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Welcome ...

Again this newsletter is well and truly overdue—my apologies—especially to our newer members who may have been wondering where it is! Each edition I wonder 'what am I going to write about?' and then delay the inevitable. However when I start to put pen to paper I am surprised by how much is going on!

Following the re-election in March of the Liberal Party there has been a reshuffle of ministers and some Departmental name changes and merges. Many of you will be



aware that the Department for Child Protection has been re-named to the *Department for Child Protection and Family Support*—CPFS. The new minister wanted to publicly identify that the Department provide support to families. Many of the families we work with think this is a change in name only and not in service. My understanding is; there has not been any growth or change in the existing services provided i.e. Parent Support, Best Beginnings, & Strong Families. Therefore, the change is in name only and

seems to be without any corresponding change in policy or practice. As there has been a change in minister to the Honorable Helen Morton for Mental Health, Disability and Child Protection, we will meet with the ministers' office in August and are keen to learn more about the Government's agenda regarding Family Support. We also wish to raise the concerns that families with children in the care system have to present the work of our agency. Recently we met with the new Shadow Minister, Honorable Dr Sally Talbot. This was a very valuable meeting where Sally was eager to learn as much as possible about the experience of parents.

As reported in our last newsletter there have been changes to the way the Department contract services—called Procurement Funding. This generally means a tendering process to receive funds from the government. Given the unique position Fin WA has within the sector, the Department decided we did not have to enter a tendering process but we were offered a Preferred Service Provider contract. This means we provided details of how Fin WA op-

erates including our service provision, governance structures, quality assurance strategies and stakeholder contribution. This process is nearly completed and a new contract ought to be forthcoming within the next few weeks. Given the economic climate there has been no increase to the funding amount except the additional state government Component II funding of \$30,000 which is to ensure the current level of service delivery is maintained. This brings our total funding to \$334,000 per year.

In the first half of this year we made funding applications to Dept. of Immigration & Citizenship, Office of Multicultural Interests and the Law Society. Unfortunately these have not been successful and as disheartening as this may be we will continue to make application wherever possible.

Memberships are now due for renewal so your attention to this would be appreciated—especially as the date for the AGM has been set for Tuesday 29th October.

Thanks everyone!



Workshops in
2013:
—feedback from
participants

'I liked the really
clear language and
detailed explanations'

'the trainer really
knows this stuff'

'this is so helpful'



Presentations
& Training

'Finding Your Way with DCP' workshops

In the first half of this year in partnership with the Women's Law Centre we have provided workshops to Women's Health & Family Services and Ruah Community Service workers. Providing the training to workers means we are up-skilling others in the sector who can then work directly with families in their own services rather than having to refer to Fin WA and rely solely on us.

Feedback has been very positive and further train-

ing has been booked for the later half of the year.

Particularly exciting for us is running these workshops for women in prison. Women (and men) 'inside' experience multiple layers of complexity when dealing with CPFS—things such as; getting phone calls in and out to case managers, information being delayed or not forthcoming, and workers being reluctant to go to the prison to meet with parents amidst the challenges of security and

schedules.

Fortunately we have developed strong working relationships with both Bandyup and Boronia and we are now running these workshops in 2 sessions in both prisons. We are hopeful we can do so each term (4 times per year) but the progression of these will be at the discretion of the prison.

If your agency is interested in having us run a workshop for your families involved with CPFS or your workers, please get in touch with the office.

Presentations, Training ...

In the first half of this year Fin presented at the Foster Care Festival of Learning. It was fabulous to have been involved again this year—the session was well received; in particular a video was presented of a dad telling his story about his journey with the Department and his positive and helpful relationship with the foster carers. The carers have remained part of this dad's extended family since reunification occurred :)

For a few years now we have been trying to participate in the formal training for new child protection

workers. We were invited to participate in a panel of 2 NGOs to talk about 'Collaborative Practice'. Fortunately the session was so well received we have been asked to be a regular participant. This is a great achievement and the feedback from our first session was that it was identified as '*the best session of the training!*'

Practitioners' Forum:

Fin WA facilitates these bi-monthly sessions for non-statutory child &

family protection workers, usually alternate between a case discussion or open space and an invited guest. Recently we had a police officer from the Family & Domestic Violence Unit speak with the group (~40 attendees) about the work of these units which have been set up as a collaboration between DCPFS, Police and a local NGO, providing a wrap around service to families. From all indications these units are providing a more holistic approach to families experiencing violence.

Parent Voice Project

Many of our parent members will be aware of the 'Parent Voice' project that we have been working on. Lani Melrose (one of our past students) came on board for 3 months to assist parents to tell their story about being involved with CPFS. Photographs are used to tell the story with an accompanying narrative to explain the emotions displayed by the photo.



The story telling is about any aspect the parents (or grandparents) wanted to tell.

This project has been so worthwhile in giving parents and family members an opportunity to feel heard and respected about the journey they have been on.



Some amazing photos and touching stories have emerged.

What has been evident is the resilience and strength of parents in such adversity and the hope they find, and hold on to.

Families involved in the project have either been a recipient of our service or were referred from

other agencies. As we had been working in the women's prison system we also extended the project to these women. We had a very enthusiastic and engaged group of women from Boronia and Bandyup. A total of 24 families have participated.

We are currently working toward having these stories exhibited to the community. We have even had interest from a publishing company to produce a book from the work! Very exciting indeed :)

This is another exciting path for the agency in helping to create a space to raise the experience and voice of families involved with the child protection system.

Bits & Pieces ...

- ◆ The **Family Inclusion Network Australia (FIN A) Inc.** has developed its mission and strategic plan. To further develop this several working groups have been established to progress the profile through branding and a website; to strategically develop relationships with key alliances; creating a media strategy and approaching politicians etc. Key to this has been working on a national logo which I hope to bring to you in our next edition.
- ◆ Fin WA continues to represent the voice of parents on the **Lawyer Assisted Signs of Safety working group**—we participate alongside CPFS,

Legal Aid and KEMH re the implementation of recommendations from the evaluation of the project. Various tasks have been achieved including training more convenors for Pre-Hearing SoS Conferences and facilitators for Pre-Birth SoS.

- ◆ A new project to **Enhance Contact** between children and parents is being considered between one of the CPFS districts, an NGO and Fin WA. Initial discussions have just begun for this pilot project however it coincides very well with discussions across the sector about the challenges of contact for all concerned and ways these can be addressed.

Farewell & Welcome

At the end of June we said farewell to Lisa Lee, our Administrator and Intake Officer. Lisa has been an integral part of our small team, assisting in the development of administration (including accounts) and operational policies and procedures.

Lisa's dedication and loyalty to the organisation has been exemplary and she will be missed in her assistance in the smooth operations of Fin WA. We wish Lisa success as she pursues her career as a new social worker. See over for a message from Lisa

Whilst we wish Lisa well in her endeavours we welcome Lyndsey Greenwood to the team. Stayed tuned to learn about Lyn in the next Finformation :)



From Lisa— it's time to say Goodbye...

Some 4 1/2 years ago, in January 2009, I started work at Fin WA. A month later I started my Social Work degree at Curtin University. Following my move to Edith Cowan University, and after almost 5 years of study I will be graduating!!

From now until October I am in my final placement after which I will emerge as a fledgling social worker!

My time at Fin has been an extremely rich experience. The team are amazing; supportive, encouraging, motivated and passionate - everything you could want from a workplace! I want to thank the team for everything they have unselfishly shared with me, including their time, experiences and wisdom. I am very sad to leave, of course, but I know that new experiences await me and I am about to embark on my goal of which I have spent so much blood, sweat and tears on over the past 5 years to achieve.

Thanks to all the families I have come into contact with. I wish you well, and hope that you find some resolution or at least peace in your situation.

I thank the board for their commitment to the organisation for their unwavering support of the work that Fin does and the time that you give to the agency.

I know this isn't really goodbye as I am sure I will see many of you around the traps.

GOODBYE!

But for now at least it is so.....Lisa

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