



*Far South Coast  
Family Support  
Service Inc.*

*Annual Report  
2017*

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Despite the uncertainty around funding and government policy that distinguished 2016/17, FSCFSS staff continued to do what they do so well supporting families through any number and variety of difficulties they might be facing.

Our Just for Mums group, now in its 7th year, continues to go from strength to strength encouraging peer support and modelling parenting skills for vulnerable families.

We farewelled staff members Geoff and Laura last year and welcomed our newest addition, Jade, in June. Our staff are an exceptionally flexible, adaptable, knowledgeable and good humoured team and Jade has evidently fitted in seamlessly.

I would like to thank all the staff for their commitment to our clients and making this always a welcoming place where people can come and know they will be heard and not judged.

I thank Andrea for her skilful negotiation of the perennial funding challenges and her advocacy on behalf of the service and, of course, we are all grateful to Pauline for managing our ever more complex finances with such diligence.

We now have assurance around our funding at least for the next three years which has relieved some stress and allows us to focus on our core business of supporting families in the Bega Valley.

Joanna Rideaux

22 September 2017



## ***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 2016 and June 2017. 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 dependent 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 and NSW Local Community Services Association (LCSA), both of whom are community services peak bodies. Services are provided under two FACS funding streams, one of which sits with the Child, Youth and Family Support program. The other program is Intensive Family Preservation which provides 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’.

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*”. This vision was re-affirmed at our annual planning day in June 2017. 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 33,946 residents in the Bega Valley Shire in 2016<sup>1</sup>. As of the 2016 Census, 20% of households across the Bega Valley Shire were couples with children; 11% of these comprised couples with young children (aged under 15 years) and 8.7% of these households were single-parent families (n=1257), 3.5% (n=511) of whom had young children.<sup>2</sup>

Overall, households with children number slightly lower in the Bega Valley Shire than Regional NSW across all age groups: babies and pre-schoolers (0-4 years) are 4.4% compared to 5.8% Regional NSW; primary schoolers (aged 5-11 years) 7.9% compared to 8.9% Regional NSW and secondary schoolers (aged 12-17 years) 7% compared to 7.3% for Regional NSW. Within the Bega Valley Shire, the profile for Indigenous families is slightly different. “Analysis of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander household types in Bega Valley Shire in 2016 compared to the total population. . . shows that there was a higher proportion of couple families with child(ren) as well as a higher proportion of one-parent families. Overall, 29.1% of total families were couples with child(ren) and 33.3% were one-parent families, compared with 24.0% and 10.3% respectively for the total population in Bega Valley Shire.”<sup>3</sup>

***Cultural background:*** In the 2016 Census<sup>4</sup>, 3,864 people resident in the Bega Valley Shire were born overseas and 5% had arrived in Australia within the 5 years prior to 2016. 4% of people were from a non-English speaking background, and only

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<sup>1</sup>Bega Valley Shire Council (2016a). ‘Bega Valley Shire Community Profile’, ProfileID Community Profile. <http://profile.id.com.au/bega-valley>

<sup>2</sup>ibid

<sup>3</sup> Bega Valley Shire 2016 Census results Community Profile .id Consulting Pty.Ltd.

<sup>4</sup>ibid

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 (5.1%), New Zealand (1.1%), Germany (0.4%) and the Netherlands (0.3%). Approximately 2.8% of the population (n=905) identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

**Social statistics:** Bega Valley Shire scores 968.7 on the SEIFA index of relative disadvantage, which is lower than the Australian average (100)<sup>5</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 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>6</sup>. The most common bracket for weekly household income ranges from \$400-\$499 per week (11% of households). 37% of all households are considered low-income households.<sup>7</sup> 10.35% of people in the Bega Valley Shire (n=3516) identify as being unpaid carers for a person who is aged or has a disability or long term illness. 6.4% (n=2187) of people living within the Bega Valley Shire are unpaid carers of children other than their own.<sup>8</sup>

**Community perceptions:** The Bega Valley Shire Council Delivery Plan 2012-17<sup>9</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

<sup>5</sup>ibid

<sup>6</sup>ibid

<sup>7</sup> ibid

<sup>8</sup> ibid

<sup>9</sup> Bega Valley Shire Council (2014b). Delivery Plan 2012-17 & Operational Plan 2013/14.

<http://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/FlipBook/OpPLan2013/index.html>

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. 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 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 2016-2017 the Service employed six permanent part-time staff, one casual Early Childhood Educator (to support Just for Mums Parenting group) 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).

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

Kellie Bateman

Geoff Bevitt (retired in October 2016)

Valerie Schmid-Oke

Chelsea Yarrie

Jade Dryden (commenced June 2017)

### ***Community Educator (Parenting)***

Laura Botto (resigned May 2017)

### ***Service Manager***

Andrea Powell

### ***Office Manager***

Pauline Wellington

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

Linda Fowler

### ***Relief Bookkeeper***

Jennifer Willcox

### ***Cleaner***

Angelique McKechnie

The staff and Board members reluctantly farewelled Geoff in October 2016, following a period of long service leave. Geoff's skills and talents, in particular his easy rapport with children, were a valued service asset. Following Laura's resignation, the service recruited Jade Dryden, an experienced and highly respected community services worker, as a Child, Youth and Family Worker. Laura has accepted a role with NAPCAN as a Love Bites Program Facilitator trainer.

## ***Funding***

In 2016 - 2017, FSCFSS received a funding contribution from NSW Department of Family and Community Services through the Child, Youth and Family Support program of \$245,881.14 and \$250,921.42 for Intensive Family Preservation. The service was successful in obtaining a Clubs grant of \$2,272 to support Just for Mums and an Illawarra Forum grant of \$1,818 to support social housing tenants.

**The audited Financial Statements for 2016-2017, 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 2017 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 2016-17 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 2016 we had Gabe Hutchinson, a Diploma of Community Services student complete his field placement at FSCFSS, before gaining employment in the community sector. In 2017 we have been enjoying the company of Tamie Roscoe and Danielle Smith, both Diploma students studying through OTEN and Bega TAFE respectively. Tamie and Danielle are keen to learn from our staff and grow their experiences and each continue to make a positive contribution to the work and reputation of our service.

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

All staff - attended Targeted Earlier Intervention forums in September 2016 and February and May 2017

All staff attended Legal Aid NSW Webinar - Changes to ADVO legislation (April 2017)

Art Based Practices (July 2016) - Chelsea and Laura

Trauma Informed Practice with Indigenous Communities (July 2016) - Chelsea

Pathways Australia Management Training (October 2016) - Pauline

Australian Childhood Foundation: The Parenting Brain (October 2016) - Laura

Bringing Up Great Kids Facilitator training (October 2016) - Chelsea

Bridges Out Of Poverty (November 2016) Chelsea, Laura, Kellie and Valerie

Youth Mental Health First Aid course (November 2016) - Chelsea

Working Even Better Together in a Change Environment (November 2016) - Andrea

Me and My Kids Facilitator training (December 2016) Valerie

Managing Challenging Behaviours (March 2017) - Chelsea, Kellie and Valerie

Evolve Foundation Aboriginal Cultural Awareness (March 2017) - Andrea

Facilitating Emotionally Charged Groups (May 2017) - Valerie

Legal Essentials -Family Law Pathways Network (CLSD) (June 2017) - Chelsea, Kellie, Tamie and Danielle

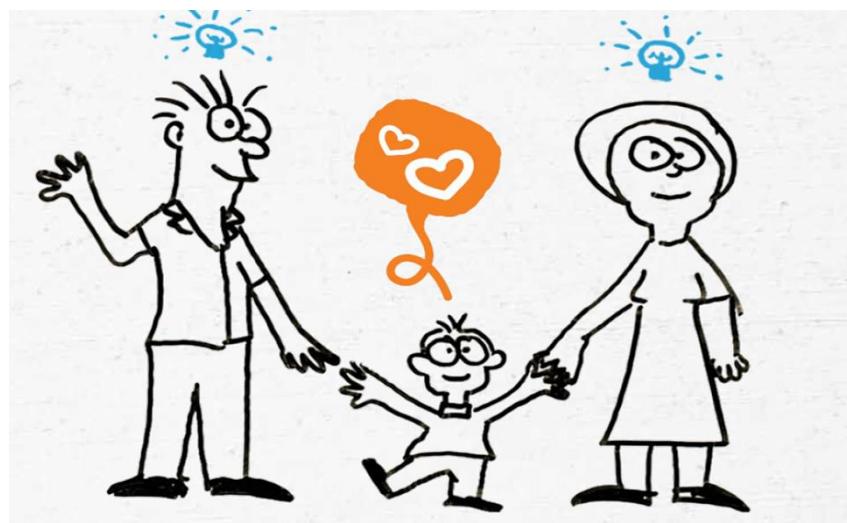
Complex Trauma and Mental Health (July 2017) Valerie, Kellie and Chelsea

Art and Play Therapy with Children (May 2017) - Kellie

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

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

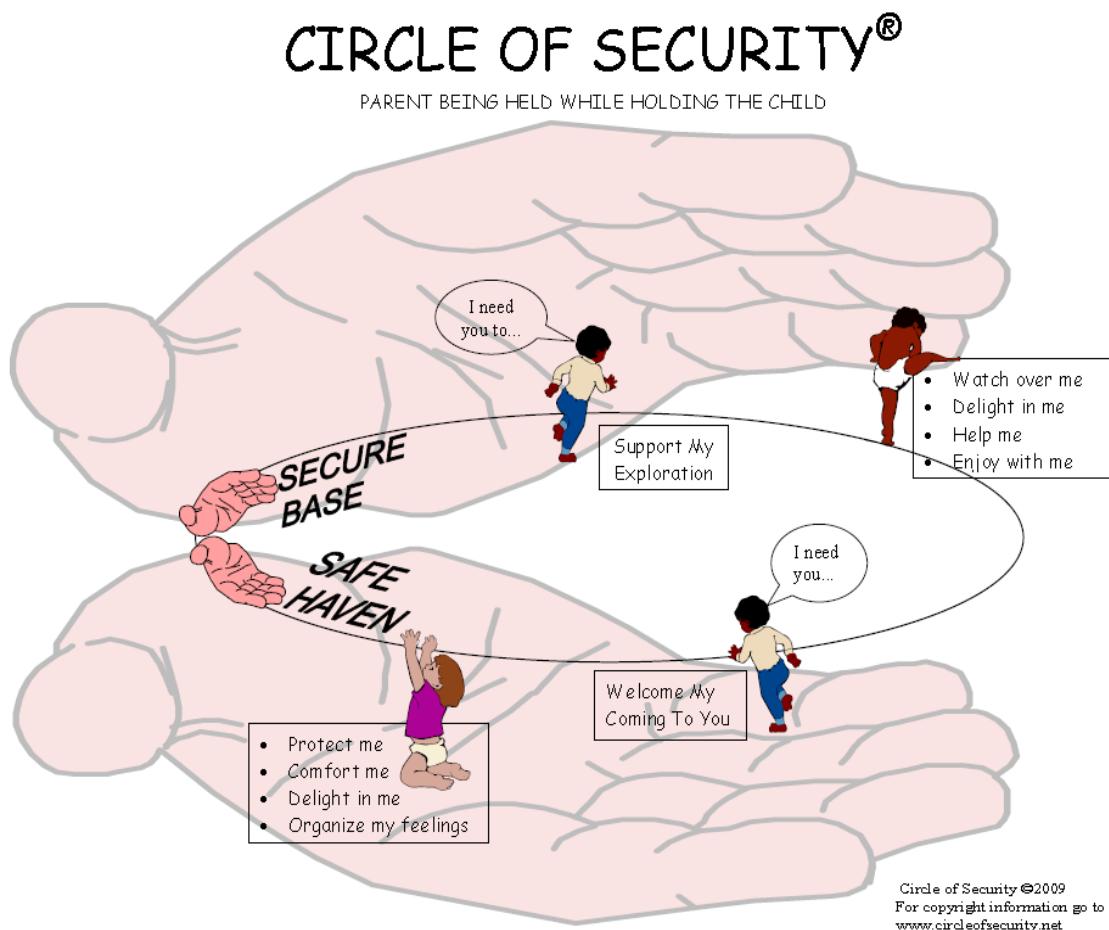
In October/November 2016, Kellie and Valerie delivered Bringing Up Great Kids parenting program at Eden Pre-school, which began with 8 participants, 6 of whom completed the program. The program, developed by the Australian Childhood Foundation, uses mindfulness and reflection to support parents to review 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 one-on-one 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. Far South Coast Family Support Service also provided support for the delivery of Love Bites in March 2017 over a 5 week period.

## ***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 2016 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. Staff participated in the ‘Walk Against Violence’ street march, which culminated in planting crosses in Littleton Gardens, in memory of women who had died as a result of domestic and family violence over the previous 12 months. 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 and carers 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.

Just for Mums has a Facebook page and this has been a very effective way of promoting the group and attracting new participants. Most weeks we had 15 mothers and up to 20 children in attendance. In Term 2 2017, Amanda Casey volunteered to provide an 8 week Introduction to Yoga program for the group, which was enthusiastically received. We thank Amanda for her generous commitment of time and skills.

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.

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 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 Service.



*Above: Story Time with Linda*



*Above: Healthy Morning Tea Time*



Above: Women's Craft and Sewing





*Above: Fortune Cookies*



*Above: Monster Masks*



*Above: Women's Craft Activity - Lavender Infused Wheat Bags*



*Above: Play Time with Kellie and Linda*



*Above: Mother's Day Craft Activity*

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

Valerie and Kellie attended this event in the forecourt of the new South East Regional Hospital on 5 May 2017. There was a large 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.

### ***2017 NAIDOC Celebrations***

On 5 July 2017 service staff participated in the NAIDOC Family Fun Day at the Indoor Sports Stadium in Bega. This event was well attended and our contribution of fruit, healthy snacks, booklets, brochures, balloons and balls to kick was appreciated by adults and children alike.

We provided some Indigenous colouring-in activities for children, applied temporary Indigenous tattoos to children's hands or arms and handed out some NAIDOC wristbands and stickers to everyone. Towards the end of the event Chelsea had about 30 to 40 young boys participating in 4 on 4 half court basketball, which they loved.



Above: Jade Dryden, Russell Meers, Chelsea Yarrie and Danielle Smith

## 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 Community Reform and Commissioning and Planning staff re: TEI performance framework
- Meetings with FACS Manager - Child Protection
- Meeting with Katungal Aboriginal Medical Service staff
- KIN (Koori Interagency Network) meetings
- Eden Interagency Services meeting
- Eden Futures - Education, Training and Employment Forum in September 2016
- 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
- Bega Valley Youth Network
- Meeting with South Coast Careers Advisors (representing 5 local secondary schools)
- Family Case Management - Bega Valley Local Managers Group and Caseworker meetings
- NSW Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee and PCYC

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 an Annual Planning Day in June 2017 which was attended by all staff. From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017 the service will begin transitioning to the Targeted Earlier Intervention program, which prioritises families with children aged 0-3 years, young parents (under 20 years of age) and Aboriginal children, youth and families.

### ***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 Brainery. 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 2016-17, 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 2016-2017 is at **Appendix 1**. This data indicates that our service provided ongoing support and assistance to:-

- 76 families, (79%) of whom remained engaged with the service for the planned duration
- 78 parents/carers and 105 children and young people

Of these families:

- 18 (24% of all service users) identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 13 (17% of all service users) have a parent/carer with a disability
- 15 (20%) have a child with a disability
- 10 (13%) are headed by a parent under 21 years of age.

There were also an additional 38 families currently engaged with the service, but not exited and therefore not included in the aggregated data collection.

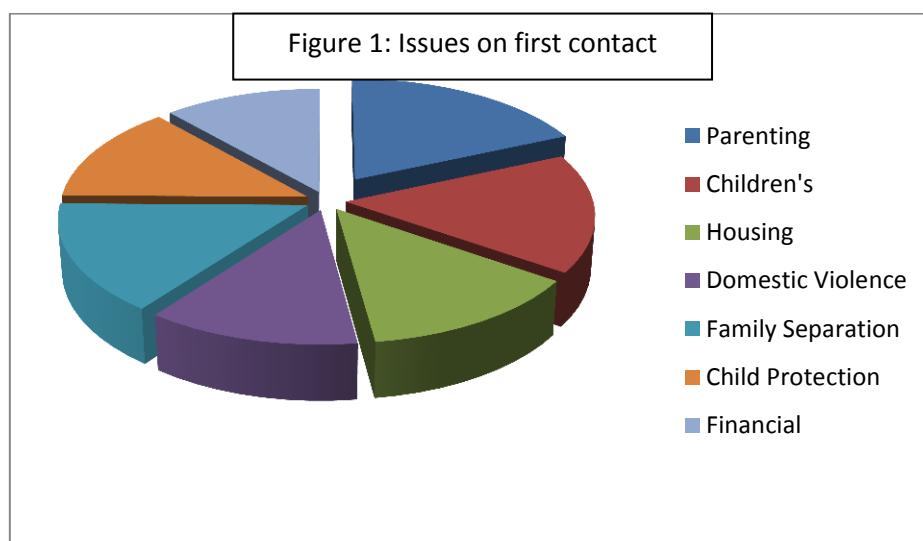
***IFP program*** Between July 2016 and June 2017 the service worked with 7 families in the Intensive Family Preservation program. Ongoing vacancies were reported to FACS.

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 specialist 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
- 88% said they ‘learnt new things to assist with parenting’ and 90% reported increased confidence in parenting
- more secure housing
- improved physical/material amenity of home life - e.g. 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 -e.g. 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 (now named Flourish)
- 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.

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

Throughout 2016-2017 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.

In the following 12 months, FSCFSS will participate in the NGO Benchmarking project. The non-government organisation (NGO) Benchmarking Model is a capability development tool that will allow organisations to self-assess their performance against ten standards regarding customer focus and corporate governance. “It is designed to embed robust, customer-centred principles into NGO operations to help deliver efficient, high quality and innovative programs and services.”

Each standard has three progressive levels of attainment:

1. Emerging
2. Mature
3. Excelling

This tiered approach provides a clear pathway to continuous improvement by allowing an organisation to track its performance and easily identify opportunities

to improve service delivery. The model also includes accountability and assessment measures designed to give customers and funding bodies greater assurance that the services being provided by an organisation are high quality, value for money and outcomes-focussed.<sup>10</sup>

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 Community Programs 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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<sup>10</sup> NSW Government Finance, Services & Innovation NGO Benchmarking Model –Evidence Guidelines, August 2017

## Appendix 1

### CYFS Aggregated Data

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
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#	Service Specification Performance Measure	Number	%	FSF Number	Service Model
1	Number of young people/families that participated in the program	76	Not Required		CYFS
2	Number of children and young people who participated in the program	aged 0-5 years	42	Not Required	19 CFS
		aged 6-11 years	36	Not Required	19 YFS
		aged 12- 17 years	27	Not Required	20 YFS
3	Number of parents/carers who participated in the program	78	Not Required	18	CYFS
4	Number and percentage of parents/carers who say that through the program they learnt new things	to assist them with parenting	69	88%	27a CFS
		about services & resources for families in our area	72	92%	27b CFS
		feel more confident about parenting	70	90%	27c CYFS

5	Number and percentage of young people/families who stayed in the program for the planned duration	60	79%	23	CYFS
6	Number and percentage of participating families/young people who:	identify as Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander	18	24%	14 CYFS
		speak a language other than English at home	1	1%	15 CYFS
		have a parent/carer with a disability	13	17%	13 CYFS
		have a child with a disability	15	20%	12 CYFS
		have a parent 21 years or under	10	13%	16 CFS
7	Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 who say that through the program they:	learnt new things	16	59%	28a YFS
		feel more confident	16	59%	28b YFS
8	Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 with low attendance at entry who on exit:	attend school regularly	1	20%	22 YFS
		attend vocational training	0	NA	22 YFS
9	Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 who say the most important goal was fully achieved	16	59%	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