



CHAIRPERSONS REPORT 2014/15

Needless to say, 2014/15 brought with it a range of challenges and opportunities.

Closure of the women's refuge (between July and December), the dismantling of a well-established women's and children's service, the ongoing problems associated with a lack of affordable housing in the area as well as uncertainty around our own funding are some of the challenges that have impacted on us. As always we have done our best to respond quickly, effectively and constructively where possible and continue to support and advocate for families in our community.

Several successful grant applications have allowed us to expand and enrich our core services this year. We facilitated suicide prevention training for community members in Eden and Bega, we extended our "Just for Mums" program, offering mentoring, social networking opportunities and parenting skills training for young mothers and we employed Julie Nagel in the position of Indigenous Family Worker. Julie has now completed the project funded by the grant and we are fully committed to continue to build on her achievements, establishing a better understanding and connections with the local Indigenous community. Julie has a wealth of knowledge and professional experience which she has generously shared with staff and the committee during her time here and I thank her on behalf of the Committee for her valuable contribution to the service.

Looking to the future, our priority will continue to be to serve our community and to watch and respond to the needs that evolve. As a Community based service we are well placed to monitor those needs and have the flexibility to respond quickly. Building understanding and strong relationships with other community organisations will be prioritised to ensure that clients receive a streamlined, well-targeted service.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge what the whole team here at Family Support do every day. Their passion, flexibility and tireless dedication to provide support and advocacy for their clients are clear to anyone who comes into contact with the service. They provide an environment where everyone, from the one-off, drop in to the high needs, long term client can feel safe and welcomed. They are an exceptional team and I feel privileged to be associated with Far South Coast Family Support Service and its staff. Thank you all.

Joanna Rideaux

Chairperson, Far South Coast Family Support Management Committee



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 2014 and June 2015. 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 the unique capacities and skills of families. Through role modelling and support, families are empowered to make positive decisions to benefit their children and their family unit. 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 Family Services Inc., 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 harm. These programs are discussed further under 'Service Provision'.

In 2014-15, 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

The vision of FSCFSS is “Strengthening families, strengthening communities”. 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 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 33,313 residents in the Bega Valley Shire in 2013¹. 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 Census², 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)³. 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 685th most disadvantaged area of Australia out of 8248 regions, which is in the lowest 10th 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 work⁴. The most common bracket for weekly household income ranges from \$400-\$599 per week (14.6% of 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.

⁴Bega Valley Shire Council (2014a). 'Bega Valley Shire Community Profile', ProfileID Community Profile.
<http://profile.id.com.au/bega-valley>

⁵ibid

⁶ibid

⁷ibid



Community perceptions: The Bega Valley Shire Council Delivery Plan 2012-17⁵ 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 Board of Management meets 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

David Jones (resigned February 2015)

⁵ 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



Governance

In March 2015 current Board members agreed to participate in ‘Developing Your Board’, an ongoing project developed and administered by the Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies at the Queensland University of Technology. This project “. . . aims to assist Boards of Australian non-profit organisations by developing the first validated board assessment tools specific to the Australian non-profit context.” (QUT 2015).

The Whole of Board and Chairperson evaluations involved completion of a confidential on-line survey by individual Board members. The survey covered:-

- Board functioning
- Board governance
- Board effectiveness
- Attitudes towards Board membership
- Board demographics

The subsequent report provided valuable feedback to members about the Board’s overall performance, and how it compares to the 300- plus other Australian boards who have completed the same surveys. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being very poor and 10 being very good), FSCFSS’s Board rated 8, placing it in the top 25% of all Boards who have completed the surveys and above the mean score of 6.5. Another variable measured the level of agreement amongst Board members as to the Board’s overall performance rating, and showed that the variability rating (measured as standard deviations from the mean) was 0.7, again placing FSCFSS in the lowest 25% of all Boards - ie there is a high level of agreement amongst Board members as to the organisation’s performance compared to the mean for all Boards of 1.5. The Board tenure question yielded a mean score of 13.25 years, more than double the mean tenure of all Boards who have completed the survey. This data confirms that we have in our current Board, members who have shared understandings of their role, strong collaborative ties and offer long term commitment and stability to the service. In terms of attracting new Board members, these findings are a positive inducement.



Staff

In 2014-2015 the Service employed eight permanent part-time staff, two casual Child Care Workers (to support Just for Mums Parenting group), an Indigenous Family Support Project worker (fixed term contract), a Locum Service Manager, then Consultant (fixed term contract) and a casual 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

Julie Nagle

Community Educator (Parenting)

Laura Botto

Service Manager

Andrea Powell

Office Manager

Pauline Wellington

Locum Service Manager/Consultant

Kristina Brenner (July- August 2014)

Relief Bookkeeper

Jennifer Willcox

Cleaner

Luzminda Pabon



Laura Botto moved into a newly created role of Community Educator this year. Laura's focus is delivering parenting group programs throughout the Bega Valley, to both groups of people and on a one-to-one basis. This is discussed in more detail later in this report.

Funding

In 2014 - 2015, 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 \$465,138.

In the past year the service applied for and was successful in achieving three (3) philanthropic grants for discrete projects. The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation granted \$25,000 to support the part-time employment of an Aboriginal Project Worker for 6 months, with a particular emphasis on supporting Indigenous families in Eden. In fact Julie Nagle worked with the service for 11 months, and as noted in the Chairperson's Report, Julie's knowledge, experience and understanding of issues affecting Indigenous communities greatly benefitted her colleagues and the Indigenous families with whom she worked.

The Sidney Myer Fund provided a \$10,000 grant to enable FSCFSS to bring specialized training - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training - to the Bega Valley in April 2015.

The Mumbulla Foundation provided a grant of \$2,000 to support the engagement of child care workers for the Just for Mums parenting support group.

FSCFSS gratefully acknowledges and thanks the NSW Government and the philanthropic funders for their contribution to and support for our service.

The audited Financial Statements for 2014-2015, detailing acquittal of all funding received are attached.

From 1 July 2014 the service reported against each Program Level Agreement via the FACS on-line portal.

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.

The service produced a new brochure for service users - My Rights and Responsibilities - which addresses core issues, such as privacy and confidentiality, the right to be treated with respect and dignity in a non-discriminatory manner, our complaints procedure and the importance of maintaining a safe environment for staff and service users. This brochure, along with a revised Consent form, is given to every service user.

This year we purchased and framed a map of Australia, based on the Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia, that attempts to represent all the language, social or nation groups of the Indigenous people of Australia. This informative map is displayed in the loungeroom cum waiting room and has attracted a lot of interest and positive comment from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous service users.

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.



Catherine and Andrea welcome you to the Industrial Estate!



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), other health agencies, 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.

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 2014-15 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.

Our former website is currently off-line and undergoing redevelopment with a link to Facebook.

Student Placements

Student Kat Cetkovic and volunteer Andrew Lund continued to work with FSCFSS from July to December 2014, when both had to cease their involvement due to pressing family circumstances. Kat was very helpful in her support with Just for Mums and Andrew immersed himself in a variety of areas, ranging from IT support to groupwork and planning. Their contributions to the service are greatly appreciated.

Sally-Anne Bertram commenced her Diploma of Community Welfare work placement in May 2015. Sally-Anne is a qualified naturopath and brings many other skills and experiences to her work and studies. Participants at the Just for Mums



parenting group benefitted from a session Sally-Anne delivered on using natural remedies for common childhood ailments. She is currently working on designing an evaluation survey (using Survey Monkey) to seek responses from former service users and other relevant organisations, about perceptions of our service.

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."

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

Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change delivered by CCWT at Merimbula, attended by Kellie (July 2014).

Australian Childhood Foundation Conference - Trauma Informed Practice, Melbourne (July 2014), attended by Laura.

Jobs Australia National Conference, Melbourne (August 2014), attended by Pauline.

FAMS Bi-annual Conference, Sydney (August 2014), attended by Geoff.

Aboriginal Best Practice Workshop (August 2014), attended by Catherine, Valerie and Geoff.

Beyond Blue - Tackling Depression Workshop, (November 2014), attended by Geoff.



The Times Are Changing - D & A and Aboriginal Communities, (December 2014), attended by Kellie, Julie and Geoff.

Grant Seeking - Webinar (December 2014), Valerie, Catherine, Kellie and Andrea

Advanced Case Management Masterclass, Canberra (February 2015), attended by Valerie.

Circle of Security, Canberra -4 days (February 2015), attended by Julie.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) 2 days Bega and Eden (March/April 2015), attended by Geoff, Julie, Kellie, Valerie, Laura and Andrea.

Hand In Hand Parenting program (over 6 weeks in April-May 2015), attended by Valerie in her own time.

Creative Art Therapy (2 hours over 8 weeks April-June 2015), attended by Catherine and Laura in their own time.

Lifeline Domestic Violence Accredited Training - 2 days, Bega (April 2015), attended by Valerie, Kellie and Laura.

Co-operative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) Family Law Pathways training, Bega (May 2015), attended by Valerie, Geoff and Kellie.

Continuum of Neglect, Bega (May 2015), attended by Catherine, Kellie and Valerie.

Auditory Processing Disorder, Merimbula (May 2015), attended by Catherine.

Groups and Community Events

Bringing Up Great Kids

In 2014-2015 Laura Botto successfully ran two 'Bringing Up Great Kids' parenting programs in the community in Oct/Nov 2014 and May/Jun 2015 and is due to run another in Bermagui in October 2015.

This 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.



Laura encouraged the training of all family worker staff to become registered facilitators in the program. They will all attend an Australian Childhood Foundation facilitator training workshop in Canberra on 12 November 2015. 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 participants at Bringing Up Great Kids - Bega

Love Bites Program

Laura has also co facilitated the Love Bites program in Bega in June 2015. This program is run in local secondary schools 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. Both Laura and Geoff have received training as Love Bites facilitators and will continue to support the delivery of this very important program.

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 2014 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. The service is an active participant on the Bega Valley Domestic and Sexual Violence Committee.



Just for Mums Parenting Support Group

Just for Mums is a parenting support group that has been operating for the past 4 years. In 2015 FSCFSS received a grant of \$2,000 from the Mumbulla Foundation, a local philanthropic trust that supports community projects in the Bega Valley. This grant allowed us to engage a professional child care worker (Linda Fowler) to provide educative and constructive play activities for the young children of the mothers attending the group.

Valerie is the main group facilitator. The group meets on Tuesdays between 10am and 1pm and the program is run for 8 weeks in each school term. The Bega Uniting Church kindly offered use of their hall and commercial kitchen at no cost, and the group was also greatly assisted by a weekly donation of \$50 towards program costs (food, beverages, fruit, craft materials etc.) by then Manager at Woolworths Bega, Mr. Matthew Jorgenson. FSCFSS thank both Woolworths and the Uniting Church for their generosity.

The aim of this group is to provide opportunities for mothers to meet and interact in a safe and supportive place, to work on strengths and empower women as individuals and in their role as mothers/carers. The objective is to increase parenting skills and confidence, so the group program incorporates parenting strategies based on attachment theory, along with skills-based activities, such as basic sewing, yoga, macramé etc. Each term's program is planned in advance, with input from participants and the weekly program is widely circulated to other services and via Facebook. The number of participants rapidly grew to around 10-12 mothers and a similar number of young children/babies. Some weeks there were 13 mothers and 17 children. This necessitated the engagement of a second child care worker (Connie Walker) with back-up support from other family workers.

Mothers, carers and children often attended the group because they were isolated, first time mothers or their children needed a socially structured and stimulating environment.

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.





Catherine instructs Mums in the art of tying themselves in knots!

Morning tea time at Just for Mums



Children at play in the sand pit



ASIST - Applied suicide intervention skills training

After considerable planning and thanks to the financial support of the Sidney Myer Fund, FSCFSS brought the ASIST training program to the Bega Valley in March 2015. The project was to deliver two free accredited Suicide Risk Assessment training sessions across the Bega Valley Shire, to equip the community with skills to respond effectively to people having thoughts of suicide. ASIST teaches participants to recognise when someone may be at risk of suicide and how to respond in ways that help increase their immediate safety and link them to further help. The training helps people apply suicide first aid in many settings -with family, friends, co-workers and team mates - and more formal helping roles.

In early 2015 we commenced liaising with Mr. Brenton Tainsh (Manager, Livingworks Australia) and dates and venues were organised for the workshops. The training was widely advertised through e-mail networks, and newspaper articles. The registration process was open for 1 month and at close, all places had been filled. The first of the 2 day workshops was held at Jigamy Farm and Keeping Place on 26-27 March, and the second workshop was held at Workability premises in Bega on 30-31 March, with presenters Brenton Tainsh and Keith Todd, both of who have 30+ years experience in the delivering ASIST program.

The level of interest following publicity about this training opportunity and the numbers who registered and attended was extremely encouraging. In all 42 people received accreditation in applied suicide intervention skills. Particularly pleasing was the number of Indigenous participants (9), church members (3), TAFE Diploma students (8), school counsellors (3) and health workers (4). Six Family Support staff attended this training and received accreditation. Thanks to Geoff, Andrea, Catherine and Kellie for their work in ensuring this training was a positive experience for all.

Mental Health Week - River Walk

Staff attended the River Walk organised by SPAN- the local Suicide Prevention Action Network - in October 2014, 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.



Meetings and Networking

FSCFSS is a member of numerous local interagency committees and the organisation highly values collaborative work to maximise outcomes for children and families. FSCFS has numerous informal organisational partnerships, including with Eden Access Centre, Women's Resource Centre and SEWACS.

Andrea attended a meeting with senior FACS personnel in Queanbeyan in September 2014, in relation to the Contract Governance Framework and another meeting in November 2014 in regard to the Safe Home For Life legislative reforms. In addition to case planning and other meetings with NSW Family and Community Services and other services, 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



FSCFSS NAIDOC stall 2015 –free handknitted jumpers courtesy of a generous Bombala grandmother, known to us as Mrs. B.



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
- Clients in Eden
- Clients who would be excluded from receiving services elsewhere
- Boys and adult male clients
- Aboriginal families
- Carers including grandparents and foster carers
- Families experiencing multiple complex issues or trauma

In order to obtain equity in service provision to families, FSCFSS recognises the need to offer additional supports to some vulnerable population groups, which the Strategic Plan will offer in a more formalised way.

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 2014-15, 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 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.

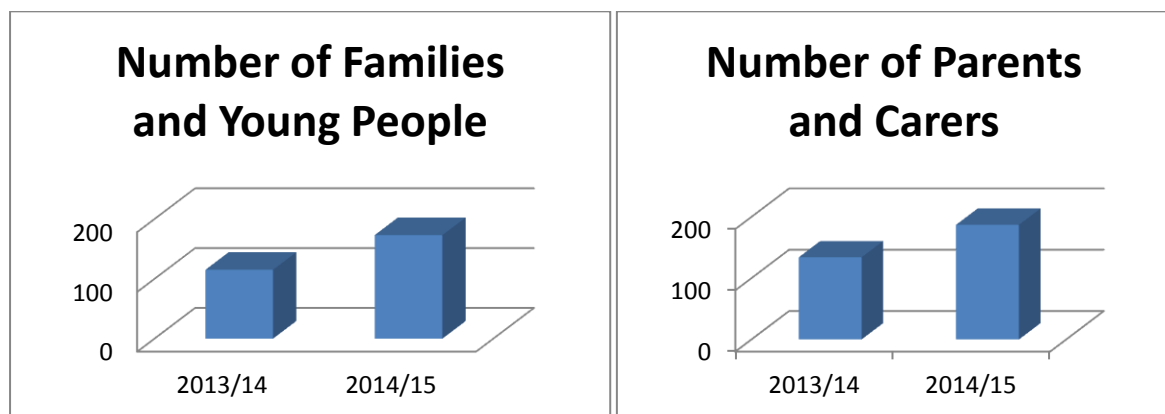
The aggregated CYFS service provision data for 2014-2015 is at **Appendix 1**. This data indicates that our service provided ongoing support and assistance to:-

- 173 families, 131 of whom remained engaged with the service for the planned duration (an increase of just over 50% from 2013-14)
- 187 parents/carers (an increase of 39% from 2013-14)
- 160 children and young people (an increase of 37% from 2013-14)

Of these families:

- 37 (21% of all service users) identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (a significant increase of 164% from 14 in 2013-2014)
- 29 (17% of all service users) have a parent/carer with a disability
- 14 (8%) have a child with a disability
- 11 (6%) are headed by a parent under 21 years of age.

The large increase in service delivery in response to increased demand can, in part, be attributed to the skills and productivity of our wonderful staff and the longstanding professional reputation of our organisation.



IFS and IFP programs Throughout 2014 the service was at capacity in these programs (with 3 families in IFS and 2 Indigenous families in IFP). Towards the end

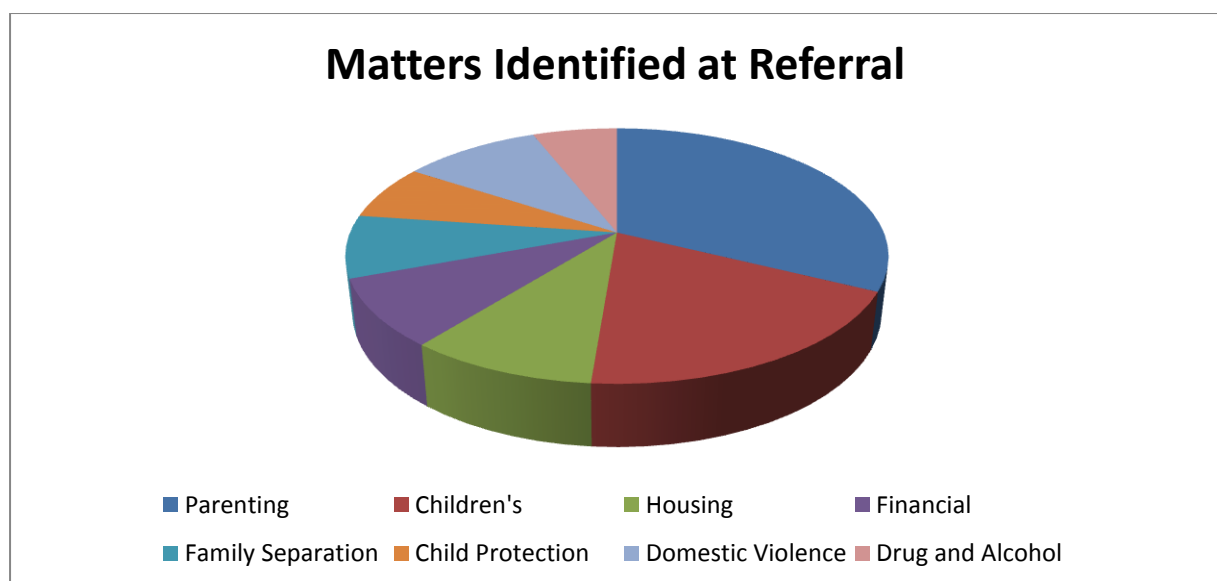


of 2014, some families were in the exit process and two new families were accepted to the IFP program.

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
- 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)
- Probation and Parole (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

Community Development

Work and Development Orders

In December 2012, we were advised by the NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice (DAGJ) that our service's application to participate in the Work and Development Orders (WDO) scheme had been approved. This scheme is administered by the State Debt Recovery Office (SDRO). Work and Development Orders are orders, made by the SDRO, that allow eligible people to satisfy their fine debt through unpaid work or certain courses or treatment with approved organisations and health practitioners. WDO's are open to people who:

- have a mental illness
- have an intellectual disability or cognitive impairment
- have a serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances
- are homeless
- are experiencing acute economic hardship.

As a Work and Development Orders provider, we are able to either provide or refer approved clients with:- “ medical/mental health treatment (including disability



case management), financial or other counselling, drug or alcohol treatment, educational/vocational or life skills course and voluntary unpaid work.”

Our service registered two clients with the WDO scheme in 2014-15, including a young mother who had fines incurred in her name through the dishonesty of her ex-partner. The WDO scheme is a welcome initiative that greatly benefits many of our client group whose lives are severely constrained by financial hardship or entrenched personal problems.

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

2014-2015 was a busy and productive year for the service amidst the continuing uncertainties related to the re-design of the community services system in NSW. 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.

In 2015 we applied through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (DSS) and two philanthropic organisations for funds to increase our service capacity to work with Indigenous families and employ additional Indigenous workers. Unfortunately we were not successful with these applications, but our service will continue to apply for funding to achieve this goal.



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

The organisation has been actively involved in the many consultations and surveys in regard to the proposed sector reform, including the negative impacts on local communities as a result of the Going Home Staying Home reform process. Our service has a valuable contribution to make to any reform of the EIPP program, which we sincerely hope will not decimate the existing network of local, community-based service providers.

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.



Our backyard



Appendix 1 - CYFS Aggregated Data

Financial Year	2014/15
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#	Service Specification Performance Measure		Number	%	FSF Number	Service Model
1	Number of young people/families that participated in the program		173	Not Required		CYFS
2	Number of children and young people who participated in the program	aged 0-5 years	80	Not Required	19	CFS
		aged 6-11 years	60	Not Required	19	YFS
		aged 12- 17 years	20	Not Required	20	YFS
3	Number of parents/carers who participated in the program		187	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	150	80%	27a	CFS
		about services & resources for families in our area	162	87%	27b	CFS
		feel more confident about parenting	157	84%	27c	CYFS
5	Number and percentage of young people/families who stayed in the program for the planned duration		131	76%	23	CYFS
6	Number and percentage of participating families/young people who:	identify as Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander	37	21%	14	CYFS
		speak a language other than English at home	4	2%	15	CYFS
		have a parent/carer with a disability	29	17%	13	CYFS
		have a child with a disability	14	8%	12	CYFS
		have a parent 21 years or under	11	6%	16	CFS
7	Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 who say that through the program they:	learnt new things	13	65%	28a	YFS
		feel more confident	13	65%	28b	YFS
8	Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 with low attendance at entry who on exit:	attend school regularly	3	11%	22	YFS
		attend vocational training	0	NA	22	YFS
		at least 20 hours p/wk paid employment	0	NA	22	YFS
9	Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 who say the most important goal was fully achieved		13	65%	28c	YFS



Appendix 2 – STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2019

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





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