



## ***Introduction***

This Annual Report details the services and activities provided to families and the broader community in the Bega Valley Shire by Far South Coast Family Support Service (FSCFSS) in the period between July 2015 and June 2016. FSCFSS is a community-managed, not for profit organisation that has been operating in the Bega Valley Shire since 1987. FSCFSS provides critical support and early intervention services to families with dependant children throughout the Bega Valley Shire, many of whom are disadvantaged, with the goal of strengthening the skills, capacity, resilience and wellbeing of families and children.

The organisation takes an integrated and collaborative approach to service delivery, in recognition of the fact that effective service provision relies on a diversity of approaches and supports. These include individual and family work, organisational partnerships, group work and community development. Due to the outreach capacity of the organisation, staff are well equipped to offer home visits to families in more distant areas such as Eden and outlying towns.

The organisation adopts a client-centred, strengths-based approach that recognises and values the clients' experiences and expertise. Our services focus on highlighting new options and choices to families to empower them, developing their skills and supporting them to make good decisions for themselves and their children. The multi-skilled staff at FSCFSS collaborate with each other and with other services, to assist families with complex needs, where intensive support or multiple interventions with children, youth and parents are required. Working from a 'whole of family' perspective, staff address diverse child and family issues, including matters relating to parenting, relationships, child wellbeing, safety, drugs and alcohol, domestic violence and children's development. The range of services provided encompasses case work, community education, information, support groups, counselling, advocacy, referrals and brokerage support.

The organisation is part of a network of Family Support Services in NSW and is a member of NSW FamS, the peak body. Services are provided under three FACS funding streams within the Early Intervention and Placement Prevention Program: (1) **Child, Youth and Family Support**, which provides advice, support, casework

and group programs to families with dependant children who are experiencing various forms of difficulties and hardship; and (2) **Intensive Family Preservation** and (3) **Intensive Family Support**, providing intensive case management to families identified by FACS as experiencing multiple barriers to independence and where children are deemed to be at imminent risk of removal into Out of Home Care. These programs are discussed further under 'Service Provision'.

In 2015-16, FSCFSS was a member of FamS, the NSW Local Community Services Association, Association of Children's Welfare Agencies/Centre for Community Welfare Training (ACWA/CCWT), ACT Women's Legal Centre and Jobs Australia. FSCFSS is incorporated as an Association under the NSW *Associations Incorporation Act 1984*. The organisation is a registered Income Tax Exempt Charity (ITEC), has Deductible Gift Recipient Status and is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission.

All staff and management members have current Working with Children Check clearance and all signatories to financial transactions have a National Criminal Record Check

### ***Our Vision***

At our Strategic Planning Day in October 2015, staff and the Board of Management reviewed our service philosophy and organizational identity and agreed that our purpose is : *"Working with families to create a stronger Bega Valley community"*. The organisation seeks to advance this vision by providing a safe, inclusive, responsive and respectful environment in which family members can develop skills and resources to keep children safe and strengthen family relationships.

### ***Our Philosophy***

FSCFSS champions the *Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics*, a national framework that designates methods of sensitive, client-centred and culturally appropriate service provision in the community. The Code of Ethics strongly recognises Aboriginal sovereignty and the critical importance of cultural awareness, consultation and respect during service provision. More generally, the Code of Ethics provides a framework to hold caseworkers and social workers accountable for service provision, and offers guidelines for decision making in ethically complex social work settings. All FSCFSS staff are expected to abide by and uphold the Code of Ethics during their work, and all FSCFSS service planning.

In our work with families, the service -

- Recognises the social, environmental, economic, physical, emotional and cultural factors which influence family wellbeing
- Recognises that families have multiple forms, not necessarily biologically based

- Understands that every family is unique, and believes that social, cultural, racial and linguistic identities should be celebrated
- Believes that all members of a family should be safe from violence and abuse
- Values the knowledge, resilience and skills that exist in every family unit, and the rights of families to make informed decisions about their own parenting
- Helps families take control of factors that will enhance their independence and self-reliance
- Recognises the integral role of families in communities, and the importance of community building in strengthening families and networks
- Aims to be flexible and continually responsive to the changing needs of families and communities

(Source: NSW Family Services Inc.)

### ***Our Community***

Bega Valley Shire Council reports that there were 33,475 residents in the Bega Valley Shire in 2015<sup>1</sup>. As of the 2011 Census, 32.3% of households (n=4343) across the Bega Valley Shire contained children, and 30% of these households were single-parent families (n=1307, 9.7% of total households).

***Cultural background:*** In the 2011 Census<sup>2</sup>, 11.7% of people in the Bega Valley Shire were born overseas. 4.2% of people were from a non-English speaking background, and only 0.2% of the population in the Shire report difficulties with English. The most common countries of birth other than Australia are the United Kingdom (5.3%), New Zealand (1.2%), Germany (0.8%) and the Netherlands (0.7%). Approximately 2.8% of the population (n=905) identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

***Social statistics:*** Bega Valley Shire scores 967.8 on the SEIFA index of relative disadvantage, which is lower than the Australian average (100)<sup>3</sup>. The SEIFA index measures the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage, based on a range of attributes such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment and jobs in relatively unskilled occupations. Eden, at 874 on the SEIFA index, is the most disadvantaged area of the Shire and ranks as the 685<sup>th</sup> most disadvantaged area of Australia out of 8248 regions, which is in the lowest 10<sup>th</sup> percentile of the nation. 5.7% of people in the Bega Valley Shire (n=1816) report having a disability that necessitates assistance with daily activities. 34.8% of adults in the Shire

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<sup>4</sup>Bega Valley Shire Council (2015a). 'Bega Valley Shire Community Profile', ProfileID Community Profile. <http://profile.id.com.au/bega-valley>

<sup>5</sup>ibid

<sup>6</sup>ibid

completed school to Year 12, with the majority of adults exiting school at lower grades.

**Workforce and Income:** 13,404 people living within the Bega Valley Shire are in the labour force (52.6% total participation), with 50.4% of these workers in full time employment, 41.6% in part time employment, and 6% looking for work<sup>4</sup>. The most common bracket for weekly household income ranges from \$400-\$599 per week (14.6% of households). 30% of all households are considered low-income households. 12.9% of people in the Bega Valley Shire (n=3403) identify as being unpaid carers for a person who is aged or has a disability or long term illness. 24.7% (n=6516) of people living within the Bega Valley Shire are unpaid carers of children.

**Community perceptions:** The Bega Valley Shire Council Delivery Plan 2012-17<sup>5</sup> summarised community opinion about significant topics of community concern across each of the four districts of the Shire (Bega, Bermagui, Merimbula and Eden). Youth/child services and facilities were a top 5 area of concern for residents in both Bega and Merimbula districts, while the need for more attention and funding in Eden was a top 5 concern within the Eden district. These service gaps highlight some critical issues affecting families raising dependent children in environments where extended family support may be unavailable, where relative poverty is an ongoing constraint, and where social and/or geographic isolation can impede a family's capacity to either provide or engage with opportunities to enhance the wellbeing and healthy development of family members.

### **Board of Management**

The voluntary Board members bring enthusiasm and diverse skills to their governance role, guiding the manner and functioning of the organisation to enable it to meet its goals. Accountability to both the community, including service users, and the funding body underscores all Board deliberations. Both staff and service users benefit from the collaborative work and wisdom of the Board and their ongoing commitment to and support for the Service is highly valued. The service particularly appreciated Board members giving their time to participating in the Strategic Planning review day in October 2015.

In August 2015 Board members decided to hold management meetings on a bi-monthly basis, with capacity for flexibility around necessary decision-making outside of meetings. A monthly Risk Management Schedule is checked by

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<sup>7</sup>ibid

<sup>5</sup> Bega Valley Shire Council (2014b). Delivery Plan 2012-17 & Operational Plan 2013/14. <http://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/FlipBook/OpPlan2013/index.html> Access date 27 June 2014

Management to ensure compliance with all statutory and non-statutory obligations. The Board of Management meets bi-monthly on the second Tuesday at 12.30 pm. FSCFSS maintains Directors' and Officers' Liability insurance for Board members.

Over the past year the Board comprised:

***Executive***

Chairperson - Joanna Rideaux

Vice Chairperson - Claire Lupton

Secretary and Public Officer - Kylie Dummer

Treasurer - Caroline Long

***Committee Members***

Mary Hourigan

Paul Brunton



***Staff***

In 2015-2016 the Service employed eight permanent part-time staff, one casual Early Childhood Educator (to support Just for Mums Parenting group), an Indigenous Family Support Project worker (fixed term contract until August 2015), and a casual cleaner and relief bookkeeper. All staff (aside from the Office and Service Managers and Cleaner) undertake direct work with families (at people's homes, at the office premises and other locations, such as schools or other services), across all three EIPP programs.

***Child, Youth and Family Workers***

Kellie Bateman

Geoff Bevitt

Valerie Schmid-Oke

Catherine Ubrihien (resigned May 2016)

Julie Nagle (Indigenous Project Worker until August 2015))

Chelsea Yarrie (commenced May 2016)

***Community Educator (Parenting)***

Laura Botto

***Service Manager***

Andrea Powell

***Office Manager***

Pauline Wellington

***Early Childhood Educator (casual)***

Linda Fowler

***Relief Bookkeeper***

Jennifer Willcox

***Cleaner***

Luzminda Pabon (resigned January 2016)

Angelique McKechnie

The staff and Board members reluctantly farewelled Catherine in May when she headed south to Hobart. Catherine was a respected, highly valued team member and is very much missed. Chelsea is an experienced social worker who has worked in youth services, child and family centres and brings many talents and skills to her role and the service is very pleased Chelsea has joined the staff. Geoff is currently on much deserved long service leave. Our long-time cleaner Luz also moved to South Australia and Angelique took on this role.

***Funding***

In 2015 - 2016, FSCFSS received a funding contribution from NSW Department of Family and Community Services through the EIPP funding streams of Child, Youth and Family Support, Intensive Family Support and Intensive Family Preservation. Total funding from this source was \$481,807.93.

In the past year the service applied for several philanthropic grants for discrete projects. Unfortunately we were not successful with these applications.

**The audited Financial Statements for 2015-2016, detailing acquittal of all funding received are attached.**

## ***Environment***

Staff at Family Support strive to offer a comfortable and welcoming space for families coming to the Service. This includes providing a child-friendly and safe environment for children, as well as a non-threatening space for the increasing numbers of men using the service. Comments are frequently made by children and adults about how warm and inviting the premises are, which reinforces the importance placed on this aspect of service delivery. People know they can ‘drop in’ to use the library or speak to a family worker about any issue.

Since October 2005, we have housed the NSW Legal Aid Commission Family Law solicitor, Ms. Kylie Dummer, who works from our premises 1-2 days each fortnight. This arrangement has been mutually beneficial, as many of Kylie’s clients are in need of family support or access to information and resources that we possess, and many of the families who use our services require legal advice and representation.

Geoff Holten, financial counsellor with the Far South Coast Financial Counselling Service continued to work from our premises for consultations with clients of that service, as needed in Bega.



In early 2016 we completed the application to ACON to be recognised as a ‘LGBTI SAFE PLACE’ and received endorsement, so our office now has stickers, signage and the Safe Place charter prominently displayed.

## ***Publicity***

Family Support Service is listed in the local newspapers' 'Making Contact' page with contact numbers, hours of operation and a brief description of services provided. The Service has multiple listings in the Bega Valley Shire Council Community Directory and is registered with Referrallink and HumanServicesNet, components of the Better Service Delivery Program. Regular updates on state and national databases are supplied.

The Service brochure is widely distributed through Maternity services (as part of the "Blue Book" given to parents), medical practices, solicitors, local courts, employment agencies, schools, pre-schools and child care centres, counselling services and a wide range of community organisations. The brochure was re-designed in 2014 to enhance our 'brand' and up-date the information within to make it more appealing, user-friendly and less 'wordy'. The re-designed brochure was produced 'in-house' and is printed on recycled paper. This means less cost for commercial printing and we can print up multiple copies for distribution at community events, such as NAIDOC or White Ribbon Day.

Our business card was re-designed 'in house' and our web address ([www.fscfss.com.au](http://www.fscfss.com.au)) added to it.

School newsletters are used to advertise parenting groups, other events of interest and the services provided more generally, and local newspapers include occasional articles, press releases and photographs about Family Support activities.

In 2015-16 we continued to distribute Indigenous story books for Indigenous families, along with other culturally relevant literature regarding children and parenting, through 'showbags' provided to Katungul's Koori Midwifery Access Program midwives. This is an effective way of introducing the services we provide to Indigenous families. We also made multiple copies of a booklet for children - Australian Indigenous Activity Book for Kids - to give to families.

## ***Training and Professional Development***

FSCFSS recognizes the importance of ongoing professional development and is committed to sustained, quality training for all staff, including (when possible), students and volunteers.

Over the past year the training undertaken by staff has been specialised and diverse, adding greatly to the collective knowledge within the service. The service also subscribes to '*Developing Practice*', the quarterly journal jointly published by the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies and NSW Family Services Inc. for the child, youth and family services sector. This is a highly valued resource which is widely read and well utilised by staff.

In line with FSCFSS's Strategic Plan 2014-2019 (Appendix 2): Strategic Goal 3: A LEARNING ORGANISATION - "*The organisation is responsive, continually evolving and primed for new opportunities*", staff identified four key objectives, two of which relate to professional development:

- "Objective 3: FSCFSS recognises the reciprocal value of students, volunteers and trainees.
- Objective 4: Professional development of workers is encouraged."

In the second half of 2015 Sally-Anne Bertram completed her Diploma of Community Welfare field placement with FSCFSS, and received great support from Kellie, who was her supervisor.

Professional development activities undertaken in the past year are detailed below.

*First Aid Certificate* - Kellie (23/7/2015) and Laura (21/9 -22/9/2015)

*Social Emotional Learning 0-5 years* - Kellie (22/7/2015)

*Writing Winning Funding Proposals* - Andrea, Pauline, Catherine (27/7/2015)

*Domestic Violence Core training (ECAV)* - Valerie and Laura (27-30/10/2015)

*Kids Matter (webinar)* -Geoff (27/10/2015)

*Yarning Strong* - Catherine and Kellie (6/8/2015 and 5/11/2015)

*Bringing Up Great Kids Facilitator training* - Valerie, Catherine, Laura, Kellie and Geoff (Australian Childhood Foundation 12/11/2016)

*Youth Mental Health webinar* - Valerie (4/3/2016)

*Child Protection webinar* - all staff (17/3/2016)

*Love Bites Facilitator training* - Laura 29-30/3/2016)

*Public Innovator's Lab - Harwood Foundation* - Andrea (26-28/4/2016)

*Uncomfortable Conversations* - Valerie and Pauline (27/4/2016)

*Arts Based Practices Workshop* - Valerie, Laura and Chelsea (15/06/2016)

*Trauma Informed Practice with Indigenous Communities* - Chelsea (24/6/2016)

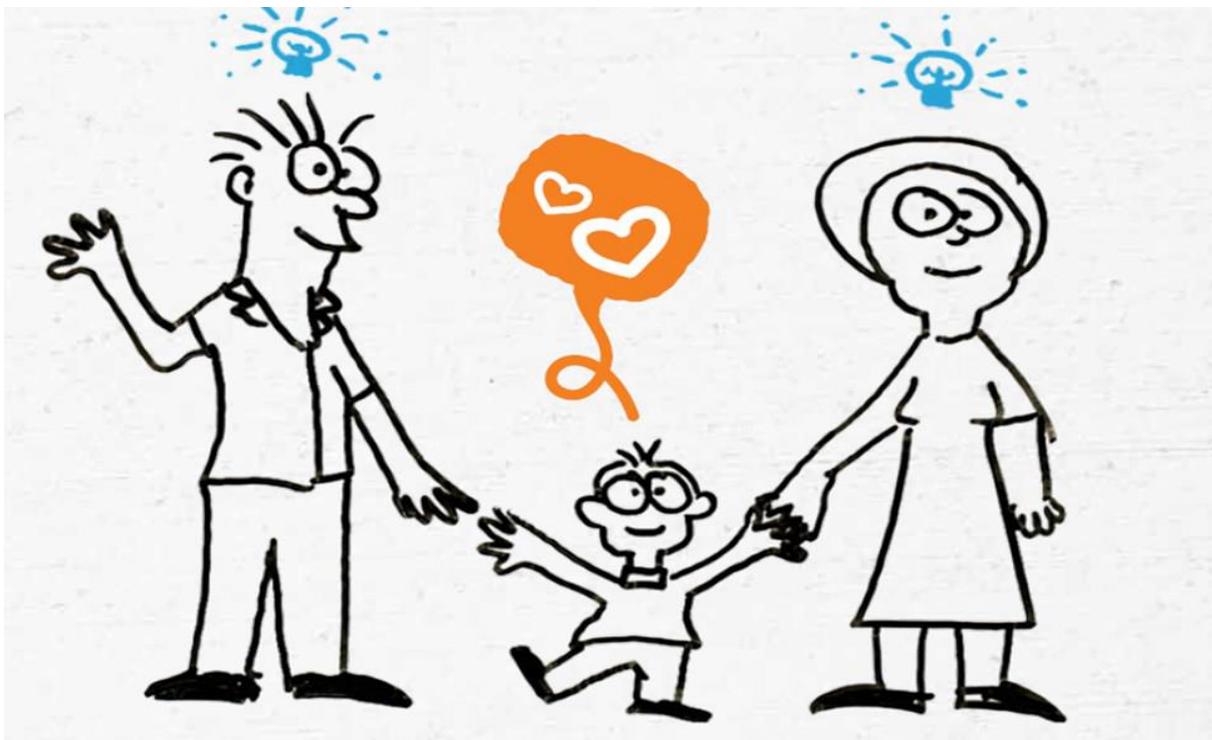
## ***Groups and Community Events***

### ***Bringing Up Great Kids***

In November 2015, Kellie, Valerie, Catherine, Geoff and Laura completed the Bringing Up Great Kids facilitator training with the Australian Childhood Foundation. Being a facilitator of the Bringing Up Great Kids Program means being part of a community of professionals who share an ethos to offer evidence based parenting support for all families.

Laura and Kellie ran this parenting program in Bermagui in October 2015, and Kellie and Valerie offered it in Bega during May 2016. These groups were particularly well received by the participants.

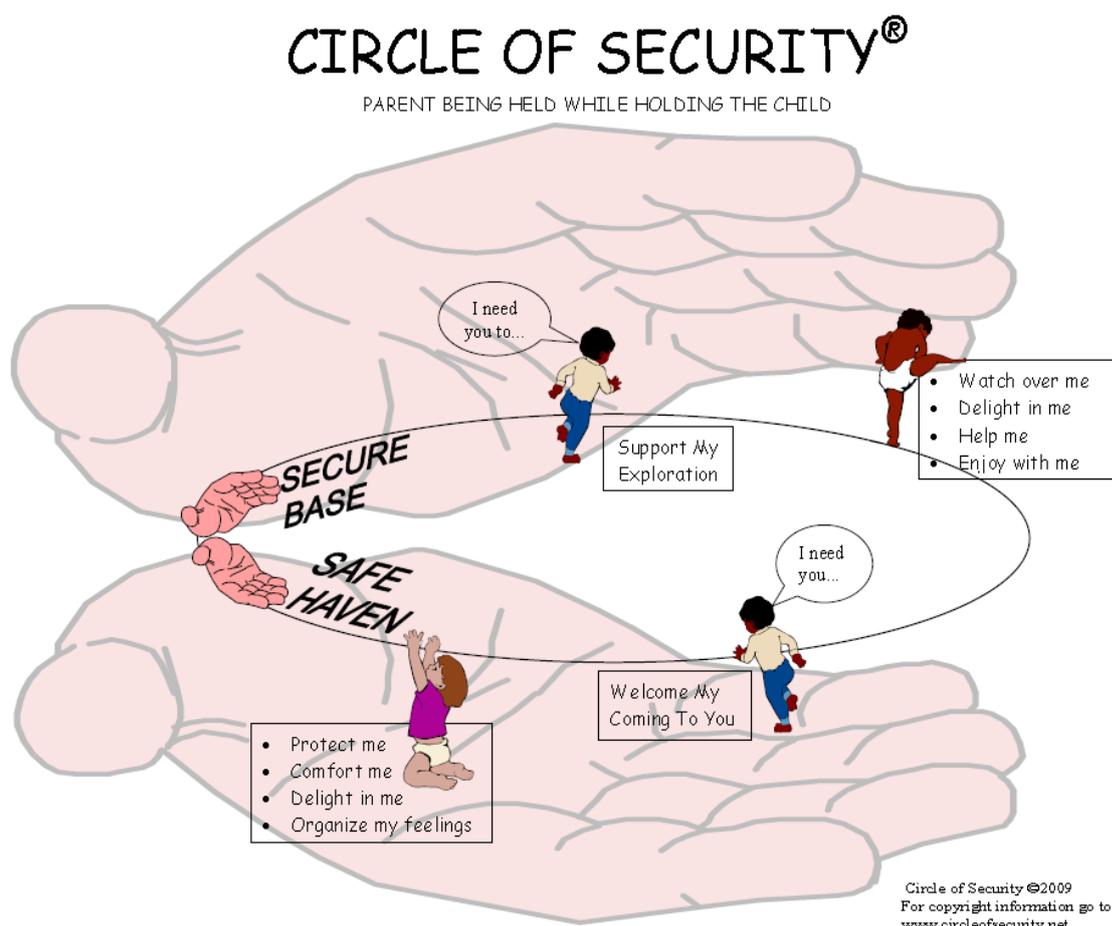
The program, developed by the Australian Childhood Foundation, uses mindfulness and reflection to support parents to review and enhance their patterns of communication with their children, to promote more respectful interactions and encourage the development of children's positive identity. This program offers a unique alternative to other programs offered in Australia. It draws from the evidence base about the importance of attachment narratives (Siegel 2013) and the increasing recognition of the role of mindful practices in positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes.



***Australian Childhood Foundation***

## Circle of Security Parenting Program

Staff also used the Circle of Security program in work with individual families. This program emphasises secure attachment as the foundation for strong bonds between parents and children to nourish their physical, social and emotional development.



## Love Bites Program

Laura was a co-facilitator for the 2016 round of the Love Bites program in Bega Valley schools. This program is run in local secondary schools with Year 10 students and focuses on healthy relationships. Students are encouraged, through art, drama and role plays to think about what constitutes abuse in relationships, and how to support someone living in that situation. Love Bites was conducted at Eden Marine High School, South Coast Anglican College and Bega High School.

## Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention

Family Support staff participated in a range of community development activities and strategies to raise community awareness about domestic and family violence, including 2015 White Ribbon Day with a market stall in Littleton gardens, 16 Days

of Activism to Stop Violence Against Women and promoting the “Bega Valley Says No to Violence” signs around the townships in the Shire. Geoff and Pauline participated in the ‘Walk a Mile in Women’s Shoes’ street march. The service is an active participant on the Bega Valley Domestic and Sexual Violence Committee.

### ***Just for Mums Parenting Support Group***

Just for Mums and Carers is a weekly activity group that meets on Tuesdays for 4 hours over an 8 week period in school terms. The group is facilitated by Valerie, with support from Kellie and early childhood educator Linda Fowler. The program is designed to engage with mothers and carers of young children (under 5 years of age) who are socially isolated, often sole parents and sometimes experiencing economic hardship. The group provides opportunities for participants to develop friendships and support networks, acquire new skills (such as basic sewing or other crafts), learn about children’s developmental stages and share strategies and ideas to help mothers feel more confident in their parenting. The program is planned a term ahead with a strong focus on providing opportunities for isolated mothers and their children to engage in a range of activities designed to foster growth and social inclusion. Just for Mums provides a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere, which is critical to engagement with mothers and carers who are isolated due to low self-esteem or those who come from a non-English speaking cultural background, and extremely important for modelling an atmosphere that promotes positive development experiences for children. We organise speakers on topics requested by families; over the past year these have included the Women’s Health nurse, Early Childhood nurse, Playability and the Toy Library, local naturopaths speaking on common childhood ailments etc.

A separate program of activities is provided for the children attending Just for Mums (many of whom may not have previously been in the care of an adult other than their mother). The children’s program is delivered by a qualified and experienced early childhood educator and the children benefit from the stimulation and socialisation experiences stemming from their interactions with other children and the adult educator, as well as the range of play and learning opportunities. These program activities are consistent with the foundational principles of the Ten Pillars of a Good Childhood (as developed by the Association for Childhood Education International - ACEI) and align with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC). They encourage creative play, sensory play, social relationships, language development, literacy and numeracy skills.

The concurrent programs for mothers and young children is what makes the structure and style of this group distinct from a playgroup and has been a hallmark of the success of this model. Mothers get to spend time in activities with other adults, whilst their children are separately and creatively engaged. Participants

have been referred to the group by early childhood nurses, pre-schools, family day care and local domestic violence services. We have had participants (mothers, carers, grandparents and children aged 0-5 years) from Bega, Pambula, Merimbula, Quaama, Bermagui, Tura Beach, Cobargo, Candelo and Bemboka and the group is open to all.

In an unsolicited letter to our service, one participant wrote: *“I started my journey into parenthood as a single mother and it’s groups like this that make all the difference for not only my daughter, but myself. I have made new friends here and have been able to continue the friendships outside of mum’s group. Being a mother can be isolating but coming here on a Tuesday has really helped. My daughter has thrived!! She is used to other children and it’s helped make her like daycare and fit in well, from her very first day.”*

The service gratefully acknowledges and thanks the Bega Uniting Church for offering use of their hall and kitchen at no cost. Thanks and acknowledgement also to Candelo Bulk Wholefoods Co-op for donating healthy foods for the group and the Bega Valley Child and Family Network and Illawarra Forum for financial contributions to assist with childcare costs.

Mums and children who attended the group were referred by Community Health, Staying Home Leaving Violence Program, Playability, Family and Community Services (FACS), Women’s Resource Centre, Bega Valley Family Day Care, Mackillop Family Referral Service and South East Women’s & Children’s Services.



Just for Mums participants engrossed in activity



Linda and children ready to 'fly' the sail!



Morning tea time with Kellie



Story time and outside play



### ***Mental Health Week - River Walk***

Staff attended the River Walk organised by SPAN- the local Suicide Prevention Action Network - in October 2015, with an information stall and our new pull-up banner. This event attracted more than 100 people and demonstrated that mental health is an important concern for our community. The speakers were described as 'inspirational' and included people directly affected by recent suicides in their families.

### ***International Midwives Day***

Valerie and Andrea attended this event in the forecourt of the new South East Regional Hospital on 5 May 2016. There was a huge turnout of parents with newborns and toddlers and our stall was popular as we had many donated offerings to distribute - hand knitted kids jumpers, new baby clothes, baby beanies and socks etc, as well as information about parenting.

### ***Youth Network***

In February 2016, Bega Valley Shire Council convened a Roundtable on Service Needs of Young People in Bega Valley Shire. The Roundtable followed release of a survey into perceptions of service providers about areas identified as unmet needs for young people, which was conducted by Angelique McKechnie whilst she was undertaking an Internship at the Council. One outcome of this Roundtable was a meeting in March between Liz Scott, Youth Health Outreach worker (Grand Pacific

Health), Andrea Powell (FSCFSS) and Kylie Furnell (SEWACS Youth Accommodation Program) to discuss re-convening a local Youth Services Network. Liz established a Google group, e-mails were widely sent inviting responses/participation and the first meeting, at which draft Terms of Reference were adopted, took place on 6 July 2016. At that initial meeting, which had strong attendance, the group agreed it was important to encourage young people's direct involvement, so 'services' was dropped in favour of Youth Network. The network will meet bi-monthly and at least two meetings will be held in Eden and Bermagui.

### ***Meetings and Networking***

FSCFSS has strong interagency relationships with other organisations providing support to families in the Bega Valley. These relationships enable us to build strong case management approaches to working with families who require a mix of support. Building and maintaining these relationships at the local level is a critical component of the work we do.

Services we regularly collaborate with include a range of mental health care providers, child and family nurses, Anglicare, Staying Home Leaving Violence, SEWACS, FACS Child Protection caseworkers and managers, Housing NSW, police domestic violence liaison officers, Far South Coast Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, Women's Resource Centre, Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Mackillop Family Referral Service.

Family Support staff also participated in:-

- Meetings with FACS Partnerships and Planning staff re: EIPP contracts

- Meetings with FACS Manager - Child Protection

- KIN (Koori Indigenous Network) meetings

- Eden Interagency Services meeting

- Bega Valley Local Domestic and Sexual Violence Committee

- Bega Valley Child and Family Network meeting (bi-monthly)

- Child Protection Interagency Group (CPIG) incorporating the

  - Keep Them Safe Forum

- Family Case Management - Bega Valley LMG and Caseworker meetings

- Regional Homelessness Forum - convened by Housing NSW

- Management Committees of both Southern Women's Group and SEWACS

- Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN)

- Local Court Users forums

## ***Strategic Plan 2014-2019***

The Strategic Plan 2014-2019 with its five strategic goals and accompanying operational strategies can be found at **Appendix 2**.

All services delivered by the organisation are focused at improving wellbeing and conditions for families and children, particularly people experiencing disadvantage. While FSCFSS does not formally target specific population groups within this category, it does attempt to place increased emphasis on supporting:

- Families experiencing financial hardship
- Families who are geographically isolated or lack transport
- Aboriginal families
- Carers including grandparents and foster carers
- Families experiencing multiple complex issues or trauma
- Young parents

The service held a facilitated Strategic Planning Review Day on 22 October 2015, which was attended by all staff and members of the Board. Linda Perrine and Associates facilitated this review which considered the work of the service in the past year and ways to refocus the organisation in response to emerging needs and opportunities to enhance the services that we provide.

## ***Library***

The free-lending library collection continues to be an appreciated resource for families and other service providers. The Service is kept up to date with new releases/titles by the local bookshop and organisations such as The Brainerly. The library comprises non-fiction books, professional journals, CD's, videos and audiotapes covering a range of issues: pregnancy, parenting, child and adolescent development, raising optimistic and resilient children, children with disabilities, communicating with children and young people, women's health, men's health, mental health, depression and anxiety, grief, trauma recovery, post-separation parenting, to mention just some. Books for younger children, teenagers and Indigenous stories not found in local library collections are in great demand.

The library is a very important tool in our work with families and Pauline is to be congratulated for her vigilance and management of this valuable resource.

## ***Service Provision***

In 2015-16, Family Support staff provided individual and family counselling, parenting groups and workshops, advice, advocacy, information and referral, court support, school liaison and participated in many community development and

networking activities. The service also assisted a large number of one-off service users and community members on a 'drop-in' basis. Often these are people referred by other services (such as FACS, Centrelink, Housing and Mission Australia). These occasions of service are documented as 'one-off' assistance to record the family's details and their evaluation of the services provided.

The aggregated CYFS service provision data for 2015-2016 is at **Appendix 1**. This data indicates that our service provided ongoing support and assistance to:-

- 148 families, 121 (82%) of whom remained engaged with the service for the planned duration
- 161 parents/carers and 193 children and young people

Of these families:

- 34 (23% of all service users) identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 22 (15% of all service users) have a parent/carer with a disability
- 13 (9%) have a child with a disability
- 10 (7%) are headed by a parent under 21 years of age.

There were an additional 31 families currently engaged with the service, but not exited and therefore not included in the aggregated data collection.

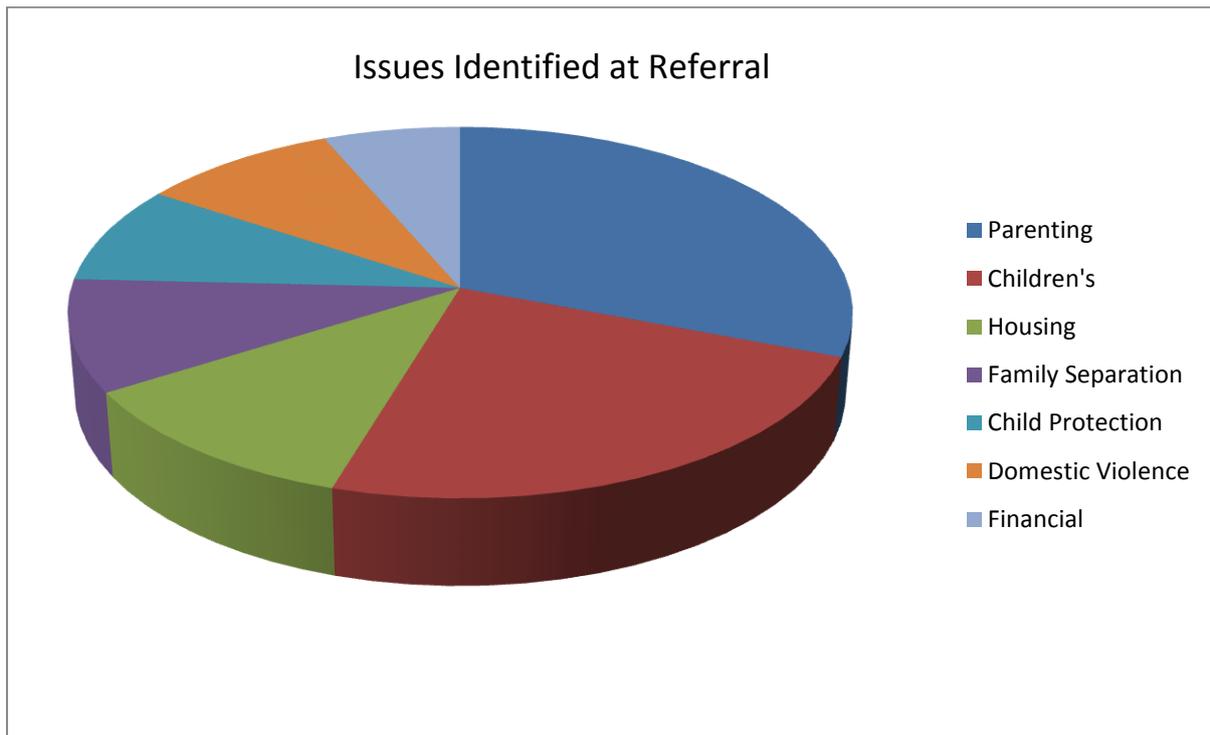
***IFS and IFP programs*** Between July 2015 and January 2016 the service was at capacity in these programs (with 3 families in IFS and 2 Indigenous families in IFP). With some families exiting in early 2016, FACS were advised of vacancies and one new family was referred.

Concerns about parenting and children's wellbeing, including child protection matters, are identified by a majority of service users as the reason for contacting the service. As well as working with parents, over the past 12 months staff have continued to undertake more intensive one-to-one work with children and young people. This work enables staff to draw on a variety of creative tools to actively engage children and young people, including puppets, drawing, therapeutic card games etc. to address children's concerns about, for example bullying, anxiety and dealing with anger.

Many families have conflicted family law matters and related concerns regarding their children. Housing vulnerability and risk of homelessness is a common problem for many families. The severe shortage of rental properties and associated housing affordability remains a critical issue in the Bega Valley, as elsewhere. Staff have assisted many families with obtaining temporary crisis accommodation, supported

tenants appearing at the Residential Tenancy Tribunal and advocated on behalf of homeless families with both public and private rental managers. Women and children who experience domestic violence are often referred from domestic violence specialist services, such as Far South Coast Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, Staying Home Leaving Violence and the police Child Wellbeing Unit for ongoing support.

Figure 1 (below) depicts the issue(s) identified by families on first contact with the service.



### ***Service Outcomes - What Did We Achieve and Did We Make a Difference?***

#### ***For children and young people***

- improved school attendance
- reduced school suspension
- access to medical and dental treatment
- access to mental health counselling
- more secure housing
- participation in school excursions and out-of-school activities
- increased opportunities for recreation and social inclusion
- reduced conflict in the home
- strategies for dealing with bullying

## ***For families***

- reduced conflict between parents and children/young persons
- approximately 90% said they 'learnt new things to assist with parenting' and reported increased confidence in parenting
- more secure housing
- improved physical/material amenity of home life - eg. utilities remain connected, children have food and school clothes, broken white goods replaced or repaired
- increased understanding of and empathy for children's physical and emotional development and needs
- referrals to specialist services to address specific issues -eg. mental health practitioners, domestic violence services, social housing providers

## ***Referral Networks***

Over the past year Family Support Service has maintained two-way referral links with a large number of community agencies, both government and non-government including:-

- Bega CSC (FACS)
- Adult and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Southern NSW Family Referral Service
- Far South Coast Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service
- Women's Resource Centre
- Housing NSW
- School counsellors, Home School Liaison Officers and Aboriginal Liaison staff
- Sapphire Coast Tenancy Scheme
- Staying Home Leaving Violence
- SEWACS and South East Youth Accommodation Service (SEYAS)
- Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice
- Women's Health nurse
- Child and Family nurses
- Bega Maternity
- Katungul Aboriginal Corporation Community and Medical Services
- NSW Legal Aid
- Mission Australia
- Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre
- Catholic Care
- Campbell Page and Reconnect
- Anglicare and NILS (No Interest Loans Scheme)

- Post Separation Co-operative Parenting Program (Anglicare)
- Bega Valley Family Day Care
- Wandarma Drug and Alcohol Service
- Playability
- PRA and Partners in Recovery (Richmond)
- Schizophrenia Fellowship
- Personal Helpers and Mentors Service
- GP's - Mental Health Care Plans
- Centrelink social workers
- NSW Police Child Wellbeing Units
- St Vincent de Paul
- Salvation Army

**Angel Flight** - FSCFSS continued as local referring agents for Angel Flight, a service that links people needing to access medical services in Sydney, ACT or Melbourne with a volunteer pilot and plane to transport them to their destination, where they are collected by an "Earth Angel" who takes them to the medical facility. This is a fantastic service for people in rural areas which is provided free of charge.

**Management Support** - Andrea continued in her role as Chairperson of Southern Women's Group, the organisation which manages the Women's Resource Centre and Far South Coast Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service. Pauline took on the Treasurer's role at South East Women's and Children's Service in March 2012, now known singularly as SEWACS and continues in this capacity. Although demanding extra time and commitments, these roles and the resulting networking opportunities are of mutual benefit to those organisations and Family Support Service. We share many clients yet provide different but complementary services, all of which increases the social capital available for our clients.

### ***Future Goals and Directions***

Throughout 2015-2016 service staff were involved in numerous meetings, consultations and discussion forums in relation to the Targeted Earlier Intervention reforms being undertaken by FACS. The reform will redesign the service system at a district level, with a stronger focus on supporting Aboriginal families, families with children aged 0-3 years and young parents. Our current Program Level Agreement and Funding Deed will cease at 30 June 2017

In May 2016 we successfully recruited Chelsea Yarrie, and in so doing fulfilled a longstanding objective to have a permanent Indigenous Family Worker as part of the team at FSCFSS. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, Chelsea is an

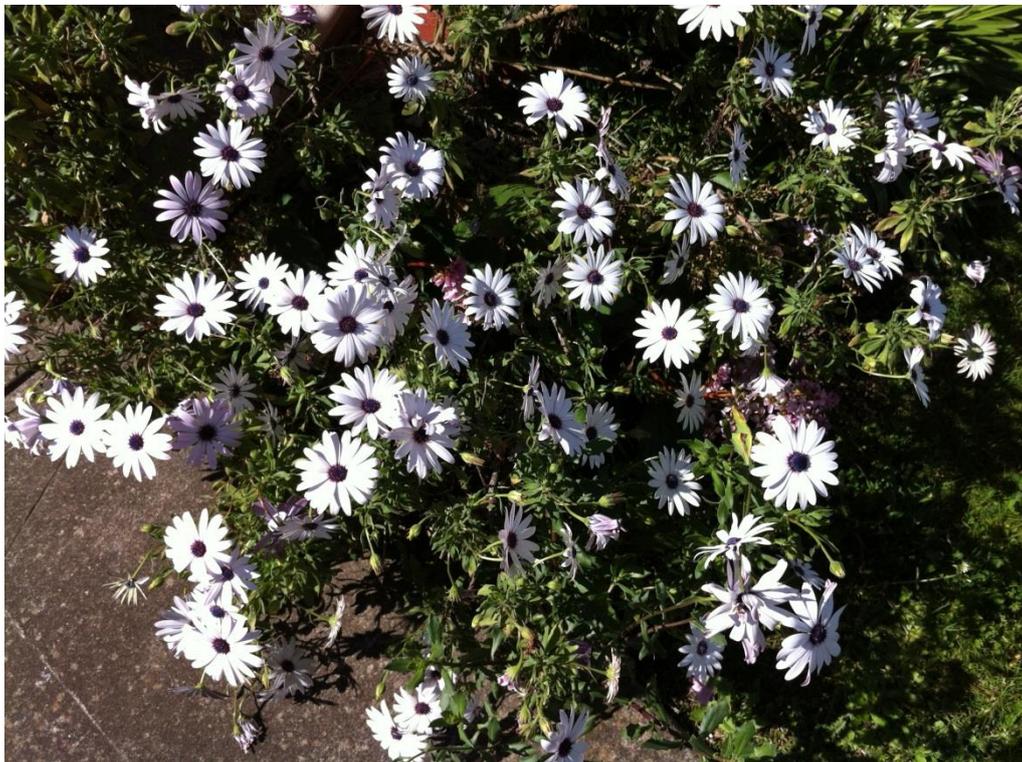
experienced and highly skilled social worker and all the staff can benefit from her practice wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

The organisation's staff and management are in discussion with other like-minded services about more formal collaborative structures to strengthen our position at the forefront of evidence-based, best practice earlier interventions to support the wellbeing of children, young people and their families.

The maintenance of co-operative and collaborative relationships with FACS child protection caseworkers, managers and our Project Officer is an important priority. The same priority applies to the wide range of other services we work with to achieve good, positive outcomes for families and children in the Bega Valley.

FSCFSS is a small organisation, valued for our genuine links to the local community of Bega Valley Shire and our flexibility in responding to the needs of families. Guiding our work into the future is a strong awareness of the need to remain responsive and attuned to emerging community needs and issues affecting families, and the importance of vigorous advocacy on behalf of families, particularly marginalised and disadvantaged families.

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CYFS Aggregated Data						
Financial Year		2015/16				
#	Service Specification Performance Measure	Number	%	FSF Number	Service Model	
1	Number of young people/families that participated in the program	148	N R		CYFS	
2	Number of children and young people who participated in the program	aged 0-5 years	78	N R	19	CFS
		aged 6-11 years	60	N R	19	YFS
		aged 12- 17 years	55	N R	20	YFS
3	Number of parents/carers who participated in the program	161	N R	18	CYFS	
4	Number and percentage of parents/carers who say that through the program they learnt new things	to assist them with parenting	141	88%	27a	CFS
		about services & resources for families in our area	147	91%	27b	CFS
		feel more confident about parenting	145	90%	27c	CYFS
5	Number and percentage of young people/families who stayed in the program for the planned duration	121	82%	23	CYFS	
6	Number and percentage of participating families/young people who:	identify as Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander	34	23%	14	CYFS
		speak a language other than English at home	3	2%	15	CYFS
		have a parent/carer with a disability	22	15%	13	CYFS
		have a child with a disability	13	9%	12	CYFS
		have a parent 21 years or under	10	7%	16	CFS
7	Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 who say that through the program they:	learnt new things	25	45%	28a	YFS

		feel more confident	25	45%	28b	YFS
8	Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 with low attendance at entry who on exit:	attend school regularly	8	20%	22	YFS
		attend vocational training	0	0%	22	YFS
		at least 20 hours p/wk paid employment	0	0%	22	YFS
9	Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 who say the most important goal was fully achieved	24	44%	28c	YFS	

## STRATEGIC GOAL 1: AN EQUITABLE ORGANISATION

*The organisation values fairness and a targeted approach to those most in need*

- Objective 1: Service provision to Indigenous & CALD communities is culturally appropriate
- Objective 2: The organisation regularly conducts outreach to improve client access
- Objective 3: Increased availability of male workers and services for men
- Objective 4: Services are tailored to the needs of different population groups
- Objective 5: All workers are individually valued and developed to their strengths

## STRATEGIC GOAL 2: AN INTEGRATED ORGANISATION

*Partnerships, interconnections and relationships are crucial to achieving results*

- Objective 1: Service provision is holistic to maximise client support and outcomes
- Objective 2: External partnerships and networks are developed strategically
- Objective 3: FSCFSS is well promoted and known within the community
- Objective 4: The FSCFSS team is strong, connected, and works closely together

## STRATEGIC GOAL 3: A LEARNING ORGANISATION

*The organisation is responsive, continually evolving and primed for new opportunities*

- Objective 1: Services are planned and evaluated to maximise relevance and effectiveness
- Objective 2: The organisation actively evolves and innovates
- Objective 3: FSCFSS recognises the reciprocal value of students, volunteers and trainees
- Objective 4: Professional development of workers is encouraged

## STRATEGIC GOAL 4: A QUALITY ORGANISATION

*Governance, systems and processes uphold the highest standards of care*

- Objective 1: The governance body members are role models in leadership and support
- Objective 2: Policies and procedures are communicated, upheld and continually evolving
- Objective 3: The organisation takes a proactive approach to risk management
- Objective 4: The workforce delivers professional services in line with best practice principles
- Objective 5: The organisation is committed to continuous quality improvement

## STRATEGIC GOAL 5: A RESILIENT ORGANISATION

*The organisation exhibits strength and sustainability at all levels*

- Objective 1: Funding sources are diversified
- Objective 2: Challenges are recognised as opportunities
- Objective 3: The organisation fosters resilience by supporting staff and clients