tabled in Parliament on October 29. Some key points are of particular interest.

The Ombudsman held an inquiry into individual funding arrangements for children in out-of-home care with the Ombudsman saying that 'Fee-for-service arrangements for out-of-home care need much greater scrutiny. Our inquiry identified serious issues about the monitoring of fee-for-service arrangements, the long-term nature of some arrangements and the lack of evaluation of the actual quality of services provided.'

The Ombudsman's Annual Report also details a group review of 23 children, under the age of five years, entering the out-of-home care system. The review highlighted "a failure by DoCS to allocate a caseworker to half of the children entering long-term care" and "a significant lack of home visiting by DoCS officers after the children's final care orders".

The NSW Ombudsman's Annual Report and associated media releases are available at www.nswombudsman.nsw.gov.au/news_media/index.html

The **NSW Child Death Review Team** has released a report on the Fatal Assault and Neglect of Children and Young People. It shows that for fatal neglect the inadequate supervision of 1-4 year olds has emerged as a key issue while for fatal assault, it is young children living in families with criminal and domestic violence histories.

In all categories except deaths of teenagers, the fatal assault and fatal neglect of children occurred in the family with parents the main suspects or perpetrators. Of the 40 children who died as a result of assault between July 1999 and June 2002:

- * 20 (50%) died following non-accidental injury,
- * 8 (20%) were teenage killings,
- * 6 (15%) involved parents affected by mental illness, and
- * 5 (12.5%) were killed in the context of family breakdown.

Of the 31 children who died as a result of neglect between July 1999 and June 2002:

- * 26 (83.9%) died as a result of inadequate supervision,
- * 4 (12.9%) died as a result of motor transport incidents, and
- * 1 died following failure by the parents to provide medical care.

Half the children who died as a result of inadequate supervision lived in families that had other difficulties including financial, relationship or drug and alcohol problems.

The full report and summaries are available at www.kids.nsw.gov.au

The Annual Report of the **Children's Guardian** lists all designated agencies providing OOHC in NSW at 30 June 2003. There were 58 agencies providing Substitute Care, 46 Disability organisations and a number that offered both. 75 of the total 95 were non government organisations, four were state or local government and 16 were private organisations (almost double from the previous year).

Other news

The Department of Community Services has produced a **Draft Charter of Rights for** children and young people in out-of-home care in accordance with terms of the 1998 legislation. The Draft Charter includes such things as the right to be informed, to be listened to and to feel safe. It comes in the form of a small fold up card that can easily be carried around and is designed to be accessible and appealing to children and young people. The Charter is being issued as a 'working draft' up until August 2004 and the department is seeking feedback.

Out-of-Home Care service providers who receive program funding are being asked to complete a Service Information Collection Form for DoCS and ACWA is asking members for a duplicate copy of the completed forms to assist in our mapping and understanding of the service system

The OOHC Partners Reference Group is advising on models of specialist foster care for high needs young people as well as assessment models and case management responsibilities. The NGO representatives are pressing for more work on what the OOHC service system currently is like and what it should be like, with a focus on strategic planning rather than detailed operational issues.

Another Partnership Reference Group continues to meet monthly to advise DoCS in relation to **early intervention** and prevention initiatives. The Vulnerable Families Project will develop services for young 'first time' parents where other vulnerabilities are present such as mental illness. It is expected that these services will be delivered by non-government agencies or possibly Health Department. Another project is intended to have new DoCS caseworkers dedicated to working with families where a non-urgent child at risk report has been received. Both projects will be trailed in the four areas of the state.

Occupational Health and Safety continues to be a major agenda item for the DoCS Dialogue Group. Feedback from the sector indicates that, since the

commencement of new legislation on 1 September, workplace assessors have been taking a reasonable advice and assistance approach. NCOSS is funded for an OHS project officer who is expected to start early next year. The Health and Community Services Industry Reference Group (IRG) continues to meet and will shortly establish a working group on issues relating to working with clients with aggressive behaviours. The IRG is also looking into concern at the recent development where workers compensation premiums are now based on gross salaries, not net.

There is frustration was at the slow resolution of proposed changes to the **Children's Services Regulations** including staff – child ratios. Advice to Government on this is expected to be made by DoCS before the end of the year.

The **2004 ACWA Conference**, held in conjunction with CAFWAA, will be at Sydney Convention Centre Darling Harbour from 2 – 4 August 2004 with the theme *Knowledge into Action: effective practice in child and family services*. See www.acwa.asn.au/conf2004/

Provided by the Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies

South Australia

As predicted, the focus of CAFWA(SA) in the last six months has been on the tendering of Alternative Care Services in South Australia. After announcing in February 2003 that the services would go out to tender, the Request for Tender was finally released in July 2003. A significant addition to the list of organisations potentially tendering to deliver the programme, was Family & Youth Services, a branch of the Department of Human Services. Probity issues were going to be high on the agenda, given the potential for conflict of interest between the funder and provider.

On studying the Request for Tender it was apparent that there were some significant shortcomings in the document, especially in relation to both the inadequate funding of Metropolitan Family Based Care, and also potential difficulties in implementing the proposed service model. Individual members of CAFWA(SA) began lobbying to influence changes to the tender specifications. As an Association CAFWA(SA) was unable to arrive at a consensus view, in relation to the tender document. For a time there was the possibility that the spirit of co-operation, trust and partnership enjoyed amongst CAFWA(SA) members, would be broken down by the competitive nature of tendering, and the priorities of individual organisations.

Facilitated by SACOSS, organisations across the State joined together and voiced their concerns to the Minister in relation to the integrity and viability of the Alternative Care Service Model, as specified in the tender call. The outcome of this lobbying was the appointment by the Minister of an independent consultant, whose task was to examine the RFT and provide advice on the service model and financial viability of that model. At the time of writing this report we await the outcome of that review.

While at times it might not appear to be the case, CAFWA(SA) has also involved itself in issues other than the Alternative Care Tender. These include:

- Providing feedback on Child Protection Review “Our best investment: A State plan to protect and advance the interests of children” which was released in March 2003.
- Providing feedback to and supporting Families Australia “Suffer the children No More” campaign.
- Responding to media campaigns which were pressing for additional resources to Family and Youth Services, to enable them to better address child protection notifications.
- Facilitating negotiations between Department of Human Services, Australia Services Union and Alternative Care Providers in relation to the possible transmission of employment for current alternative care staff.
- Sponsoring carers to attend the CAFWAA Practice Symposium.

While the next six months no doubt will involve CAFWA(SA) in ongoing issues in relation to the provision of Alternative Care Services, and the possible transition to new providers, there are two other issues which should receive attention. These are:

- With the winding up of SAFECARE as an association which supports foster carers in the state, CAFWA(SA) is extremely keen to assist in ensuring that there continues to be an independent voice/support group for carers in South Australia. While it is too early to tell what this might look like, CAFWA(SA) will work closely with those involved and help provide whatever assistance is required.
- With uncertainty surrounding the future of the Family Support Services Association of S.A., CAFWA(SA) is also keen to work with members of the Family Support Sector to ensure that there continues to be an Association which provides peer support and advocacy and training opportunities for that sector.

The ongoing work of CAFWA(SA) as an advocacy and lobbying group is extremely important. It continues to be a vehicle which provides the opportunity for co-operative linkages between organisations which have the best interests of children and families as a priority. The year 2004 will provide ongoing challenges to the Association, and we are confident that the members will work together in meeting those challenges.

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

Victoria

Productivity Cuts Campaign

Each government department is meant to reduce its expenses by 1% each year whilst maintaining its productivity. Despite having promised to quarantine Community Care, Disability and Housing from what are known as the ‘Productivity Cuts’, the Government now requires services to sign Funding

and Service Agreements (FASAs) which include adherence to this blanket policy. The three sectors (Community Care, Disability and Housing) have now held two rallies outside Parliament House to protest.

This issue cannot be left to wither away. The prospect of a further \$32 million in government funding being lost from the community sector over the next three years is unacceptable. In the midst of other, government-imposed cost increases such as the current unfunded 17% increase every year in WorkCover premiums to cover the common law liability, the compounding effect of the productivity cuts threatens service quality and even service viability. We will continue to campaign and gather the evidence that can monitor the impacts of these productivity cuts on the Victorian community.

Launch of the CWAV Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

The Minister for Community Services, Hon. Sherryl Garbutt, launched the CWAV Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare on 22 October 2003, marking a milestone in CWAV's evolution as peak body for Victoria's child and family welfare and support sector. Dr Dorothy Scott has accepted the role of Patron of the Centre which will be linked to establishment of a Chair at one of the universities. CWAV continues to be the legal entity with a membership of 84 community service organisations.

Release of the Report, *Protecting Children: the Child Protection Outcomes Project*

The Allen Consulting Group reported on current theory and practice in child protection systems around the world, outlining potential directions for reform in Victoria, for example, in stability of placements, preventive and diversionary strategies, community partnerships and integrated support services that could reflect a whole-of-government approach. A community consultation process will now take place over the coming three months. The process led by an independent panel chaired by Mr Peter Kirby includes briefing sessions and submissions. The panel will also canvass reforms to the Children and Young Person's Act 1989.

The Youth Summit

Held as the centrepiece of CWAV's contribution to Children's Week 2003, the inaugural Youth Summit involved 22 young people from the child, youth and family welfare and support sector meeting with five facilitators and 22 professional workers in the Council Chambers of Melbourne Town Hall. A report will follow, in which issues affecting young people in care will be listed together with accounts of the solutions that the young people put forward. Some of the issues are: stability and support in out-of-home care; relations between workers, carers and young people; education; support for pregnant teenagers and young mothers; and how Centrelink deals with young people in care. In Children's Week 2004 the next Youth Summit will hear what progress has been made on young people's concerns.

Provided by the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria

Western Australia

Not available at time of printing

Queensland

As is the case in other jurisdictions throughout Australia and overseas, Queensland is currently facing significant challenges in meeting the basic safety and well being needs of all children and young people in care. Reasons for this include:

- chronic under resourcing over time
- increasing demand and complexity of client need
- there are too few services to meet demand
- existing service “types” are outmoded

Despite the introduction of new legislation in 1999/2000 together with additional injections of new monies since that time to support the implementation of legislative and policy requirements, Queensland’s child protection service system has continued to demonstrate significant levels of systemic distress.

Furthermore, public awareness of this distress has been heightened through the activities of various advocacy groups and a sustained media campaign that eventually exposed an horrific case of abuse in foster care.

In response the Crime and Misconduct Commission approved the establishment of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Foster Care in Queensland on 29th July 2003. The terms of reference and other relevant information including written submissions and transcripts of evidence may be obtained from the Commission’s website address www.cmc.qld.gov.au.

PeakCare’s submission to the Inquiry is available from PeakCare’s website www.peakcare.com.au

Although no date has been set, it is anticipated that the Inquiry will deliver its report to State Parliament early in the new year.

While the CMC Inquiry has been broadly welcomed as an opportunity to achieve improved outcomes for children, young people and their families ongoing concern relates to the fact that like the Forde Inquiry that went before, the scope of this Inquiry is confined to a specific out of home care component. From this perspective ensuring the safety and well being of children and young people and the support of their families requires a holistic rather than piecemeal examination of child protection within Queensland.

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 at time of printing

4. Symposium Report

The 2003 CAFWAA Symposium ***When Care is Not Enough*** was held at Rydges Eaglehawk Resort on 17, 18 and 19 September.

Those of you who made it to the symposium will know what a huge success this was. The event attracted 252 participants and some people had to be turned away. The only negative aspect of the whole show was Canberra's cold weather.

The huge response to the symposium appears to reflect the real sense of crisis in out-of-home care services and a desperate search by program managers and direct service practitioners for new models of care and treatment.

In the follow-up evaluations of the conference structure 96.6% of the 91 respondents who completed the evaluation sheets rated it as excellent or very good. The showcase presentations also got high praise with 87.9% of the respondents indicating an excellent or very good rating. Other events got lower but still very good ratings. And very important when asked about how much learning achieved at the symposium 42.9% of the respondent said **more than usual** and 30.1% said **a lot more than usual**. A success by any standard!

I think all of the above indicate that CAFWAA was on the ball both in terms of the timing and theme for this symposium. It is now the second time that

CAFWAA has run a successful symposium of the kind. On each occasion the focus has been on hard to serve children and youth. In fact, it looks like this is a niche market for CAFWAA that it should hold on to with a view to holding a further symposium in 2005 (but not in cold Canberra).

While the issue of low educational achievement of children and youth exiting from care was on the symposium agenda this remains an issue of deep concern and an area that needs urgent and extensive attention. Mental health and drugs use issue were also very much topics of discussion and debate and these may mature into a theme for a 2005 symposium. Noticeably, these factors feature in the recently published Casey Alumni Study 'Assessing the effects of foster care (www.casey.org). In this large scale very well implemented study the variables predicting successful transition from care included:

- less positive parenting from the last foster mother
- completing high school
- having paid employment experience while in care
- requiring less educational tutoring
- requiring less drug/alcohol treatment
- participation in youth recreation/sports clubs
- Life skills/independent living preparation
- Not being homeless within a year of leaving care

This publication coming so soon after the symposium should give everyone cause for thought. It certainly provides CAFWAA with an agenda to pursue with Commonwealth and State governments. Indeed, CAFWAA will need to increasingly be an advocate for children and youth in out-of-home care and their families.

Against that background there was a noticeable absence from the symposium of senior staff from Government departments responsible for out-of-home care services. Given that it is these departments that will shape the future of out-of-home care services this was a worrying absence.

5. Research

Since the last newsletter some notable developments have taken place which auger well for NCFWRC. They are detailed below.

Organisational change

Following consultation with NCFWRC members, Frank Ainsworth and Judy Cashmore met with the Board of CAFWAA in November 2002. At that meeting it was agreed that a working group consisting of Frank and Judy for NCFWRC and Graham Jackson and Michelle Townsend for CAFWAA would prepare a paper for the Board setting out ways in which NCFWRC might establish a formal relationship with CAFWAA.

The CAFWAA Board has now considered this paper and approved the proposal that NCFWRC become a sub committee of CAFWAA. The draft proposal was that:

- NCFWRC becomes the research sub-committee of CAFWAA. This committee would have a specified number of CAFWAA board members as members together with an equal number of NCFWRC members.
- A chairperson of the committee would be nominated by the CAFWAA board.
- The chairperson would provide an annual report of the committee's activities to the CAFWAA board.
- The sub committee would have the power to co-opt non-CAFWAA or NCFWRC members where this seemed advantageous.

The function of the research sub-committee to be as follows:

- To review all NCFWRCC research proposals in the light of CAFWAA policies.
- To endorse (or otherwise) NCFWRC research proposals and recommend that CAFWAA supports grant application to key sources of research funds.
- To facilitate access to research data from the CAFWAA member agencies and the non-government sector in general.
- To promote research and disseminate research findings via the CAFWAA webpage and through CAFWAA publications.
- To seek funds to support service projects which demonstrate how research finding can be incorporated into and enhance practice effectiveness.

Graham Jackson has been nominated by the CAFWAA Board to work with Frank and Judy on the terms of reference for the sub-committee.

NCFWRC is also seeking to be part of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) bid for an Australian Research Council (ARC) supported electronic network of researcher in the area of child and family issues. This will be a multi- disciplinary network numbering over 100 researchers.

Special edition

Judy and Frank also co-edited a special 2003 edition of '*Children Australia*' on 'A National Research Agenda for Out-Of-Home Care'. The first article in the special edition reflects the work undertaken at the NCFWRC Research Day at the Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies (ACWA) conference in 2002.

National research audit

ACWA in conjunction with CAFWAA is currently seeking a grant from a philanthropic foundation to support a national research audit. If the funding application is successful, the audit will be conducted by NCFWRC. It will be the first benefit to come out of the CAFWAA/NCFWRC alliance.

At present there is no national register of out-of-home care research activities. This audit is the essential next step in the ACWA /CAFWAA /NCFWRC bid to harness key university and other research efforts in the drive to build a research agenda that supports evidence based models of practice in out-of-home care and more generally in child and family services.

The audit will help to progress the national research agenda in relation to out-of-home care. The project will involve:

- undertaking consultations with all State members of CAFWAA and their networks on their research priorities and research capacity
- conducting an audit of existing/recent research in out-of-home care in Australia
- linking the Australian research to the international research and analyze for comparable/different findings, transferability of findings across systems etc
- identifying gaps and developing priorities
- exploring ways of coordinating our research and grant-seeking efforts across Australia
- exploring models (e.g. UK Research in Practice) for dissemination / implementation of findings

Research day

At the next ACWA conference to be held Sydney in July 2004, the NCFWRC will again be holding a Research Day. On this occasion the day will be titled 'The National Research Agenda: Keeping the Ball Rolling. The plan is to do more work on refining and prioritising the agenda.

The results from the National Audit will be presented at this day and will be subject to review by participants. We also hope to be able to use Professor Roger Bullock's experience as a notable British researcher throughout this process.

Provided by Frank Ainsworth and Judy Cashmore Co-Convenors of NCFWRC.

6. CLAN

CLAN - Care Leavers Australia Network - is a national self-help support group for older people who grew up or spent time during their childhood in "care" away from their families of origin, whether as state wards, Home children or as foster children.

CLAN was founded in July 2000 by Leonie Sheedy and Joanna Penglase. Leonie was a state ward in Victoria, who grew up in a Catholic Home. Joanna grew up in NSW, in a non-government residential Home which was run under licence from the Child Welfare Department (now DOCS). Their childhoods covered the immediate postwar decades, the 1940s, 50s and 60s.

Leonie is currently a child-care worker with three children of her own. Joanna has one daughter and recently completed a PhD based on her own Home experience and that of 90 interviewees who grew up in care in NSW.

The first public meeting of CLAN was held on 21 October 2000 at the premises of the Exodus Foundation in Ashfield, Sydney. Several hundred people attended that meeting, and there are now almost 300 members, in all states of Australia. CLAN is an incorporated organisation, but is funded entirely by membership fees and donations, and staffed by volunteers. CLAN now has rented premises in Sydney with financial support from current and former care providers.

In most states of Australia there are now limited Aftercare services for Care Leavers under 25. CLAN is concerned is the thousands of considerably older Care Leavers across Australia who were subject to a child welfare system (whether state or non-state) which, unlike today, made little or no attempt to take account of children's feelings, needs, or family ties. Many state wards were fostered, often to grossly unsuitable carers, their natural parents then discouraged from contact. Church or charitable Homes and institutions, however, in this era were the most common form of out-of-home care for children without viable family. Public inquiries such as the one which resulted in Queensland's 1999 Forde Report have shown that residential care all too often involved high levels of sexual, physical and emotional abuse. What is less well known is that the policies and practices that were characteristic of the management of residential Homes in this earlier time resulted in children feeling completely abandoned and emotionally neglected, cut off from both family and community ties and stigmatised as "rejects of society".

Research into the outcomes of growing up in this sort of "care" is minimal. However what little there is, along with anecdotal evidence (of which there is now a great deal) indicates a disproportionate representation by Care Leavers in the national statistics for relationship breakdown, drug and alcohol

addiction, mental and emotional problems, incarceration, and suicide. Care Leavers from this earlier system continue to suffer both from their experiences in “care” and from the ongoing consequences in their present lives of the policies applied to them in the past. The majority have grown up with profound feelings of worthlessness and insecurity; many have lived all their lives with one or more of the symptoms of what is now called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

What are CLAN’s objectives?

- to provide a network through which people from this background throughout Australia can communicate with each other and share their experiences. We know that many people who grew up in 'care' feel isolated and alone, believing the traumas of their childhood years were somehow their own fault.
- to raise public consciousness of our past situation and its effects, so that what happened to us as state wards and Home children becomes as well-known as the experiences of the ‘stolen generations’, child migrants and adoptees.
- to lobby governments in every state to provide acknowledgment and support for former state wards and Home children, for example through the appointment, in the Departments currently concerned with children of personnel who have the sole responsibility of looking after the needs of this older group of Care Leavers.
- to have support services set up which include:
 - mediation services to help people locate lost family members and make contact with them;
 - search services in all states specifically targeted to former state wards and Home children to help locate family members. Existing services are inadequate and do not acknowledge the needs of this group of people;
 - access to education and training for Care Leavers who were prevented by their background from reaching their potential (some Care Leavers from this earlier period left “care” unable even to read and write);
 - access to other life skills courses - such as parenting courses. Many of us grew up with no role models and as "parentless people" we have had little idea how to be parents ourselves. Also, as we know from our own experience, having children often raises painful unresolved issues from childhood, particularly around abandonment and neglect;
 - specialist counselling services to help Care Leavers deal with these past issues.

CLAN is keen to hear from organisations that provided care and are interested in supporting the services that CLAN seeks to provide.

See www.clan.org.au

or contact

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email: careleavers@hotmail.com