



*Supporting families with children in care*

## **FIN**FORMATION

The Family Inclusion Network of WA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and the Noongar Nations; we honour and pay respect to elders and their people, past and present, and walk together in reconciliation.

### **Welcome to the first Fin WA Newsletter for 2020**

What a year 2020 has been so far! It is hard to comprehend how fast and how enormous the changes have been around the world, and here in Perth, in the last few weeks. It has been a very unsettling time, and I think we have all felt a bit wobbly at different times recently. Despite the shift in priorities for many government and business organisations, we know that relationships are still at the heart of who we are as humans. We hope you can find ways to remain connected to your internal compass, and to supportive friends and colleagues in the midst of this physical distancing. We will be sharing ways we have found to stay connected to ourselves and to others at this time, and would love to hear from you too.

**Fin WA services are continuing:** Our Advocates are continuing to provide information, advocacy and support to families involved with child protection. We are also providing systemic advocacy with the Department about what families need at this time, and how to think creatively about keeping families in contact with each other. The Bringing Up Great Kids Parenting Program is still running in Mirrabooka. We are still working with Family Partners and Volunteers, even though we can't see people in person.

**Our Team is still working:** our office is closed, but all staff are working from home. Our phone and email contacts remain the same.

**We will keep adapting** our services and thinking creatively about how to stay connected. We are hosting Zoom playgroups and workshops, and meetings, for example. Please let us know what has worked for you, how you are managing this time being safe at home.

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## Welcome to Maddie McLeod, Operations Manager

My name is Maddie McLeod and I have recently been appointed to the newly created role of Operations Manager at Fin WA. I am very much looking forward to meeting parents and other stakeholders connected to Fin WA, as well as contributing to the important work of the organisation.

I am a qualified social worker with twenty year's experience, mostly working in the out-of-home care and justice sectors. Prior to commencing at Fin WA I worked at Wanslea for seven years in a range of roles including Coordinator of the Out of Home Care Team.

I was attracted to the role at Fin WA because I believe that every effort should be made to support parents so that children do not need to enter out-of-home care and, when children do enter care, that parents and children are supported to maintain their relationships. I believe that parents and families have a right to be heard and often require assistance to navigate a complex and sometimes broken system. Having worked in out-of-home care I am aware that for many families this doesn't happen.

I believe the work Fin WA does is both important and necessary. The values of Fin WA (inclusion, equity, transparency, diversity, independence and partnership) align with my personal values and I am proud to be associated with an organisation which holds these values at the centre of all work. I consider myself to be an empathic, genuine, resourceful and hard-working person; I am also adaptable, creative and resilient. I hope that these qualities along with my experience as a social worker will enhance the work of Fin WA.

On a personal note, I am a mum to 14 year old twin boys. They are pretty typical teenagers- both gorgeous and frustrating! I'm very grateful to be employed by an organisation that recognises the importance of family. I will be working four days a week, which is a great fit for me as it allows me some time with my boys who are growing up so quickly!

I am always happy to talk to parents and professionals connected to Fin WA so, please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to meet me, or if you have any issues to discuss. My email is [maddie@finwa.org.au](mailto:maddie@finwa.org.au)





## Remember back in the days when we could meet physically!

A very special meeting was held at Fin WA in early February, with The Foster Carers Association, CREATE, and of course Fin WA. These organisations represent three of the key groups of people involved in the Out of Home Care system, and are all working to support families and children involved with child protection. It was great to get to know each other over a cuppa, and share many common concerns as we seek to maintain positive relationships between children, their birth parents, and carers. We all agreed on the importance of relational permanence no matter where children are living, and of helping everyone to feel heard, respected and included in this deeply personal space.

We hope to make this a regular meeting!



## Life at home...

I've just been talking about how we are coping with the microwave and toaster. I didn't mention anything to the washing machine as she puts a different spin on everything. Certainly not to the fridge as he is acting cold and distant. The iron said everything will be fine, no situation is too pressing. The vacuum was very unsympathetic - told me to just suck it up, but the fan was more optimistic and hoped it would all blow over soon! The toilet looked a bit flushed when I asked its opinion and didn't say anything but the door knob told me to get a grip. The front door said I was unhinged and so the curtains told me to yes, you guessed it, pull myself together!

## **Partnering for training.**

We are very excited to have begun training a new cohort of volunteers and Family Partners. So far this year we have:

- discussed working in a professional environment, and what it means to maintain confidentiality, meet the codes of conduct and adhere to Fin WA's values and ways of working
- provided feedback to the Out of Home Care Reform process
- participated in the Cultural training from Yorganop, about the Impact of Colonisation and the Stolen Generation on Aboriginal people
- been trained in Accidental Counsellor training from Lifeline, and
- learned more about the child protection system through the Finding Your Way training.

Unfortunately we have had to postpone the training on:

- How and When to share your story, and
- Trauma Informed Practice.

But we look forward to resuming face to face training when we can safely do so, and we are continuing to discuss the best ways to support families at this time, through different mediums.

**Would you like to Zoom in, or join a WhatsApp chat to do some virtual art, and chat to other families who are involved with child protection at the moment? Have you tried Zendangling? or made an Eye of God? just some of the suggestions that have come from families who are isolating at home.**

**Ph: 0411 032 308 to talk to Jacquie about how to join.**

## **Creative@home**

Community Projects are a way of staying creative at home as individuals, while also working on something fun together as a community. The program is for people to Act-Belong-Commit creatively while they are home in isolation. Here you can find group projects that everyone can contribute to and celebrate once the need for social distancing is past!

[northmidlands.org.au](http://northmidlands.org.au)

## **Playgroup at Home**

Positive social connection has always been a great way to help with managing stress. Playgroup WA have launched a new Facebook group called Playgroup at Home WA to keep you inspired, and connected to others while at home at this time. There are also other great resources including 'Play Ideas', and 'Building active bodies and brains.'

[playgroupwa.com.au](http://playgroupwa.com.au)

## **Time in Nature has not been cancelled!**

Nature Play WA has put together a list of 25 things to do in social isolation. Our lives have changed in many ways with events and gatherings being cancelled but thankfully we still can go outside for a short time with the people we live with. From picnicing in your back yard to collecting leaves and sticks for a collage, there are some great ideas here:

[natureplaywa.org.au](http://natureplaywa.org.au)

**Keep an eye on the Fin WA website for more child-friendly, and mindful ideas to keep calm and positive while we are all spending more time together.**

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