



POLICY PAPER

Workforce Development

July 2010

Child & Family Welfare Association of Australia Inc.

ABN 65 962 251 319

ADMINISTRATION & CORRESPONDENCE TO:
Locked Bag 13
Haymarket
NSW 1240

Ph (02) 9281 8822
Fax (02) 9281 8827
cafwa@acwa.asn.au
www.cafwaa.org.au

STATE MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

- Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies (NSW)
- Child & Family Welfare Association of South Australia
- Child & Family Welfare Association of Tasmania
- Child, Youth & Family Agencies of the ACT
- Centre for Excellence in Children & Family Welfare, Victoria
- Children's Youth & Family Agencies Association (WA)
- PeakCare (Qld)

Incorporated in Victoria
No A0032610M
Registered office
Level 5,50 Market Street
Melbourne
VIC 3000

Foreword

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.

On the 30th of April 2009 The Council of Australian Governments endorsed the Governments "Protecting Children is Everyone's Business" A National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020.

This was a historic occasion for Australia. The first time that a National Framework for Child Protection has existed and been developed in a tri-partisan manner. The development of the Framework not only included the State and Territory Governments but for the first time the Non-Government Sector had a key role in the development of the Framework.

CAFWAA has continued to play a central role in the development of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's children with representation on the National Implementation Working Group. Many gains have been made in our nation working together, state, commonwealth and the non-government sector combining our efforts to design and develop more effective strategies to improve outcomes for children and young people.

However still is much to be achieved. In 2005, 23,695 children and young people were in out of home care in 2010 this figure has grown to 34,069. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children the rate of substantiation of abuse more than doubled over this period. Indigenous children are more than seven times as likely as non-Indigenous children to be the subject of a substantiation or abuse in 2010.

CAFWAA is committed to continuing to ensure that we lobby for the change that is needed to ensure that our children and families are afforded the best possible future.

We must remain committed to strengthening families and ensuring that children and young people's optimal well being continues to be central to our communities and our nations greatest achievement.

These 3 policy papers, Closing the Gap, Workforce Development – addressing crisis in the family support and child welfare sector and A National Family Support System provide evidence based recommendations for the next phases of meeting this goal.

Lisa Hillan
Chair

Australia, like the rest of the developed world, is facing a crisis in workforce provision flowing from both a declining birth rate and an aging population. Achieving full engagement in the workforce would substantially address the labour shortage issues whilst enhancing outcomes for those people not currently employed. In order to enable all Australians to be able to engage in the workforce they require not only access to work but also a fully staffed, resourced and accessible social and health services to support them to maintain a work life.

WHAT DOES THE NOT FOR PROFIT SECTOR CONTRIBUTE TO AUSTRALIA?

- In 2007 there were 600,000 not for profit organisations - *up from 520,000 in 1996.*
- Not-for profit organisations contributed \$43 billion to GDP, 4.1% of GDP (not including volunteers) up from \$21 billion in 2000 - *grown in real terms by 7.7% per year from 2000 to 2007. 15 per cent was growth in social services.*
- Not for profit organisations employed close to 890,000 people and utilised the services of some 4.6 million volunteers. Three-quarters of volunteers across all not for profit organisations contribute to culture and recreation activities or to social services.
- Around half of the sector's income is self-generated (including fees for goods and services). A third is received from government (including contracted government services) and around 10 per cent from philanthropic sources. *Productivity Commission, 2010*

WORKFORCE CRISIS

- There is currently an insufficient workforce and a growing inability to fully staff community service organisations – this is particularly crucial with the drop off in carers and volunteers but increasingly evident in many skilled staff vacancies.
- There is no comprehensive national and state and territory workforce development strategy to address these crucial problems now and into the future – five years, or – on to 2045.
- The future demand for child, youth and family services is growing rapidly and requires a consistent entry of new recruits and a cessation of the drift of current employees to government and other professions. There is an increasing need for skilled, specialised staff.
- To deliver positive outcomes for clients is very challenging due to an increasing complexity in the nature of the work and a steady increase in child protection notifications persists.
- Information from submissions to the recent Productivity Commission on the contribution of not for profit sector, 2010 informs us that in 2008, 64 per cent of community service organisations reported difficulty in attracting appropriately qualified staff. *ACOSS, 2009.*

- The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) confirmed these findings, reporting skills shortages in all states and territories for social workers in 2008 and skills shortages for welfare workers in New South Wales and Queensland and recruitment difficulties in other states.

Future demand scenario modelling demonstrates starkly that both government and community service organisations will not be able to staff family support and child welfare services with workers. This problem is exacerbated by workforce shortages in health, education and related specialist services. The workforce crisis is acute in Indigenous services, in regional and remote locations and in specialist areas of work. Organisations are also unable to attract sufficient carers and volunteers despite ongoing promotion campaigns and innovative strategies for recruitment and retention. There are systemic barriers to the retention of workers, carers and volunteers that must be addressed with appropriate changes in government policies and programs, increased investment and continued incentives for workers.

SYSTEMS AND ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

Many community based not for profit organisations can only offer Award wages, considerably lower than comparable positions in government and business, although some can offer the advantage of fringe benefits tax (FBT) concessions. Even when FBT exemptions are considered, The Australian Council of Social Services estimated: ... a gap of between 20-30% for similar roles in community as opposed to government sectors. This gap widens to as much as 40-50% for senior policy experts and managers. Low wages contribute to the substantial movement of employees from community based organisations to the public sector.

In order for workforce development in the community sector to be effective there must be honest identification of disincentives that flow from government policy and serious and long term lack of investment and planning such as:

- Poor salaries and conditions.
- Short term funding for jobs and anxiety caused by pilot funding.
- Lack of career paths – horizontal and vertical.
- Casualisation of the workforce.
- Ongoing key vacancies in the workforce.
- Lack of carers and volunteers.
- Low morale when vital support positions are lost through lack of funding.
- Lack of trained applicants for specialist jobs (e.g. quality officers, research and policy officers).

- Positions which lack the time for sufficient face-to-face work with clients.
- High case loads leading to stress and burnout.
- Lack of time, money and personnel for supervision, debriefing and mentoring.
- Inability to access training due to lack of funding, time and workforce vacancies.

The sector has had over a decade of 'working smarter' and 'cutting to the bone' and any more cutting of money from these crucial areas is now a direct cut to services to abused and neglected children. Various reports from Government, from the large consultancy firms such as Allen's (undertaken by state and territory Councils of Social Service) attest to this as well as local research, undertaken over sustained periods of time, with participatory community service organisations such as that undertaken by Dr. Angela Murphy at the University of Ballarat, 2009.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

New entrants, mature entrants, carers and other professionals such as teachers, nurses, child care workers and health administrators can be supported to make career transitions into family support and child welfare work. Flexible course delivery, recognition of prior learning, articulation into and through courses and accelerated pathways to qualifications will enable a more diverse group of people to enter the sector. Workers need encouragement, incentives and equity in resourcing to undertake new training and participation in training will need to be fully supported with generous funded study leave and fully funded participation in certificate and degree courses.

Course content needs to cover child development, transition stages, intensive work with children, teenagers, young people and families and statutory work. Workers need to understand child and family centred practice in a wide range of specialist activities such as housing, income support, employment, health, mental health, addictions, domestic violence and sexual assault and universal services such as maternal and child health and education. Flexible learning, both face to face and on-line, needs to reach the highest standards when workers are contending with remote isolation and work and family balance.

The sector has innovative and flexible training across Australia in Universities, TAFEs, VET and RTOs e.g. certificate and post graduate courses funded by the Department of Human Services, Victoria and delivered by La Trobe University et al; degrees in human services at James Cook University; the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Victoria, Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy; COPMI (Centre for Parents with a Mental Illness), South Australia; Bremer TAFE, Queensland online, integrated courses.

INDIGENOUS WORKFORCE

AIHW figures in Child Protection Australia 2008–09 show the gap is continuing to widen in Indigenous child abuse and neglect and national figures indicate that Indigenous children are now 7 to 8 times more likely to be abused or neglected, up from 6 times in 2007–08. There is an urgent need for workforce development strategies to include a focus on Indigenous workers and for funded, targeted strategies to be put in place.

Australia has exemplars of good workforce strategies e.g. National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction, NCETA at Flinders University related to the development of a National Alcohol and Other Drug Workforce Development Strategy and an Indigenous Services database, wellbeing and other resources; Central Australia programs on literacy; Mt. Theo. AOD Harm Minimisation, Northern Territory; National Centre for Indigenous Excellence, Redfern, Indigenous Consultant Guidelines; TAFE; ATSI, RTO Network, NACCHO, Adelaide, South Australia; VACCHO AEHWS Training, Victoria.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The community service sector works with families, children, teenagers and young people with complex needs and requires a highly skilled workforce, including volunteers and carers. In the course of a lifetime of work engagement workers in the community sector need to be able to progress in their careers, to transition into other areas of the sector and to be able to take a break and re-enter the workforce without incurring penalties. The sector needs to attract youth, carers, volunteers, unemployed workers and a full range of young and mature workers from diverse backgrounds. Any commonwealth, state and territory conditions that discourage participation in the community sector workforce need to be identified and removed.

Recruitment alone is not the answer – inexperienced and poorly trained frontline workers, working in a resource poor environment, are likely to make poor decisions, exacerbate critical decisions and may escalate the involvement of child protection before all other alternatives are fully explored. This fuels chaotic work, stress, and burnout and contributes to many workers leaving the sector. A successful workforce requires a successful organisation to operate in that provides a nurturing environment, supervision and mentoring, shared ethics and values, integrated decision-making, responsible use of resources, performance management and values diversity, safety and wellbeing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Commonwealth Government to develop and fund a comprehensive **National Workforce Development Strategy for the Community Services Sector (Family Support and Child Protection)** that is well funded and accountable to COAG, through the tri-lateral reporting arrangements for the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, 2010-2020.
- Commonwealth Government to engage all relevant sector bodies such as the *Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council*, research and teaching institutes and national and state and territory peak bodies in workforce planning for the sector.
- Commonwealth Government to collect data on the existing workforce for the family support and child welfare nationally and at state, territory and local level with specific information sought on the characteristics of the workforce and what the barriers to recruitment and retention are.
- All Commonwealth Government agencies – Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), Australian Federal Police, (AFP) Department Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), Department of Health and Aging (DoHA) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) should be engaged in developing a fully resourced and skilled workforce for both government and the community sector workforce.
- Commonwealth Government must provide leadership in the development of consistent national Awards, legislation and standards that are best practice, including fair and competitive salaries, good conditions and portability of comprehensive entitlements that are comparable across sectors and accompanied by funded dissemination, training and monitoring.
- Commonwealth Government must lead reform of the current engagement and contracting practice and the undue burden of competitive tendering, compliance and regulation measures Imposed on community service organisations.

Indigenous Workforce Development Strategy:

- Commonwealth Government to develop and fund a long term national workforce development strategy for Indigenous workers based on Indigenous participation and self-determination, in consultation with SNAICC.
- Commonwealth Government to fully fund and support Indigenous students and workers who are studying with scholarships and cadetships, including 'away from home' and travel allowances.
- Commonwealth Government to ensure courses are articulated from basic literacy and numeracy level through to certificate and postgraduate qualifications in the community sector.
- Commonwealth Government to fund and encourage partnerships and transfer of services between Indigenous and non-Indigenous services and government.
- Commonwealth Government to fully fund Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations thus enabling them to support students and workers who are undertaking study.

Workforce Development Strategies:

- All governments, in consultation with the community sector, to develop and fully fund innovative, flexible models to recruit and retain a diverse workforce, including aging workers, careers, volunteers and targeted models of staff recruitment and retention for Indigenous people, CALD population, workers from a refugee background and workers with special needs.
- All governments, in consultation with the community sector, to fund strategies to provide a flexible workplace environment to meet the diverse needs of workers for training, caring for children, caring for sick and aging family members and taking a break and re-entering the workforce.
- All governments and community service organisations to provide varied career opportunities to enable transitions to work within a range of community, government and Indigenous services, working as a staff member, specialist, carer and volunteer.
- All governments to fund and provide financial and work place incentives such as study leave, flexible training and on-line access to training to encourage participation in the community sector workforce.
- All governments to fully fund training, supervision, debriefing and mentoring costs for workers, carers volunteers and managers and targeted support for carers and volunteers.
- All governments, in consultation with the community sector, to fund collaboration and partnerships to share effective strategies in human resource management, training and professional development to avoid duplication and costly pilots.
- All governments to fully fund training that is: accredited, child and family centred, focused on cultural competence and includes a focus on adult oriented services and that recognises prior learning, articulation and acceleration into and through courses.
- All governments to provide full legal, financial and personal support in cases of workplace critical incidents or allegations of abuse.
- All governments to provide workplace concessions for volunteers wishing to work in community service organisations.

CONCLUSION

CAFWAA appreciates the competing demands on government for investment in a range of workforce development strategies to meet the nation's economic goals but we argue that a society is only as strong as the citizens within it and that Australia's future as a nation requires the full participation of every child and young person. Families in Australia today are struggling and there is a need for a comprehensive **National Workforce Development Strategy for the Community Services Sector (family support and child welfare)** to ensure that a highly skilled and stable workforce is available to provide a consistent family support and child welfare services.

Government has a responsibility to mobilise political will to invest in the workforce, including the Indigenous workforce, needed to provide services to families as they raise their children. A failure of vision today will result in chaos and crisis in the future with rising numbers of notifications to a child protection system that is already struggling and often failing children.

Without a skilled, stable workforce the goals of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, 2010-2020* will not be met.

REFERENCES

Allen Consulting Group (ACG). Improving Not-For-Profit Law and Regulation: Options Paper, prepared for the Department for Victorian Communities, 2006: Review of Not-For-Profit Regulation, 27 September 2007.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2009F, Labour Force, cat. no. 6202.0, Canberra

Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) 2008a Australian Community Sector Survey 2008.

Bremer Tafe. bremer.tafe.qld.gov.au

Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Victoria, Australia. Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy. www.cwaf.asn.au

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005: Implications for Regional Governance and Service Delivery. Dr Angela Murphy, School of Behavioural and Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Ballarat. (Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare 2009)

COPMI Children of Parents with a Mental Illness. www.copmi.net.au

Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations (DEEWR) www.deewr.org.au/Early Childhood/Policy Agenda/EarlyChildhoodWorkforce/Documents/A%20

Department of Human Services Victoria (DHS) 2002A, Health, Housing and Community Sector 2002, Partnership in Practice, DHS, Melbourne; 2009b, Portable Long Service Leave Scheme for the Community Services Sector-Consultation Discussion paper, www.dhs.vic.gov.au/pdpd/csif/downloads/plsl-discussion-paper-3mar09pdf

FaHCSIA (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs)

- 2009, Community Business Partnership Resources www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/communities/pubs/community/Pages/default.aspx
- 2009a, Background Paper: National Volunteering Strategy, www.socialinclusion.gov.au/LatestNews/Documents/NVSPaper.pdf
- 2009b, Community Business Partnership Resources, www.fahcsia.gov.au/search/Results.aspx?k=community%20business%20partnership&s=All%20Sites

Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020. Retrieved from www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-04-30/docs/child_protection_framework.pdf

Council of Australian Governments (2009). Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. Implementing the first three-year action plan, 2009-2012.

La Trobe University. www.latrobe.edu.au

Lenders, J. (Treasurer, Victoria) Reducing the Regulatory Burden: The Victorian Government's Plan to Reduce Red Tape, 2006-07 Progress Report, September, 2007. http://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/CA25713E0002EF43/WebObj/RRBPprogressReportfor200607/\$File/RRB%20Progress%20Report%20for%20200607.pdf

Lyons, Mark, Third Sector: the contribution of non profit and cooperative enterprises in Australia, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2001

Mt. Theo-Yuendumu/Health Resources. www.Healthinonet.ecu.edu

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. www.NACCHO.org.au

NCVER (National Centre for Vocational Education Research) 2009a, Australia.

NCVER, July. 2009b, Workforce Planning for the Community Services and Health Industry.

NCVER, June. Office of the Third Sector 2009, Compact: Working Together, http://www.thecompact.org.uk.

Productivity Commission Research Report, Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector, Australian Government, Canberra, August, 2010.

The National Research Centre on AOD Workforce Development (NCETA) (2003). Key Workforce Development Issues for the Alcohol and other Drugs Non-Government Sector: A Literature Review Natalia Skinner, Toby Freeman, Jodie Shoobridge, Ann Roche, The National Research Centre on AOD Work force Development. nceta@flinders.edu.au

The National Centre for Indigenous Excellence, Redfern, NSW. www.ncie.org.au

The National Roundtable of Non profit Organisations, 2007, http://nfproundtable.org.au/NFPfactsheet.doc

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. www.VACCHO.org.au.

**Child &
Family Welfare
Association of
Australia Inc.**

Locked Bag 13
Haymarket
NSW 1240

Ph: (02) 9281 8822
Fax: (02) 9281 8827
cafwa@acwa.asn.au
www.cafwa.org.au

