



Aboriginal Family
Support Services

Annual Report

2004-2005

Aboriginal Family Support Services
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MISSION AND VALUES STATEMENTS

Mission

Aboriginal Family Support Services (AFSS) provides programs and services that assist and support Aboriginal People to protect and preserve their families. AFSS ensures that Aboriginal children and young people achieve their maximum potential by growing up in safe, secure, culturally sensitive and supportive environments.

Values

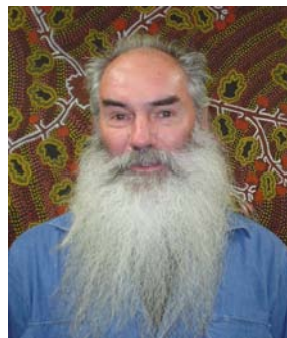
AFSS is committed to contributing to the well being of Aboriginal people and their families by providing high quality client focussed programs and services within a sound cultural, ethical and legal framework. AFSS values strong, fair and energetic leadership and adherence to acceptable management principles and practices and acknowledges the important role that staff play in achieving organisational objectives by supporting their professional growth and development, and rewarding their hard work, skills, knowledge and experience.

To ensure that children are placed appropriately, AFSS is committed to the Aboriginal Placement Principle. This Principle is based on the premise that Aboriginal Children are better off cared for by Carers within the extended family or community to ensure their culture is not lost.

Board of Management Current Members



Kym Mitchell
Executive Member



Ian Davidson
Chairperson



Wayne Rigney
Treasurer



Margaret Nelson
Executive Member



Barbara Falla
Secretary



Sharron Williams
Director

Members at last Election/AGM 2004/2005



Directors Report

In terms of our organisational growth and stability, this year has been filled with challenges and excitement. With some staff changes and the introduction and development of some new programs as a result of the Alternative Care funding Agreements, it has included the continued uncertainty regarding the tender process and non-awarding of new contracts for service delivery in the Northern Country Region. We have also had added pressures of only being granted a one (1) year contract for the Metropolitan Aboriginal Alternative Care program.

However, I am very happy to be advising that we are still achieving significant outcomes with for Placement Services metropolitan region, Reunification services metropolitan (new program) and Early Intervention services metropolitan (new program) and continued delivery of Placement services and Family Preservation in our Northern Country Region (unchanged funding for this region).

AFSS have been awarded an extension of the Northern Country Region Alternative Care Services Agreement until June 2006 as we continue to be involved in stakeholder forums to explore appropriate and sensitive options for service delivery to this region.

AFSS participation in the Petrol Sniffing program (metro based) has been discontinued, with the Department of Families and Communities lobbying for funds to continue the program under a better working model and hopefully re-located to Port Augusta.

In terms of our Youth Accommodation Support Service (YASS) this program has continued to be extremely stable in terms of staffing and program delivery. It has maintained a high quality of service for our unit residence and continues to enhance the partnerships with the stakeholder groups including the Aboriginal communities.

In March of this year Leanne Young, Manager, YASS went on twelve months leave without pay to take up a position with the Sturt City Council. Dan Mitchell who was our Senior Youth Worker within the YASS is taking up the challenge and is filling the position for the next year.

Highlights of the year include:

Client Camp

We were successful in gaining funding from the Commonwealth Government to run a cultural camp for child in foster care. This was a wonderful adventure that allowed 12 young boys to experience cultural connectedness at York Peninsula. The camp provided cultural activities including fishing, boomerang making and throwing, story telling, bush walking and traditional foods. Due to the overwhelming success of the camp AFSS will be seeking additional funds for cultural camps in the near future.

Carers Week

In recognition of our Carers and the celebration of the wonderful job they do throughout the year, during Carers Week staff arranged for carers and children to go to lunch at Charlies Diner in the Metro region and for the North Country region Carers celebrated with a Family Fun Day of

carers and children, this was a day packed with activities for Foster Carers and children with special certificates for our Foster Carers.

Additional Funding

AFSS was successful this year in securing additional funding for our YASS program, this money was by way of one off funding for the replacement of client furniture, Manchester, kitchen items and client computers.

In terms of support and sponsorship we would like to acknowledge and thank - ALRM, APOSS and Tindall Gask Bentley for their support and funding, this has ensured the success of our Foster Carer's Christmas Party. An effort we hope to repeat this year, we were also successful in acquiring funding from the Hon Robert Hill, Emergency Relief Funding for our emergency relief program.

134 Waymouth St

This year we have explored some funding opportunities to do some much needed renovation to our offices at 134 Waymouth Street, we are hoping to be able to remove the carpet in the foyer area and replace it with nice sandstone tiles also to install better lighting, in a hope to make the foyer look more inviting for all who attend our offices.

Enterprise Bargaining

The Enterprise Bargaining Agreement was ratified in April of 2005. Although this seemed to be a long process while we were progressing the negotiations, it was necessary to ensure that the staff representative committee were involved throughout the whole process and at the appropriate points they involve the Union representative. The introduction of the EBA has enabled changes to be introduced and has been successful in assisting to move us to a new level in work place relation.

National Boards:

At a national level I have continue to be actively involved in the following committees:

- SNA ICC
- Families Australia
- CAFWA
- MACAC
- APOSS
- SWAACC
- Inner City Youth Housing Committee
- Nunga Mi:minar
- Alternative Care Operations Committee
- Aboriginal Alternative Care Service Provider Forum
- CHIP
- Face 2 Face

Acknowledgements:

In closing I wish to acknowledge and commend the Board of Management for their commitment and support throughout the year, we recognise the skills, knowledge and experiences that they bring to our agency. Without the continuing commitment and contributions of the Board AFSS we could not continue to service our communities in a positive way.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Management team for their continued support throughout the year.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank all of our Agency Staff in all locations for their commitment and passion for ensuring that our services remain client focused and accessible by all members of our communities. It is your enthusiasm and professional approach to continuous improve that ensures we continue to provide a high standard of service in all program areas.

Thank You for another wonderful and exciting year

Sharron Williams
DIRECTOR



Youth And Support Services Report

INTRODUCTION

Another year has passed for the Youth Accommodation Support Service,(YASS). The YASS program has been extensively involved this year with the University of South Australia participating in their Occupational Therapy Participatory Community Practice Program. From this 4 Occupational Therapy students were offered placement in the YASS program. The aims for the placement are; to increase student awareness of community based agencies and services and to provide an opportunity for students to explore potential community projects. Two projects were identified and developed by the students; one a 'Living Independently with Networks, Care & Support' project and the other, 'The Women's & Children's Learning & Development Centre Asbestos Removal Project'. With the project aim to provide a sustainable, culturally appropriate strategy of support in order to maintain and promote independence for our clients after exiting from supported accommodation.

This year the National Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, (SAAP), rolled out the SAAP V service agreement requirements after an evaluation and review process. Once Bi-Lateral agreements have been reached SAAP V service agreements will be for 5 years.

STAFFING

The year had been one of reasonable stability where staff movement is concerned. In the latter part of the year changes occurred at the management level. Leanne Young has taken 12 months leave without pay to pursue employment in Local Government. The staff at YASS take this opportunity in wishing her lots of luck with her new endeavour. Dan Mitchell, Senior Youth Support Officer will be acting in the position as Manager in Leanne's absence. The vacant Senior Youth Support Officers position will be filled by rotating other staff members from the program who have lodged an expression of interest.

As the current Manager I have been proactive in promoting and participating in a professional development approach to our service delivery by becoming actively involved in other Aboriginal Services and community agencies.

I am a current member of the Marni Wodli Cultural Advisory Group and I am hoping to become active with the Department for Families and Communities in their partnership with SAAP service providers as the Aboriginal SAAP Advisory member. As the current Manager I will continue to promote the YASS program as did Leanne Young, ensuring the program is held in high regard throughout the Government and community sector.

Leanne Young

As the Manager of the Youth Accommodation Support Services Program for eleven months of the 2004/05 financial year I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff for their assistance and support throughout this past year. We work in a challenging and demanding profession and rely on good policies, procedures and collaborative team work to deliver an excellent service.

I have decided to accept a Community Development role in Local Government for the next twelve months and I know I leave the team in good hands with Dan Mitchell as Acting Manager. My absence also provides the opportunity for skilled Level 3 workers to perform level 4 duties on short term contracts. I am confident in everyone's abilities and skills to carry out these duties in a professional and competent manner in my absence.

TRAINING

The Spencer Institute of TAFE was once again approached this year to assist staff with further training options in community services for the next twelve months. Two training packages in; Diploma Community Education and Community Welfare are some of the new study packages that are available for staff.

The Spencer Institute of TAFE has a strong commitment to Pastoral Care with students studying external from a TAFE campus, Course Coordinators visit students in the work place to offer off campus support and assistance. This has proved to be a 'best option' of study for staff that are employed in a community service and working a 7 day roster split between 'AM' and 'PM' shifts.

CLIENT DATA

The following information has been identified from data collected via the National Data Collection Agency's – SMART program (Systems Management and Report Tools);

1. The YASS program provided supported accommodation to approximately 50 clients during 1 July 2004– 30 June 2005 and 24 dependants.
2. The program provided support periods to 39 females and 11 male clients.
3. Support periods, duration of support and accommodation (%):
 - 2-4 weeks 21.3
 - 4-13 weeks 25.5

46.7% of clients duration of stay is between 2-13 weeks

4. The most frequently reported reasons for seeking assistance were:
 - Relationship breakdown 43.9%
 - Domestic Violence 34.1%
 - Usual accommodation unavailable 34.1%
 - Interpersonal conflicts 31.7%
 - Eviction/previous accommodation ended 26.8%
 - Time out from family 24.4%
 - Physical/emotional abuse 24.4%
5. The most 'needed' supports, as reported by clients were identified as;
 - SAAP/CAP Accommodation 96.0%
 - Meals 94.0%
 - Laundry/Show er 92.0%
 - Culturally appropriate 88.0%
 - Transport 70.0%
 - Advice/Information 68.0%
 - Advocacy/Liaison 58.0%
 - Emotional support 66.0%
 - Health/medical services 58.0%

- Assistance to obtain/maintain Independent Accommodation 54.0%
- Living skills 42.0%
- Family counselling 42.0%

6 Primary income source of client on arrival (%);

Parenting payment(single)	38.1%
Youth Allowance	35.7%
New start Allowance	11.9%
Disability Support	7.1%

CLIENT'S PROGRAMS

Clients who are accommodated in the youth program are involved in the development of their individual case management plans with the assistance of the Senior Youth Support Officer and their Key Worker. Individual case plans actively involve clients in identified programs such as Parenting Workshops, TAFE and Education and Employment options. Early Intervention programs provided by AFSS have been incorporated into the clients individual case management plans.

The Early Intervention program will provide clients with strategies to:

- Build capacity in families to care for their children
- Help break the cycle of abuse and neglect.

The Program will include:

- Nunga Parenting Group
- Nunga Child's Play
- Child/Parent Play
- Group Sessions – with visiting specialists
- Men's Groups

The youth program has also provided social and recreational activities where clients participate in the decision making and implementation process. Both units are equipped with Foxtel, Xbox and Playstation consoles and games, DVD and Video libraries. Clients have access to a Resource room equipped with computers, art supplies, reading material, board games and children toys and activities.

CONFERENCES/FORUMS/MEETINGS

Staff attended two several conferences this year focusing on the promotion of Aboriginal Homelessness and Mental Health Youth issues. The conferences, attended were; The Mental Health Service annual conference and the Knowledge Into Action Conference. Staff also attend throughout the year the following Community Agency meetings, SAAP monthly Managers, SAAP monthly Seniors, Marni Wodli Cultural Advisory Group, and several local government network meetings addressing youth issues.

I would also like to acknowledge the dedicated staff members of the team who continue to demonstrate loyalty and commitment to YASS and assist in the promoting of the program as the professional, specialist service that it now is.

SUMMARY

SAAP is entering a new phase after the SAAP IV evaluation stage of the National program, and it is expected that the new SAAP V agreement will be for 5 years.

As a team we will continue to develop and grow. As a youth service we will lead the way.

Dan Mitchell

A/Manager, Youth Accommodation Support Services



Family Support Services Report

This year has seen AFSS programs continue to provide high quality services to the Aboriginal community throughout South Australia.

Family Support Services incorporates

- Metropolitan Alternative Care
- Northern Country Alternative Care
- Early Intervention
- Emergency Relief
- Cultural Liaison

Each area has programs that sit within them such as Foster Care, Reunification, Parenting programs and Community assistance. Further information is included in the following Program reports.

During the year AFSS developed the new programs in line with the Alternative Care tender. In the past AFSS provided a Family Preservation program that in addition to reunifying families assisted birth families with supports to prevent family breakdown. In the new tender, AFSS is funded to provide reunification services only.

Lyn Jones, Coordinator Reunification in consultation with AFSS senior staff developed a reunification model that was implemented in October 2004.

To deal with the problems faced by Aboriginal families in crisis, AFSS developed the Early Intervention program to bridge the gap between Family Preservation and the new look Reunification program.

AFSS won the tender for Foster Care with additional dollars to previous years. This enabled the program to provide more intensive support to foster carers and look at alternatives to the traditional ways of providing this type of service. A number of new initiatives were developed and trialed over the financial year.

The review of Alternative Care in the Northern Country region was another area where AFSS has been very involved over the last 12 months. I have attended all of the review meetings with the Director and the Coordinator, Northern Country.

The process whilst it has been lengthy has also raised a number of issues that are not only pertinent to the Northern Country region but also to the Alternative Care sector. The issues that have been keenly debated included relative care, dual registration and the dollars attached to service delivery. The outcome of the meetings will culminate in December 2005 with a preferred provider tender process.

The Cultural Liaison Officer has attended a number of the information sharing sessions in addition to their attendance at all metropolitan Family Care meetings. They have also forged new links within Southern Country to act as cultural advocates when AFSS is unable to attend.

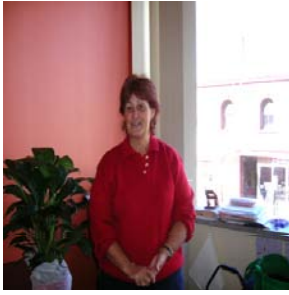
Sadly the number of court responses and attendance at Family Care meetings has not diminished.

As of the 1st July 2004 AFSS has been trialling a number of new positions in Family Support Services. Each program area is led by the Program Coordinator. This position is similar to the Senior roll however with additional responsibility and an Agency Portfolio. Further positions that have been trialled that include a mentored Family Support Worker and Lead Family Support Worker. The mentored position has been very successful in the Early Intervention program. The Lead Family Support Worker has been successful in the Foster Care area. AFSS believes the creation of these new positions create a career path for new and existing employees as they develop their skills.

AFSS have been very proactive throughout the year in presenting information sessions of new and existing programs to the community. These include fellow Aboriginal organisations, CYFS and other interested parties within the community.

In closing I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you and a job well done to all Family Support Workers. It has been a year of change and challenges that this committed and dedicated team of workers has met head on.

Peter Laintoll
Manager, Family Support Services



Early Intervention Report

Early Intervention offers 5 main programs:

- Nunga Parenting
- Child/Adult Play
- Men's Group
- Nunga Child's Play
- Community Assistance Program (CAP) & Emergency Relief (ER)

Staff

- Coordinator – Lyn Gordon
- Home Maker (FSW) – Michelle Taylor
- Mentored position (FSW) – Vincent Bizzell
- Child Care Position (FSW) – Sasha Nichols

History

Early Intervention was first conceived due to the perceived crisis of family breakdown among the indigenous peoples of Adelaide. The Programs are designed for Aboriginal families who are experiencing significant difficulty and where immediate intensive intervention is required prior to a real crisis occurring (e.g. family breakdown or children being removed).

Extensive research revealed that no other organisation had an Early Intervention program specifically for Aboriginal families that provided learning support to prevent a breakdown of the family unit.

All the programs and topics (with the exception of Nunga Child's Play, Community Assistance and Emergency Relief) were identified and developed with full consultation and cooperation from Elders and other members of the Adelaide Metro Aboriginal Community.

The groups that were represented in the consultation process included: Narungga; Kurna; Pitjantjatjara; Ngarrindjeri; Yankuntjara, Anangu and Arrernte:

Lyn Gordon developed the Nunga Parenting Program, and with the assistance of two Occupational Therapy students, developed the Child/Adult Play program. The Men's Group was developed by Tui Leleisuafo in consultation with Terry Tilmouth and AFSS senior staff. Natalie Worth developed Nunga Child's Play.

Nunga Parenting commenced in November 2004, ran for 5 weeks and averaged 4 participants weekly. Child/Adult Play commenced in March 2005, ran for 7 weeks and averaged 4 adult & 7 children weekly. The Men's group commenced in June 2005, ran for 6 weeks and averaged 8 participants weekly.

Current Situation

The programs within Early Intervention are offered to all persons who are in a parenting role of an Aboriginal child. The programs (except Community Assistance and Emergency Relief) are offered at 503 Cross Roads, South Plympton.

Early Intervention is a sustainable program and the individual programs have the capacity to be adapted and offered in any region of Australia including metropolitan areas, remote and isolated regions. The program is funded by FACs, and has flourished due to good Management leadership and having a proactive Coordinator. The programs are continuously being evaluated (qualitative not always quantitative).

The programs have proactive and preventative approaches that address the need to “get in early”. They have a holistic approach and address the social and environmental determinants of Wellbeing including:

- food/diet,
- housing,
- unemployment,
- parenting issues, sustaining
- Supporting the family
- Relationship issues (parent/child & adult/adult)

The Programs have an Aboriginal community and family approach which addresses the need to empower Aboriginal communities and families by enhancing the skills families and individuals already possess

The Early Intervention programs has offered group sessions to an average of 37 families.

Community Events

It is difficult to introduce a program without spending an extensive time promoting the benefits the program can offer the community. Early Intervention staff have been heavily involved in the following:

- Croc Fest – Jewellery making, rock painting & face painting
- Parks Community Family Day - rock painting & face painting
- Marion Family Day – Miniature Gardens, craft activities
- Davenport Community – traditional jewellery making
- Pt Pirie AFSS promotional day – promoting CWB programs to the community
- Pt Augusta Family Days X 2
- Cultural Camp for children in Care – Camp Coorong.

Challenges for the future

The New Year holds many challenges for the Early Intervention team. Some of the new directions involved are:

- A Relaxation program – intertwined with all programs. Being developed by 4 Occupational Therapy students
- Introduction of Aboriginal games & story telling into Nunga Parenting & Child/Adult Play programs
- Expansion of Child/Adult Play program to include activities for children 0-3 years. Lyn G & Sasha Nichols are developing this program that will include:
 - * Play without toys
 - * Entertaining 0-3 year olds whilst busy e.g. shopping, on the bus, waiting in a line etc
- Offering the CWB programs to Aboriginal people in all Prisons in SA – Yatala, Adelaide Women’s Prison, Pt Augusta & Mobilong (Murray Bridge) and several in NSW
- All Programs may be offered in Pt Pirie, Pt Augusta, Whyalla, Pt Lincoln, Ceduna, Point Pearce & Coober Pedy
- Introduction of social programs e.g. rock painting, traditional painting & jewellery making, community lunches and Elders Yarning
- Development of “Courage To Heal” Program by Rosalie Nethercott and Lyn Gordon – Concentrating on Indigenous Law of Creation
- Home Maker, which is a new position. The position will assist families:
 - * To establish household routines (meals, bed time, appointments, school)
 - * Cooking ideas,
 - * Budgeting advice,
 - * Referrals to other services etc

- New joint program in Northern Metropolitan area. “Keeping Track” is a collaborative program with 8 local agencies including – Centacare, Centrelink, CYFS, Munna Paiendi, AFSS, Kids ‘N’ You, Kaurna Plains Child Care & Primary School

Portfolio – Licensing of AFSS Resources

- AFSS are licensing all programs e.g. Nunga Parenting, Child/Adult Play, Men’s Group, Carer’s Support Program, and any future resources developed at AFSS
- Full licensing of Resources will be completed by January 2006

Coordinator

As the Coordinator of the Early Intervention Program, I have been proactive in promoting and participating in a professional development approach to our service delivery by becoming actively involved in other Aboriginal Services and representing AFSS on Forums and Committees e.g.

- Representative on:
 - * The Prevention of Black Deaths in Custody Forum
 - * Reunification Reference Committee
 - * Northern Financial Counselling Network Committee
- Participation in community events (mentioned above)
- Continuously promoting AFSS & programs through presentations to:
 - * Communities
 - * CYFS
 - * Other services/agencies
 - * Agencies in other locations in SA
- Attending conferences/meetings/forums

Students

The Early Intervention Program has been extensively involved this year with the University of South Australia as 6 Occupational Therapy students and 1 Social Work student were placed in the Early Intervention program. The aims for the placement were to explore potential Family orientated projects. One project was identified and developed by 2 students: the Child/Adult Play program. A Relaxation program for males (dads) & females (mums) is still being developed by 4 students. The Social Work student completed an Evaluation document and procedure for the CWB program. The projects aims are to provide a sustainable, culturally appropriate program to build on the skills and strengths families already possess.

Lyn Gordon
Co-ordinator

Reunification Services Report

The Alternative Care sector has undergone some dramatic changes in the lead up to the 2003/2004 financial year. The outcome of the Alternative Care Tender saw AFSS win the tender to provide reunification services to the Aboriginal community in the Adelaide metropolitan area.

Prior to the new tender, AFSS provided Family Preservation services throughout the State. These services included practical support to families in crisis, reconnection with significant members of the child's family and reunification.

Reunification, in the new tender focused on safely returning children to their birth families once the issues were addressed that caused the removal in the first place.

AFSS developed a model that encompassed three distinct areas to ensure the safe and sustainable return of children to their birth families. The three areas were

- Practical support – This included support and advocacy to secure suitable housing, assistance with budgeting, securing placements with other organizations to deal with Drug & Alcohol, Domestic Violence and addictive behaviours.
- Wellbeing – AFSS worked on developing a program that supported birth families to address the deep seated issues impacting on their ability to be a good parent. Issues that were highlighted by parents included the impact of the Stolen Generation, self esteem and grief and loss.
- Parenting Courses – Many birth families that came into the Reunification program did not have strong and positive role models to learn how to be a parent. Practical training around cooking, scheduling and child development are key components of the parenting programs.

Prior to program commencing, AFSS worked in partnership with Centacare and Central Alternative Care Unit to develop a comprehensive referral process.

The Reunification program commenced with four clients in October 2004. These four clients had been clients of AFSS Family Preservation program.

Over the ensuing months AFSS received a further seven referrals to the program. To the end of June no reunifications had occurred.

AFSS have found the Reunification area to be a challenging one. It is a new program for the Agency that is constantly reviewed and evaluated.

We also understand the importance of ensuring the family is safe and strong before children are placed back with their family. We also understand that reunification may not be possible in all cases so AFSS strives for best connection or a shared care arrangement.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Reunification Team, Lyn Jones, Rebecca Shaw and Emma Sumner for their commitment and dedication.



Community Care Report

This year has been an exciting year for the Community Care Team. We have been busy focusing on developing and implementing new initiatives to complement and strengthen the Community Care Program whilst implementing the changes outlined in the Alternative Care Tender of 2004.

Our focus has been to develop strategies that will improve AFSS relationships with our Carer's and increase the support that we provide to them. In addition, we have worked at increasing the pool of Carer's. This has led to a reduction of the pressure placed on Carer households and has directly contributed to the decrease in the number of placement breakdowns.

Our other priority has been to reduce the number of children referred through to the non-Aboriginal Service Provider, Anglicare. A joint project with Anglicare commenced early in 2005. A new referral process was developed and where possible children referred to non Aboriginal care were returned to AFSS foster carers as soon as possible. AFSS is currently developing a Cultural Maintenance Plan that ensures Aboriginal children and young people placed in non Aboriginal care retain and strengthen their cultural links with their families and communities.

From July 2004- June 2005 the Community Care Team was staffed by one Supervisor and three Family Support Workers (FSW). AFSS also trialed the position of a Duty Officer for 8 months. This position proved to be beneficial as it allowed the Team additional time to focus on developing and implementing the changes to the Community Care Program. The time also ensured each FSW was able to access much needed training in the assessment of new carer's and focus more time on initiating Assessments of potential carers.

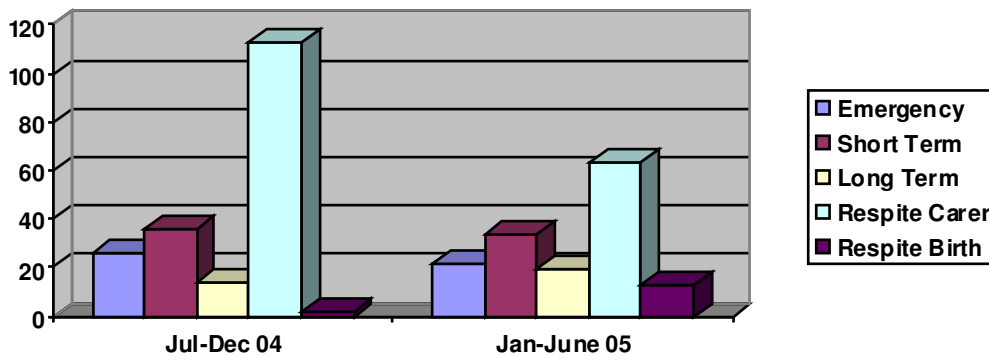
During the year the Community Care team had three Uni SA students on placement. The students conducted a range of activities from

- developing and trialling a culturally appropriate child development training package
- assisting in the development of a cultural camp model and participating at the initial cultural camp at Point Pearce
- being an active member of our Team and conducting case management duties.

The positives for the Team were immense. There was a noticeable increase in the Team morale and esteem that may be attributed to the opportunity to impart their knowledge and experience to the students therefore facilitating both parties learning experience. There has also been a noted improvement in work practices and procedures for the Team. The students put some of their technical knowledge into practice to assist the Team to develop and streamline our processes and systems.

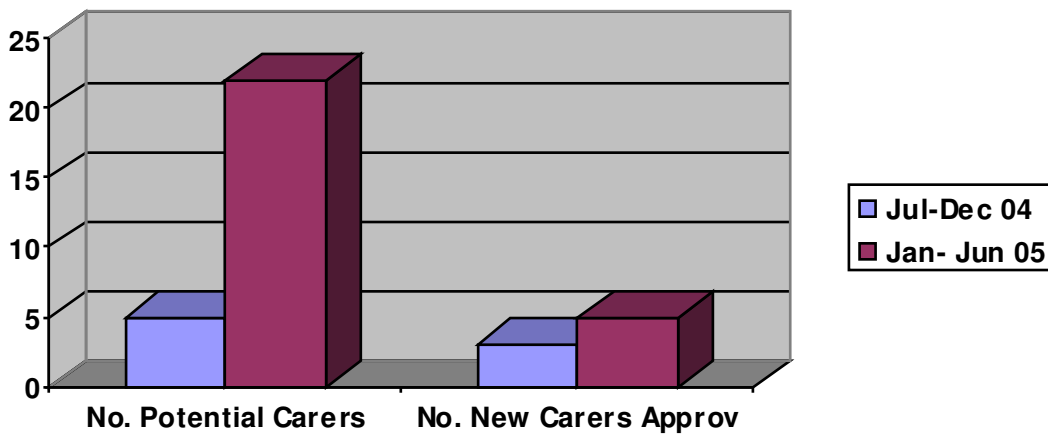
Each member of the Community Care Team has worked extremely hard and has been incredibly creative in their approaches to address the identified gaps in service delivery and meet the Agency goals of increasing the number of Carer's, improving relationships and support provided to Carer's and reducing the number of children placed in Anglicare placements.

Referrals for Placements

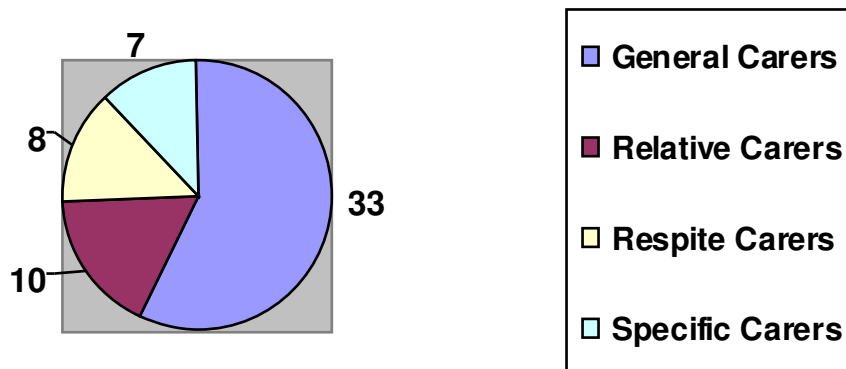


- ❖ 100% of respite referrals requested were sourced
- ❖ 91% of other referrals requested were sourced
 - Improved by 21% from December 04- June 05

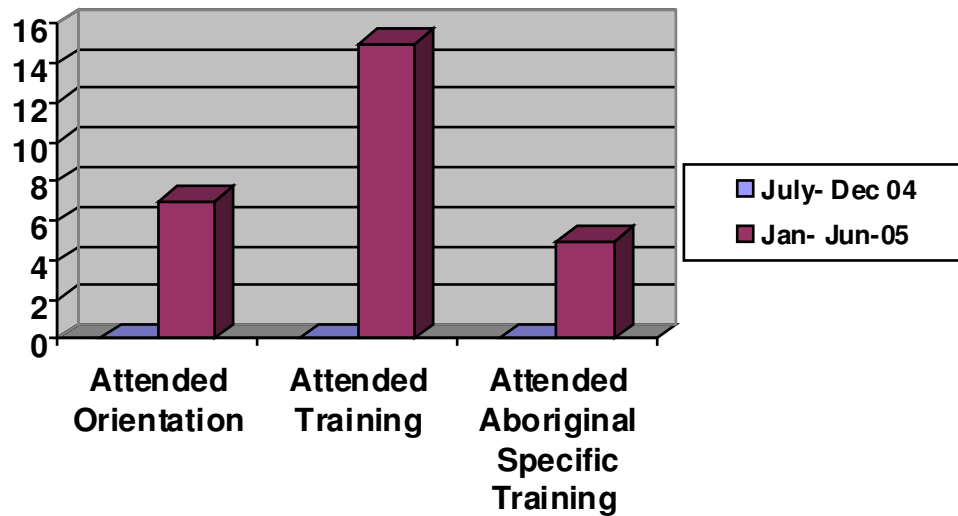
Recruitment and Assessment



Statistics of Current Carers



Orientation and Training



Petrol Sniffing Project

The PSP house was closed in July 2005 after the last placement at the house ceased in May. After evaluating the effectiveness of the Project, the Department decided to cease funding while a new model was developed to incorporate a crucial safe transition plan back to the Lands for the young people who are referred. This stage was not fully developed or incorporated in the previous model and the young people found themselves relocated to Adelaide on a more permanent basis isolated from their family and community after undergoing detoxification and intensive therapeutic support.

Mr and Mrs Ducasse were the carers who performed as fulltime house parent's duties. Throughout the life of the Project they showed a high degree of commitment and dedication to the young people in their care and were instrumental in enabling them to overcome their addiction and transition to independent living.

Respite House

A respite house was opened in November 2004. A fulltime house parent resided in the house for three months. In this time there was an average of 6 children per week placed in the house. The house was proposed to place all emergency placements to allow for a planned transition into longer term placements. The house also provided an opportunity for significant sibling access to occur for larger groups of siblings separated through placements. The respite house was closed in January to reassess and evaluate the proposed model and recruit another carer.

New Initiatives

Each Family Support Worker has chosen a portfolio/project that reflects their expertise and experience.

Youth Initiatives- Rebecca Kimlin

Proposing and developing models and facilitating Cultural Camps, Peer Support groups, School Holiday programs. These are designed to provide support to carers through informal respite options and complements AFSS commitment to connecting children and young people (CYP) to their cultural heritage through providing significant opportunities for CYP to experience their culture.

Peer Support Groups for Carer's- Parkel Lemarkat

Proposed and developed in consultation a model to facilitate the creation of Peer Support Groups for carers to attend. These are designed to increase informal supports to carers through social connections and network development, increase carers skills and knowledge through informal training to be provided and an avenue for the Agency to consult with the carers and gain valuable input into the development of training packages etc.

Aboriginal Children in Non- Aboriginal Placements- Muriel Cooper

AFSS have instigated consultation with Anglicare and the Department to identify the numbers of Aboriginal children in non- Aboriginal care and develop strategies to return the children to Aboriginal placements where possible and develop a partnership approach to address the lack of cultural support provided to children in care.

Volunteer Program - Sue Parkhurst

Design and develop an Agency Volunteer Program to complement AFSS Programs service delivery.

Staff Training

There was an emphasis on staff training this year. The Community Care Training calendar included: Assessment Orientation and Mentoring, Basic Counselling Course, Community Leadership Workshops, Project Management Workshops, and Volunteer Management Workshops, Train the Trainer in Nunga Childs Play, Responding to Children and Domestic Violence and Certificate IV Business Management.

Summary

I would like to acknowledge the permanent members of the team Muriel Cooper, Rebecca Kimlin and Parkel Lemarkat who continue to demonstrate loyalty and commitment to the development, implementation and cohesiveness of the Community Care Team. Their professionalism and consistency have been instrumental in providing the best possible support to their carers and the implementation of their projects has ensured improved service delivery to the community.

Suzannah Parkhurst
Co-ordinator, Foster Care

Northern Country Region Report

The past year has seen this area focus largely on the outcome of the Alternative Care Tender process. As it stands it has still not been awarded. The Director, Manager, Family Support Services, Coordinator, Northern Country and Board Members of AFSS attended 6 meetings with nominees of the Department, Aboriginal Alternative Care Service Providers, Non Aboriginal Alternative Care providers, and local CYFS offices. The aim of the meetings was to develop a Service model that was workable and culturally appropriate for the Northern Region.

Community Consultation in the area occurred on the 16th September 2004 and 13th December 2004, with representatives from the Aboriginal community and local Agencies/Departments invited to discuss the proposed service specifications and the tender process. Large numbers attended the initial forum, however due to low numbers in attendance for the second, it was difficult to form a full quorum of representation.

AFSS believes that the community has quite clearly requested that AFSS continue with Alternative Care Services within the Region, however mutually agree that it is under resourced with little additional funding available.

For the period July 2004 to June 2005, the Northern Region office was staffed by one Supervisor, and one Family Support Officer. Although this is quite clearly a low number of staff to deliver a service to the Northern Region, the Manager, Family Support Services has sourced additional funding to staff the area with another Family Support Officer up to the 31st December 2005.

AFSS currently provide the following services in the Northern Region

- Family Preservation Services
- Placement
- Recruitment, Assessment and Training of Foster Carers
- Cultural Advocate at Family Care Meetings
- Sourcing and consultation for all Aboriginal Placements

In early April, 2004, AFSS was successful in securing funds from Community Benefits SA to recruit foster carers and act as a promotional tool for the wider community to increase the community's awareness of AFSS services.

The Quorn Willsden Football club had previously approached AFSS for sponsorship for their as they saw AFSS philosophy 'Together with the community', very much the vision of their own. Subsequently AFSS Northern Region sponsored the Quorn Willsden Football club, due to their high percentage of Aboriginal players/members and also the event/services that they deliver to the children/families of Port Augusta, Quorn and surrounding areas which focuses on keeping families strong and a place to be safe.

Since this time, we have achieved the following outcomes:

- Free advertising in the newspapers and club newsletters
- Recruitment of three General Foster Carers
- Held two Family Days at the club as a venue (numbers in attendance: approx. 400-500)
- Positive recognition within the wider community and agencies/Departments
- High understanding from the community of AFSS Services

Community Events

AFSS, Northern Region works closely with the community and explores avenues to bring the community together. This year AFSS held or participated in a number of events that included

- Family Fun Day: jewellery making, face painting, badge making, traditional foods, bbq, fire engine, biscuit face making, kites, karaoke, tug-a-war, games
- Communities for children expo: recruitment pads, pens, balloons, pamphlets
- Child Protection Week 2004: recruitment pads, pens, balloons, pamphlets
- Croc Fest 2004: balloons, pens, pads, pamphlets
- Woolworths Port Augusta: balloons, pens, pads, pamphlets
- Interview on Umeewarra Radio Station

CARERS Week, 2004:

AFSS presented Dot paintings with 'Families' as the main theme and a Certificate of Appreciation to each Aboriginal carer in the Northern Region.

AFSS also held a special lunch to present the paintings and certificates and to thank everyone for their dedication and commitment in ensuring Aboriginal children and young people are assured a safe and happy home when they are unable to remain with their family.

Family Preservation:

Over the last twelve months the Northern Region Office has received 3 referrals for reunification. There is an ongoing frustration in this area as we believe there should be many more. However it is believed that with the introduction of AFSS Early intervention Service in this area, referrals may rise. The Northern Region Team are working collaboratively with CYFS offices to review the reason for a relatively low number of Family Preservation referrals.

New Initiatives:

AFSS particularly in the Northern Country Region see a number of challenges for the future. These include

- Outcome/Set up of the tender for Northern Region
- Further community Consultation in the Far North Region and possibly the Far West Region
- Early Intervention Program to be accessible in the Northern Region
- High Needs Foster Care House in Port Augusta and Whyalla
- Home Maker Position for Northern Region
- Yorke Peninsula to be covered by AFSS metro due to cultural connections and geographic area.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Deidre Mahomed and Darlene Allen for their hard work and commitment throughout the year in providing a service that is highly regarded in our community.

Katie Coulthard
Co-ordinator, Northern Country



Cultural Liaison Report

This financial year has been very interesting as the position is a new initiative and prior to my commencement the duties were shared amongst AFSS head office staff.

The duties included,

- ***To make recommendations on Care and Protection applications, and to provide written and verbal reports to the Court.***
- ***Provide an understanding of Family and Cultural background to Family Care Meetings.***
- ***Ensuring Carer Concerns were conducted in a manner that is culturally appropriate.***
- ***To provide Cultural advice and support to staff and clients.***

The transition into this position was as easy as the roles and duties of the Cultural Consultant were clearly defined and supported by all staff.

Care and Protection Applications

AFSS developed a data base that allows AFSS to be log and maintain all court response history for Aboriginal children coming into the out of home care system.

The database has enable AFSS to work with birth parents to monitor their progress in meeting any obligations imposed on them through court orders or in addressing their identified concerns and needs.

Over the last year I have established stronger networks, rapport and partnerships with

- Community Youth and Family Services offices,
- Child Protection Unit and
- Special Investigations Unit.

AFSS also has the ability to monitor all court applications lodged throughout the State in relation to Indigenous families and their children.

The added benefits were an improvement in the time frame and turn around of Care and Protection applications to sibling access, a stronger move to reunification and a certified effort to maintaining cultural ties and links. The efforts previously by CYFS were token gestures to culture and were not included in a majority of their applications.

***Care and Protection Applications processed
for the period July 04 to June 05*** = ***102***

Family Care Meetings

Having one permanent representative to the Family Care Meetings is greatly appreciated by the Care and Protection Unit (CPU) in that we were able to maintain continuity.

Families felt more confident in contributing and having a positive involvement and participation in the outcomes of their children's welfare and safety. Over the period we have developed a strong rapport with the CPU and this is beneficial to both the clients and the Unit as we are consulted regularly for advice in relation to Indigenous families locally and Intrastate.

The families have also identified the benefits of having the Cultural Liaison Officer as a permanent Cultural Representative for the Family Care Meetings as they feel an affiliation and feel they can approach AFSS anytime for clarification or advice.

Family Care Meetings attended for period July 04 to June 05 = 41
Number of Individual who attended = 73

Special Agency Project

In June of 2005 Aboriginal Family Support Services applied for and was successful in obtaining a grant in establishing the roles and responsibilities of a Gazetted Organisation.

Prior to commencing the Project I undertook extensive research to ascertain what information was available to Gazetted organisations. I discovered limited information regarding the roles and responsibilities of Gazetted Organisations in relation to child protection issues existed.

During the three month period I undertook extensive consultation with other Aboriginal alternative care agencies, CYFS and the Child Protection Unit to clearly define the role of Gazetted organisations. In addition to developing a brochure and training package, a list of contacts with other appropriate organisations was established to act as AFSS nominees in the Southern Country region for Family Care meetings.

The assistance of the Care and Protection Unit in Adelaide has been invaluable in establishing guidelines regarding the role of the Cultural Representative in Family Care Meetings for anyone who attends as Cultural Representatives, as it outlines the requirements and obligations.

Special Investigations and Carer Concerns

In the July 04 to June 05 periods I had been involved in 1 Special Investigation and 6 Carer Concerns.

Mens Group.

In April this year we started up a Mens Group at AFSS Cross Road property to discuss current issues and problems being faced daily by Aboriginal men. The six week course dealt with,

- Role modelling
- Empowering for self determination i.e. independence opposed to state dependence.
- Addressing social stigma i.e. high prison & unemployment representation etc.
- Revisiting traditional and cultural customs making it relevant for today's society.
- Drug & alcohol issues.
- Anger and Domestic Violence.
- Sharing ideas for better quality lives for ourselves, relationships with partners and spouses, family and children.

The initial group proved a success averaging 10- 15 men attending each session. The general feedback from the participants and their partners was all positive.

Over the 6 week period a total of 35 men attended

The Mens Group was recommenced on the 4th November 2005. It is run each Friday and although we have not achieved the same numbers of participants (4 – 5) as the first session, the enthusiasm has not waned with interest still being shown indicating the needs for such programs is definitely needed in the community.

Cultural Awareness

On commencing my duties here I had discovered that there are many myths in regards to Aboriginal people, their Culture, Traditions and lifestyle.

This caused confusion not only to non indigenous people but to a lot of indigenous people themselves and the roles and responsibilities we have in today's society. I have presented session to Volunteer groups, other agencies and Departments in relation to delivering services to Indigenous families and individuals, as well as being a cultural support for AFSS staff.

In these sessions I had identified the need for a reference guide or visual aids to assist in explaining the different Skin Groups, clans and Kinship connections that I had developed with the assistance of the Elders of Central Australia and the Elders of Adelaide.

A Power Point presentation is also available for your perusal.

Terry Tilmouth
Cultural Consultant



Administration Support

The Administration Team over the last twelve months once again has provided all of AFSS programs with efficient administrative and financial support.

AFSS Administration sits over two program areas. The Management Support Officer, Hayley Byford and the Trainee Receptionist, Michael Millar belong to the Community Development program. The Senior Finance Officer, Bruce Mortimer and the Administration Officer, IT, Simon Cook sits in AFSS Resources. Amanda Taylor who is the Program Support Officer for Family Support Services is an honorary Administration Team member and we thank her for all her support to the Team throughout the year.

The Community Development Team supports the Agency by providing a friendly and efficient "first point of call" for the community. They are instrumental in ensuring the Agency's day to day business is always in order and members of the community coming to the Agency always feel welcomed.

The AFSS Resource Team provides an internal bureau service to the other AFSS programs. All the accounting and IT needs of the Agency are met by Bruce and Simon.

Over the last twelve months AFSS has continued to investigate other areas to source funds. We were once again successful in securing \$29,500 through a Community Benefits grant to establish a Volunteer program. AFSS believes the recruitment and support of well trained volunteers will take some of the pressure off of current program workers. Suzannah Parkhurst, Coordinator of Community Care will be the person responsible for ensuring the program will be operational by early 2006. We thank Community Benefits SA for their continuing support.

During the year AFSS was overwhelmed by the generosity of the community, particularly during the Xmas period. AFSS received both financial donations and Christmas presents from the community that provided Aboriginal children and young people in care with Christmas presents and an extremely successful annual Christmas party.

AFSS also received a \$5,000 from Tower Trust during the latter part of 2004. Part of this generous donation was used to purchase Christmas presents for Aboriginal children and young people in care. The balance was used to purchase educational equipment and games for the Agency programs.

We thank Tower Trust for their continuing support for the work AFSS provides to the community.

Sadly this year we said goodbye to Hayley Byford. Hayley had been a tremendous support to the Agency in particular Sharron Williams the Director. Hayley will be very much missed by all. I would like to thank Bruce, Simon, Michael, Amanda and Eliza Farrell for their continuing work and dedication. Once again a job well done.

Peter Laintoll
Manager, Administrative Services