



CAFWAA Email News March 2008

Welcome to the first CAFWAA email news for 2008

The Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia (CAFWAA) is the national peak body representing community service organisations working with vulnerable children, young people and families, including those experiencing neglect and abuse and those living in an out-of-home care environment.

Since incorporation in 1995, CAFWAA has taken a leadership role in advocating for improved public policy at a national level. In particular, CAFWAA has sought policy responses that strengthen the capacity of families and communities to care, nurture and protect children and young people and to ensure assistance is afforded to children and young people when adequate care is not provided.

CAFWAA's new Board for 2008 met for the first time in February this year to formulate our strategic direction for coming year and consolidate a lot of work that CAFWAA has been actively engaged in. I am pleased to be the new chair for 2008 and take this opportunity to thank Simon Schrapel from SA for his 5 years of undertaking the chair of CAFWAA and the leadership that he provided to the association in this time. 2008 promises to be another busy year in the area of child protection, with a new government in the Federal arena comes new possibilities. In 2007 CAFWAA released the "A Call to Action for Australia's Children" our policy position paper (available on our website).

In short the Association has been very concerned about the 35% increase across our nation of children and young people coming into care and the 38% increase in substantiated child abuse cases accordingly. The available evidence suggests deterioration in the wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people across Australia. We have been lobbying the federal and state governments for urgent action to redress this imbalance. No more so is this imbalance felt than in the Indigenous Community where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children are still 5-7 times more likely to be in the child protection system. This continues to be a national disgrace and as a nation we must act decisively to address these issues.

The CAFWAA Board will continue to lobby and act to ensure change in this area for 2008 and work to ensure an adequate system for children, young people and their families that provides a better starting point for our most vulnerable citizens. Following is an update on how CAFWAA will be intending to do this, we welcome your feedback at all times and I thank the hard working CAFWAA executive and board members who make all of this work a reality.

Lisa Hillan
Chair

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- Child & Family Welfare
Association of Tasmania
- Child, Youth &
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- Centre for Excellence
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- Children's Youth &
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NEWS

As part of the direction for 2008 the Board would like to increase its engagement with our members and have given an undertaking to produce email news after each face to face board meeting. As an unfunded peak we rely solely on the diligence of our board members in volunteering their support to advance the objectives of the association. This is supported by the team at the ACWA and I am especially very grateful for their assistance.

1. CAFWAA has been participating in the advancement of a National Strategy for Child Protection that the new Federal government has given a commitment to progress and there was a positive engagement with the Minister Jenny Macklin on this issue. There has been the formation of a National Coalition a national consortium - the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children. The Coalition comprises the great majority of organisations which deliver children's services on the ground across Australia, as well many key researchers in the areas of child protection and children's wellbeing. This coalition has been progressing work on the National Strategy which has been facilitated by Families Australia. CAFWAA Board members believe that there is significant value in the coalition and the sector being united on the development of the National Framework

There are a number of issues of importance to CAFWAA that interface with the National Strategy:

Key issues for the National Strategy:

- Primary Services
- Secondary Services
- Tertiary Services
- Indigenous Issues
- National Standards
- Research, Evaluation, Dissemination and Service Data
- Workforce Development

The CFWAA Board will also be producing a number of short position papers in the following areas:

- o Primary, secondary, tertiary services within an Integrated holistic service approach
- o Indigenous Issues
- o National Standards and Research

These topics will form our key strategic framework for the following 12 months and will be the topics that we wish to advance and promote and place significant energy. These will build on the work contained in a call for Action and provide a platform for our engagement not just with the National strategy development but further lobbying to advance responses to child protection.

A national think tank is also being constructed in relation to homelessness and board members felt it important to contribute to this debate looking at the impact on children and child protection issues also, including young people leaving care.

Members are encouraged to provide feedback in relation to the position papers or other areas that you would wish CAFWAA to engage around. Please provide feedback to your Peak Executive Officer's or any CAFWAA Board member (there is

a list of the CAFWAA Board Members and their contacts contained at the bottom of this email news)

2. CAFWAA has sent letters to the Prime Minister and Minister for Families, Community Services, Housing and Indigenous Affairs encouraging their engagement in relation to child protection issues. We are currently pleased with the ways the federal government have engaged with the National Coalition and will continue to raise issues with the Federal Government as matters arise.
3. CAFWAA was pleased to support the recent apology to the stolen generation and our members participated across the country in this historic event. We issued a media release calling on renewed action to address the appalling child protection statistics within the Indigenous community across Australia to prevent any further apologies to the community in the future. We see as critical better investment in Children's services and family support services for Aboriginal children and families to assist in this regard. (the media release can be found on our website). These issues were picked up by a number of radio stations across Australia with our Chair undertaking a number of radio interviews. Further to this we wrote to the Prime Minister and Minister Macklin congratulating them on taking this long overdue action and joined them in a pledge to continue to work with our members to also address these issues.
4. CAFWAA renewed our commitment to promoting and providing practice development opportunities to the child protection sector and will be in the following months discussing further our commitment in this area for 2009. Our very popular CAFWAA symposiums have been one way of us undertaking this activity and other methods are being investigated by the Board to progress this initiative. The CAFWAA board sees that our professional development activity for practitioners as a significant commitment to assisting support the work done to provide exceptional services to children and young people and we will continue to work to ensure that national opportunities remain
5. The following is an update from around the country of initiatives and issues relating to child protection

QLD:

1. One Chance at Childhood Policy implementation - \$12 million over 4 years to upgrade the assessment and planning for children 0 to 4 years known to the DChS. Actually this is the level of work which should be done by all CSOs for all children in their system but due to their turnover of front line staff they do not have the capacity. The lack of prevention and early intervention services in Qld will impede parents ability to 'get their act together' for the return of their children so we need to push for the services and framework outlined in the CAFWAA paper
2. Training proposal. Due to the DChS churn of front line workers they are having to look at widening their recruitment processes. Attached is a paper I have put together to try to influence DChS requests to the National Training Council. I am comfortable with the integration but have arranged so far to broaden the competencies to include family work etc rather than just the concentration on statutory end. This will allow the NGO sector to use the qualifications.
3. Foster Carers recruitment – this will be launched in May 08 and is the brain child of the Minister for Child Safety- the focus will be on the pull factors of rescuing children who are suffering abuse and neglect
4. Workforce Council is looking at issues of developing the child protection sector and Peakcare is involved in this

WA:

1. There is a working group in WA working to see young people in care who go on to University to be given an exemption from HECS so that young people are enabled to be debt free on leaving higher education
2. Unit costing project being undertaken by the Dept in relation to placement services for within the state – a move from block funding to funding per child being investigated.
3. WA is seeing new out of home care players entering the market including some for profit services from overseas
4. The new Children's Commissioner has been appointed
5. Better Care Better services project looking at joint responses to child protection has begun

NSW:

1. Results of the EOI process for out of home care services have been announced with some old service providers not being successful – this will require some young people to transfer to new service providers. DOCS are still to negotiate costs and funding agreements with successful organisations.
2. Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW is ongoing (Wood Inquiry) – ACWA has done a submission and their submission is available on their website. The inquiry is due to give recommendations by the 30th of June

ACT:

1. There has been significant turnover within the Department's workforce and there is another restructure to cope that has also seen an increase in wages for the Department that is now creating workforce issues in the sector.
2. There are many long term cases that are unallocated as a result
3. Carers training is progressing with Foster Carers being offered a Cert. IV in protective care

NT:

1. The new Children's Commissioner for the NT has been advertised and awaiting appointment
2. FaCS has split its operations with a Reform Director vs Operational Director
3. FaCS is looking to recruit from the UK to fill vacancies
4. Closing the gap strategy is being implemented (health, education, child protection) with visiting child protection teams to remote communities to be implemented

VIC:

1. Roll-out of the new legislation is now 40% complete. On-going work by organizations in relation to stringent compliance regime under the new Legislation.
2. In the new Act support for young people leaving care extended up to 21 years. However resources are yet to roll out.
3. Tenders for Therapeutic Foster Care provision – completed for Round 1, with Round 2 underway; Residential Care - still out to tender.
4. ChildFIRST intake system has been established in 9 catchment areas (Round 1). 7 further catchments are currently setting up under Round 2.
5. Very high level review underway of Out of Home Care models.
6. Considerable activity at many levels within the Department and the sector at large on Community Sector Workforce issues.
7. Currently under consultation:
 - Kinship Care (Green Paper)
 - Care teams (Residential and Foster Care)
 - Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework

- Family Violence/ChildFIRST Partnership Agreement

SA:

1. Non-government contracts are up at the end of this year
2. Individual care packages are expanding due to lack of alternatives
3. The home visiting services run by Dept of Health have been reviewed and have had good results in Indigenous families – have trained Indigenous health workers
4. There is creation of child and family centres linked to schools but Dept of Education running these
5. Foster care payment boost 30%

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