

*Far South Coast
Family Support Service
Annual Report 2019*



Kids' artwork produced in NAIDOC Week!

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

In 2018/19 FSCFSS staff have, as always, provided quality support and information to families in our community as, when and how they were needed. I felt very proud recently when a parent told me of their experience of dropping in to the FSCFSS cottage. This person was made to feel welcome and provided with professional advice and a referral on the spot. She was amazed and impressed that she'd been able to see someone there and then without any appointment or filling in complicated forms.

This story, I believe, goes to the heart of the outstanding strengths of this service - the flexibility, knowledge and compassion of our staff. Despite increasingly complex reporting and documentation requirements our staff have managed to retain those core values in our service.

I would like to thank Kelly, Val, Jade and Chelsea for their continuing commitment, compassion and professionalism.

Pauline has, once again, done a fabulous job of taking care of our finances and being everybody's rock, for which we are all extremely grateful.

This Annual Report showcases not only the goals, achievements and quality of our service but also the impressive skills of its author, our Service Manager, Andrea, not only for producing such a document but also negotiating the ever-changing landscape of funding and government priorities.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow committee members whose humour, perspectives and knowledge make our meetings so interesting.

Joanna Rideaux

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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 2018 and June 2019. 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.

Our Vision

Staff and members of the Management Committee met on 12th March 2019 to review and develop a Strategic Plan to guide the organisation's service delivery under the Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program, and, more broadly, in line with the aspirations and priorities of the whole-of-government 'Their Futures Matter' initiative. 'Their Futures Matter' is a long term (10 years) plan to transform child and family systems in NSW to achieve the goal that **“all children, young people and families can access and connect with timely supports to improve outcomes across all areas of safety, health and wellbeing.”** The specific domains are:-

- Economic - all people in NSW are able to contribute to, and benefit from, our economy
- Education and skills - all people in NSW are able to learn, contribute and achieve
- Safety - all people in NSW are able to be safe
- Home - all people in NSW are able to have a safe and affordable place to live
- Social and Community - all people in NSW are able to participate and feel culturally and socially connected
- Empowerment - all people in NSW are able to contribute to decision making that affects them and live fulfilling lives.

The previous vision of “Working with families to create a stronger Bega Valley community” was re-visited and re-formulated to be **“Working alongside families to support better outcomes for children and young people in the Bega Valley.”**

The renewed focus on outcomes is consistent with the intent of TEI reforms and 'Their Futures Matter'. FSCFSS has chosen to re-align its services to meet TEI outcomes, and at the time of writing, has completed service activity mapping in order to begin reporting on program activities and outcomes through the Department of Social Services' Data Exchange. We will monitor progress towards realising our vision via participation in the Data Exchange data collection process and continuing to maintain a safe, responsive and respectful environment in which family members can build skills and resources to strengthen family relationships.

FSCFSS recognises the importance of addressing service gaps and resource shortages, as well as pre-empting the future needs of the community and the organisation. In doing so, FSCFSS aims to champion best practice, high quality service provision, and high responsiveness to local issues.

The ongoing commitment and support of our voluntary Management Committee and the professional dedication of our staff are gratefully acknowledged as fundamental to the achievements of the service.

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, Bermagui 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 use, domestic violence and children's development. The range of services provided encompasses case work, community education, information, parenting 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 Communities and Justice (formerly known as 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 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, student volunteers and management members have current Working with Children Check clearance and all signatories to financial transactions have a National Criminal Record Check

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's population forecasts are for a population of 34,538 residents in the Bega Valley Shire in 2019¹. As at 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.²

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 Indigenous 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."³

Cultural background: In the 2016 Census⁴, 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 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)⁵. 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

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

² ibid

³ Bega Valley Shire 2016 Census results Community Profile .id Consulting Pty.Ltd.

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

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 work⁶. 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.⁷ 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.⁸

Community perceptions

The Bega Valley Shire Council Delivery Plan 2012-17⁹ 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.

Management Committee

The voluntary Management Committee 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 their deliberations.

⁶ ibid

⁷ ibid

⁸ ibid

⁹ Bega Valley Shire Council (2014b). Delivery Plan 2012-17 & Operational Plan 2013/14. <http://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/FlipBook/OpPlan2013/index.html>

Both staff and service users benefit from the collaborative work and wisdom of the Management Committee and their ongoing commitment to and support for the Service is highly valued and greatly appreciated.

A monthly Risk Management Schedule is checked by Management to ensure compliance with all statutory and non-statutory obligations. The Management Committee meets bi-monthly on the second Tuesday at 12.30 pm. FSCFSS maintains Directors' and Officers' Liability insurance for Management Committee members.

Over the past year the Management Committee comprised:

Executive

Chairperson - Joanna Rideaux

Vice Chairperson - Claire Lupton

Secretary and Public Officer - Kylie Dummer

Treasurer - Caroline Long

Committee Members

Mary Hourigan

Paul Brunton

Geoff Johnston

Kathy Boland

Staff

In 2018-2019 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

Valerie Schmid-Oke

Chelsea Yarrie

Jade Dryden

Service Manager

Andrea Powell

Office Manager

Pauline Wellington

Early Childhood Educator (casual)

Linda Fowler

Relief Bookkeeper

Jennifer Willcox

Cleaner

Chelsea Yarrie

Funding

In 2018 - 2019, FSCFSS received a funding contribution from NSW Department of Family and Community Services through the Child, Youth and Family Support program of \$260,604.27 and \$274,976.13 for Intensive Family Preservation. The service thanks the Bega Valley Child and Family Network for its contribution of \$1,818.18 to support the early childhood education component of Just for Mums and Carers weekly support group.

The audited Financial Statements for 2018-2019, detailing acquittal of all funding received will be tabled at the Annual General Meeting.

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 2018 we transitioned from being an ACON - recognised 'LGBTI SAFE PLACE' to receiving endorsement as an ACON LGBTIQ+ Welcome Here business and our office now has stickers, signage and the Welcome Here 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 Family Fun Days.

Our business card was re-designed 'in house' and our web address (www.fscfss.com.au) added to it. Our webpage has received very positive feedback from a variety of sources, especially the useful links resource and upcoming events. Chelsea is the moderator of the webpage and we thank her for her diligence. A recent resource added to our webpage is a parent's guide for gender-diverse families.

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 2018-19 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."

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

| | | |
|---------|--|-------------------|
| | | 18 July |
| Andrea | WDVCAS Seconded worker training -Legal Aid NSW | |
| | DEX (Data Exchange) training | 14 Feb |
| | FamS Outcomes Measurement and Program Logics training | 9 May |
| | Cultural Connections Workshop for TEI providers | 19 June |
| Pauline | DEX (Data Exchange) training | 29 March |
| | Cultural Connections Workshop for TEI providers | 19 June |
| | Leadership Matters | 26 June |
| | FamS Outcomes Measurement and Program Logics training | 9 May |
| Valerie | Drug & Alcohol First Aid | 4 July |
| | WDVCAS Seconded worker training – Legal Aid NSW | 18 July |
| | Trauma Informed Practice | 11-12 Sept |
| | Circle of Security Facilitator training | 4-7 March |
| | The Nitty Gritty –Specialised Reproductive & Sexual Health | 27 Mar |
| | DEX (Data Exchange) training | 29 Mar |
| | FamS Outcomes Measurement and Program Logics training | 9 May |
| | Aboriginal Cultural Activities workshop | 28 June |
| Chelsea | Drug & Alcohol First Aid | 4 July |
| | WDVCAS Seconded worker training – Legal Aid NSW | 18 July |
| | Aboriginal Cultural Preparedness workshop | 13 Aug |
| | Beyond Developmental Trauma | 10-11 Sept |
| | Child Safe Workshop | 3 Oct |
| | Difficult Conversations with Resistant Parents | 11-12 Oct; 30 Nov |
| | Suicide Prevention Workshop – Wesley Mission | 21 Nov |
| | DEX (Data Exchange) training | 29 Mar |
| | FamS Outcomes Measurement and Program Logics training | 9 May |
| | Aboriginal Cultural Activities workshop | 28 June |
| Kellie | Drug & Alcohol First Aid | 4 July |
| | Trauma Informed Practice | 11-12Sept |
| | S John First Aid training | 29 Nov |
| | Circle of Security Facilitator training | 4-7 Mar |
| | DEX (Data Exchange) training | 29 Mar |
| | FamS Outcomes Measurement and Program Logics training | 9 May |
| | Aboriginal Cultural Activities workshop | 28 June |
| Jade | Drug & Alcohol First Aid | 3 July |
| | WDVCAS Seconded Worker training – Legal Aid NSW | 18 July |

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| | Beyond Developmental Trauma | 10-11 Sept |
| | Child Safe workshop | 3 Oct |
| | Difficult Conversations with Resistant Parents | 11-12 Oct; 30 Nov |
| | Assimilation as Trauma: Trauma Informed Cultural Practice | 21 Mar |
| | The Nitty Gritty – Specialised Reproductive & Sexual Health | 27 Mar |
| | DEX (Data Exchange) training | 29 Mar |
| | FamS Outcomes Measurement and Program Logics training | 9 May |
| | Cultural Connections Workshop for TEI providers | 19 June |
| | Aboriginal Cultural Activities workshop | 28 June |

Groups and Community Events

Bringing Up Great Kids

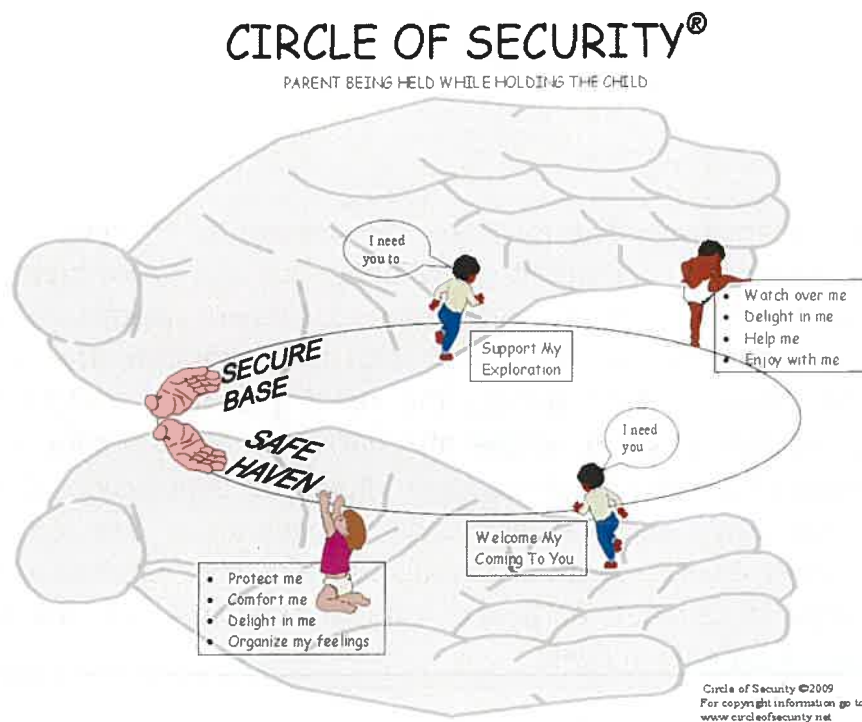
All family workers are trained to facilitate the delivery of Bringing Up Great Kids parenting program. The program, developed by the Australian Childhood Foundation, uses mindfulness and reflection to support parents to review and enhance their patterns of communication with their children, to promote more respectful interactions and encourage the development of childrens' 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. Chelsea and Kellie ran a group in Bega in October 2018 and Valerie and Jade ran the program in November 2018 for parents in Eden.



Australian Childhood Foundation

Circle of Security Parenting Program

Staff delivered the Circle of Security program as a group program for approximately 9 parents in Bega in June 2019. This program was also provided in one-on-one work with individual families. Circle of Security emphasises secure attachment as the foundation for strong bonds between parents and children to nourish their physical, social and emotional development. Some of the most powerful learnings reported by participants in their evaluations were :-“To be in the moment for my kids. . .being able to name being bigger, stronger, kinder and wiser as it helped me identify the ways I need to be most helpful to my daughter. . . recognising the importance of connection rather than attention.”



Love Bites Program

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. In May-June 2019 Love Bites was conducted at Eden Marine High School over 4 full day sessions and Jade Dryden was a presenter.

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 16 Days of Activism to Stop Violence Against Women and promoting the

message “Bega Valley Says No to Violence” around the townships in the Shire. The service is an active participant on the Bega Valley Domestic and Sexual Violence Committee and also contributes to the seconded worker roster for Far South Coast Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service at Bega Local Court.

Just for Mums Parenting Support Group

Just for Mums and Carers is a weekly activity group that meets on Tuesdays for 3 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. 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 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 and Children's Service.



Children's birthdays are celebrated at Just for Mums



Just for Mums Activities - nature bonnets and mandarin marmalade



Just for Mums - making dream catchers

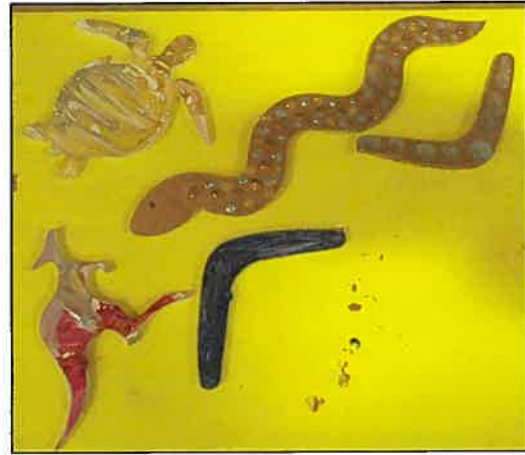


A poster created by Just for Mums participants to celebrate Harmony Day -the poster was on display at the Bega Valley Regional Library

2018 NAIDOC Celebrations

NAIDOC celebrations occurred on 4th October 2018, with indoor craft activities due to inclement weather. Family Support provided a lucky door prize and provided a range of craft activities for children during a Family Fun Day event at the Indoor Sports Stadium in Bega.





Above: NAIDOC Week Artwork

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, Headspace and Southern NSW Family Referral Service (FRS). Staff at FRS generously offered use of their large training room for FSCFSS staff to conduct parenting programs and also made it available for a variety of training exercises.

In April 2019 FSCFSS hosted a regional get-together with staff from Monaro Family Support Service and Eurobodalla Family Support Service. The day enabled a rich sharing of experiences, knowledge, ideas for programs and common challenges faced across the three services and it was agreed to make this an at least annual event.

In June 2019 we were approached by Barnardos about co-locating a Barnardos Intensive Family Preservation caseworker at our office in Bega. Donna Harrison has commenced in this role, and works out of our premises when she is in Bega.

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

Meetings with Katungul Aboriginal Medical Service staff

KIN (Koori Interagency Network) meetings

Eden and Bega Interagency Services meetings

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

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 Committee of Southern Women's Group

Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN)

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

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 management of this valuable resource and for maintaining a contemporary collection.

Service Provision

In 2018-19, 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. In 2018 we commenced twice weekly outreach to Eden, making our service available to the Eden community on a drop-in basis on Fridays at the Eden Access Centre and by pre-arranged appointments on Wednesdays.

The aggregated CYFS service provision data for 2018-2019 is at [Appendix 1](#). This data indicates that our service provided ongoing support and assistance to:-

- 80 families, (78%) of whom remained engaged with the service for the planned duration. There were also an additional 40 families currently engaged with the service, but not yet exited and therefore not included in the CYFS aggregated data collection.
- 90 parents/carers and 157 children and young people (62 in 0-5 age group; 66 in 6-11 age group and 29 in the 12-17 age group).

Of these families:

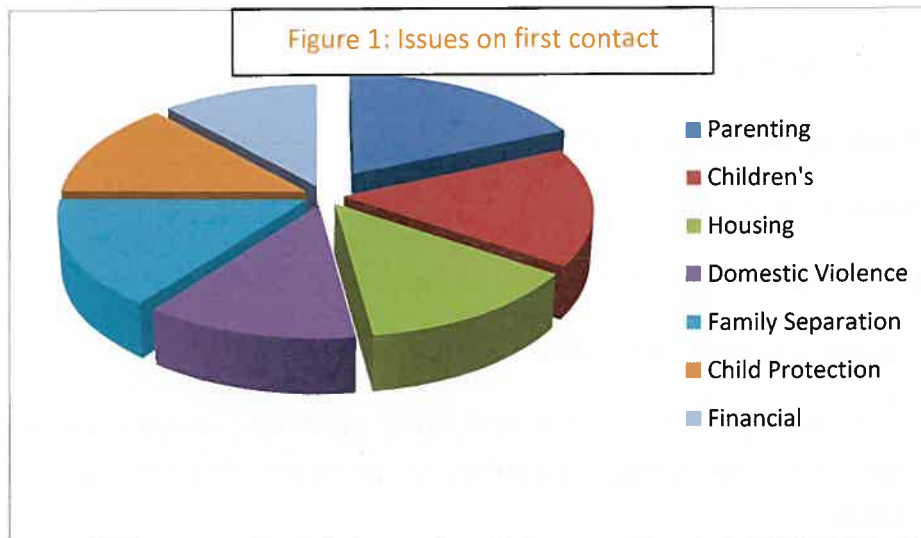
- 21% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander- this is almost double from the previous year
- 13% have a parent/carer with a disability
- 23% have a child with a disability
- 1% are headed by a parent under 21 years of age
- 4% speak a language other than English at home

IFP program Between July 2018 and June 2019 the service worked with 6 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, 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
- 93% said they 'learnt new things to assist with parenting' and 93% 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 (Communities and Justice)
- Adult and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Southern NSW Family Referral Service (Mackillop)
- 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
- Playability
- Flourish
- 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.

Team Building Day

On 28 February 2019 all staff rose early to be in Narooma for a day of 'Snorkelling with Seals' at Montague Island. Donning wetsuits at 7.30am we were on the boat and high seas by 7.45 and soon splashing and spluttering through snorkels with baby and not-so-baby seals. The next challenge was getting out of wet wetsuits (easier said than done) before climbing the very steep hill to the lighthouse. After a light morning tea we were taken on a guided tour of the island and lighthouse by NPWS guides. The weather was glorious and we were escorted on our return trip to Narooma by a pod of smiling dolphins racing us back to shore. All very exciting and a highly recommended outing!



On-board (L-R) Chelsea, Pauline, Jade, Valerie & Kellie

Future Goals and Directions

Throughout 2018-2019 service staff were involved in numerous meetings, consultations and discussion forums in relation to the Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) reforms being implemented by NSW Communities and Justice. The reforms 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. This latter category represented only 1% of service users in 2018-19.

A new data collection system - Data Exchange (DEX) - is being introduced for reporting TEI outcomes, replacing the current CYFS Excel Data Collection tool and all staff have received basic training in its application. The Community Data Solutions client data-base used by the service will be enhanced to interface with the DEX and automatically upload the required data. This should make data collection more efficient and could provide more information about the impacts of service delivery on individuals, families and children and the broader community.

By July 2020 the service will have negotiated a full transition to the TEI program and be operating under a new Human Services Agreement (formerly called a Funding Deed) and associated Schedules of service specifications (formerly known as Program Level Agreements). The maintenance of co-operative and collaborative relationships with Communities and Justice child protection caseworkers, managers and our Commissioning and Planning Officer (CPO) 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.

Appendix 1 - Aggregated service data

| Service Specification Performance Measure | | Number | % | FSF Number | Service Model |
|---|---|--------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| Number of young people/families that participated in the program | | 80 | Not Required | | CYFS |
| Number of children and young people who participated in the program | aged 0-5 years | 62 | Not Required | 19 | CFS |
| | aged 6-11 years | 66 | Not Required | 19 | YFS |
| | aged 12- 17 years | 29 | Not Required | 20 | YFS |
| Number of parents/carers who participated in the program | | 90 | Not Required | 18 | CYFS |
| Number and percentage of parents/carers who say that through the program they learnt new things | to assist them with parenting | 84 | 93% | 27a | CFS |
| | about services & resources for families in our area | 86 | 96% | 27b | CFS |
| | feel more confident about parenting | 84 | 93% | 27c | CYFS |
| Number and percentage of young people/families who stayed in the program for the planned duration | | 62 | 78% | 23 | CYFS |
| Number and percentage of participating families/young people who: | identify as Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander | 17 | 21% | 14 | CYFS |
| | speak a language other than English at home | 3 | 4% | 15 | CYFS |
| | have a parent/carer with a disability | 10 | 13% | 13 | CYFS |
| | have a child with a disability | 18 | 23% | 12 | CYFS |
| | have a parent 21 years or under | 1 | 1% | 16 | CFS |
| Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 who say that through the program they: | learnt new things | 9 | 31% | 28a | YFS |
| | feel more confident | 9 | 31% | 28b | YFS |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---|-----|-----|-----|
| Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 with low attendance at entry who on exit: | attend school regularly | 8 | 38% | 22 | YFS |
| | attend vocational training | 0 | NA | 22 | YFS |
| | at least 20 hours p/wk paid employment | 0 | NA | 22 | YFS |
| Number and percentage of young people aged 12-17 who say the most important goal was fully achieved | | 9 | 31% | 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: Services are tailored to the needs of different population groups
- Objective 4: 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

Appendix 2 Strategic Plan 2014-2019

