

THE FAMILY NET-WORKS

A magazine for people working with children and their families on the Central Coast


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If you have any comments or suggestions for ways of improving The Family Net-Works or future topics, please contact the Central Coast Networks of Practice Team.

We welcome contributions from readers.

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 the benevolent society
initiating change

 families first
A NSW Government initiative

THE FAMILY NET-WORKS

Issue 3 - November 2004

Worker Support

Welcome again to The Family Net-Works.

This third edition has emerged amidst a flurry of other activities across the Central Coast... and could easily be called the 'Congratulations edition'... because of the numerous Central Coast projects or organisations receiving recognition for their great work. See inside for more details.

Also, the first edition of the Central Coast Practice X-change is being launched this month – this journal acknowledges and celebrates the work of Central Coast workers in prevention and intervention around Violence, Abuse and Neglect.

The magazine's theme of worker support therefore is quite appropriate - recognition of successes is one part of the many things which contribute to workers feeling valued and supported in their work.

Feedback Survey

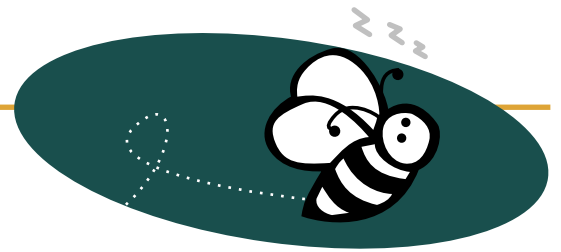
We are seeking feedback about the magazine's content to guide us next year in its development and production, so I have included a brief survey (either as a separate email file or as a hard copy for others). Please take a few minutes to complete the survey and return it to us before the 10th December. For those who do complete the survey, we are offering a chance to win a free place at a Learning and Development workshop of your choice next year. (Three places will be offered, randomly selected)



This edition is the last for the year so the Networks of Practice team would like to thank everyone who has supported the project this year, and wish you all a safe and happy summer break.

Deb and the Networks of Practice team

The Buzz



This section is devoted to what is going on locally and regionally.

Let us know the latest comings and goings of staff, new services or changes in programs and interesting tidbits. Please let us know what is happening in your area or service so we can let others know.

New Central Coast Aboriginal Health Strategic Plan 2004-08

A new Aboriginal Health Plan has been developed after extensive consultation with the Aboriginal and wider communities, and was launched during NAIDOC Week in early August. The plan provides a framework for working together to improve access to services and the health of Aboriginal people living on the Central Coast. Recent achievements in health include:

- signing of a local partnership agreement with Yerin Aboriginal Health services
- inclusion of cultural awareness as a mandatory component of CCH staff training
- establishment and resourcing of the Nunyara Aboriginal Health unit, and
- Building and fitting out of new premises for the Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Centre

For further information contact Mick Pittman or Warren Steadman on 43202698

Central Coast Health

CCH undertook a project targeting men accessing maternity services. As an outcome of the project 90% of antenatal education programs have a male facilitated session that addresses such issues as communication, relationships, post natal depression etc. A program was developed to train male facilitators to conduct the sessions, with resources also developed specifically for expectant and new dads. These are now standard for antenatal care.

For further information, contact Carol Newing, 43934822

Congratulations All Round...

to those at Peninsula Alternative Learning Centre.

Eight students from the Peninsula Alternative Learning Centre recently were recognised in the Young Achievement Australia NSW awards. The students competed against other high school students across NSW as well as tertiary business studies students. Having formed their own company, "It's 4 Ya" the students were nominated in 6 awards, taking out the awards for best product and the overall award for manufacturing. Their product-environmentally friendly possum boxes!!!

The students will attend the National awards on November 23rd at the Wentworth Hotel in Sydney.

For further information, contact 43447492.

More Congratulations....

To Mark Friedewald & colleagues in Central Coast Health

The Central Coast Families First Project undertaken by Mark Friedewald in 2003 - "Fathertime" won the Commendation in the Service Delivery Section of the NSW Premiers Public Sector Awards 2004 last Friday.

This project consisted of three components: expansion of existing parenting discussion forums for expectant fathers; development of literature specifically for fathers and a resource pack distributed to new fathers following their child's birth.

For further information, contact Carol Newing 4393-4822

Comings and Goings

Aunties and Uncles

Jen Wicker, Aunties and Uncles Coordinator for the Gosford LGA has left her position for family reasons. Those who have had contact with Jen will miss her. Recruitment for her replacement is currently occurring, with Hellen Dibb, the Wyong Coordinator, covering the Gosford area as well, until recruitment is finalised. We wish Jen well.

Changes in staff at Horizons Central Coast Family Services

Terri Thomas has commenced work at Horizons Family Services as a family Worker. Further changes are on their way, as the

current manager, Annette Evans will leave her position later in the year to seek more balance between her parenting and professional life.

Changes in staff at Burnside

Welcome to new New Steps' Home Visitor Coordinator Jane Thomas - Jane is replacing Martine Langoulant and will be covering the Gosford LGA. Jane has previously worked for 2 1/2 years with Wyong DOCS



Martine Langoulant is now the Volunteer Facilitator for New Steps, replacing Vickie Robson who is now the full time caseworker in the Habitat program.

The New Steps' Team can be contacted on 43 243566.

Benevolent Society staff changes

Pippa Sangster, Learning and Development coordinator and Administrative Officer has taken maternity leave to look after new baby, Max. Pippa will return, next year, but in the meantime we welcome both **Marnie Easson** undertaking Learning and Development and administrative work, and **Geri Gray**, her capable partner in administration.

Robert Boyle has recently accepted the position of Men's Access Resource Worker with The Benevolent Society. Funded through the Areas Assistance Scheme for 4 years, Robert's role will include providing support and training on issues of access and equity for community organisations who provide services to men and to work directly with men to identify new methods and strategies to allow services to become more male friendly.

Elaine Stovin-Bradford has accepted the position of Family Worker at Northlakes Child Care Centre. She replaces Gill Barwell who left after finding the commuting a bit too hard. We wish Gill well in her new position in Newcastle, and welcome Elaine.

Transition to School Update from Diana Hanks

1. Transition Dinner: 91 early childhood educators attended the dinner in July.
Guest Speaker Bob Perry, head of Primary School Education at UWS challenged participants thinking when he stated that we should think of children as being eligible to start school and that parents and teachers should prepare for all children who are enrolling in kindergarten. Current issues of concern are addressed in:
Dockett, S, & Perry, B. (2004). "Starting School: Perspectives of Australian children, parents and educators". In *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 2(2), 171-189.
2. Workshops have been held in Term 4 on 'Working with Families'. Narara Valley, The Beaches and the Peninsula networks have organized additional workshops. Topics have included the Emergent Curriculum and the formation of a working party to gain consistency in expectations of schools for prior to school settings re the transfer of information.
3. A draft matrix and follow up survey was sent to all schools and prior to school sites. Comment was requested for this and the effectiveness of the program. Surveys are still being returned.
4. Vickie Parry and I have recently visited the Aboriginal Early Childhood services Unit at Alexander Park, Wunanbiri Pre-School, Awabakil Pre-School and the DET Aboriginal Pre-School at Toukley. Services provided by these facilities gave us a better insight into the future types of culturally appropriate resources that could be implemented on the coast.
5. Speaking to groups of parents about their expectations of schools throughout the year has ensured that educators are becoming more empathetic towards families. Parents need to know that their children are happy, safe and cared for. They want help in organizing a plan so they are 'ready'. Hints on helping children cope in a difficult situation are appreciated. Knowledge of the help available for families with special needs is also needed especially in the first weeks of school. 'Time to Talk' is a big issue for many parents.

For further information, contact Diana Hanks on 43 489100

Local Help with Websites: - Gosford Web & Info Tek (GWIT)

The aim of Gosford Web and Info Tek is to create websites for non-profit organisations in the area. People joining GWIT are trained in creating web pages using HTML (HyperText Markup Language, the IT industry standard for creation and maintenance of all types of web pages), as well as basic graphic design and page layout. There are two teams working on a range of projects, including sites for Pacific Link Community Housing, Terama Industries packaging, Reverse Garbage Recycling centre and a listing of Central Coast community halls.

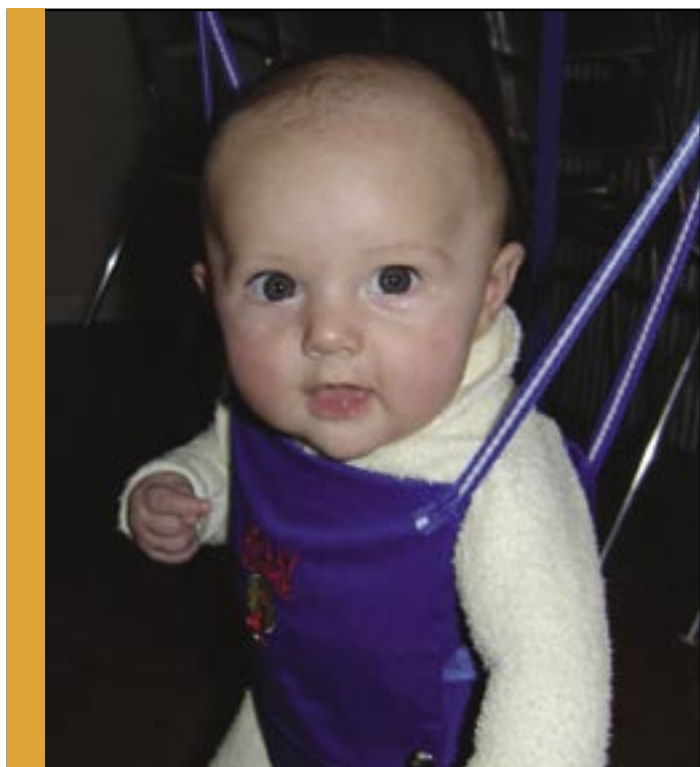
GWIT can take an organisation's basic information, like name, address, aims, products and contacts, and turn it into a useful, easy to understand website for use by potential clients.

GWIT is one of a number of similar groups around the state under the umbrella of Communicare Allskills Sydney, which provides technical skills training in a range of fields. It is a Work for the Dole Initiative funded by the Commonwealth Government.

For further information contact Richard Binnie or Alec Lamberton on 0438 626 901, or email your details to gwit_au@yahoo.com.au

GWIT's own website can be viewed at:
www.communicareallskills.com/gwit

Central Coast Networks of Practice Update



This project is funded through Families First. The project's broad objectives are:

- To promote and support the development of holistic services for young children and families.
- To develop and support innovative networks of practice.
- To increase organisational and network capacity to provide effective evidence based and relevant services.

Network Development

Two main networks established: Gosford and Wyong Family Services Networks. Wyong FSN was initially established in November and continues to meet monthly, whilst Gosford was established in March. With around 44 different workers having been involved with the Wyong FSN to date, with and around 44 workers have been involved in Gosford FSN. Each has adopted a purpose statement:

Purpose statement (summary)

The Wyong/ Gosford Family Services Network strengthens the integration of services for families and children through:

- Creating partnerships between network members to effectively use resources, develop new ways of working and build on collective strengths.
- Enhancing referrals to create easier pathways to appropriate support programs.
- Contributing to joint planning to better meet client needs and build on the strengths of the service network.
- Supporting training and skills development to build on the strengths of practitioners to improve programs and career development.
- Increasing communication and information flow.
- The promotion of services to the community and network members

What is the work or activities of the network?

The Wyong/Gosford Family Services Network furthers its aims through the following activities:

- Holding regular Forum Meetings
- Facilitating information sharing and service updates
- Facilitating linking with other networks/interagencies
- Conducting planning, identifying gaps and priorities
- Advocating for services improvement, resource allocation and issues that affect families
- Supporting and facilitating practice development
- Creating a skill register and supporting mentoring
- Developing collective resources such as databases and education and informational material.

Interaction Group Activities

Each network has interaction groups which operate between general meetings. These groups are the forum through which specific interest work occurs, and which feeds back through general meetings.

Wyong FSN has:

- Wyong Family Day
- Funding of services
- Mapping project, including worker support
- Economic Development/ social enterprise

Gosford FSN has:

- Worker support
- Referral issues
- Mapping

Practice support

The project is keen to support workers to reflect on their work through both the networks and also through discussion and skills development. This occurs in some ways through the networks and their interaction groups. In 2005 we are hoping to host some practice events which will support workers to do this within their work.

Information distribution

Ongoing miscellaneous distribution through email network of other people's information and funding opportunities. Also provide one-off information to individuals seeking specific information.

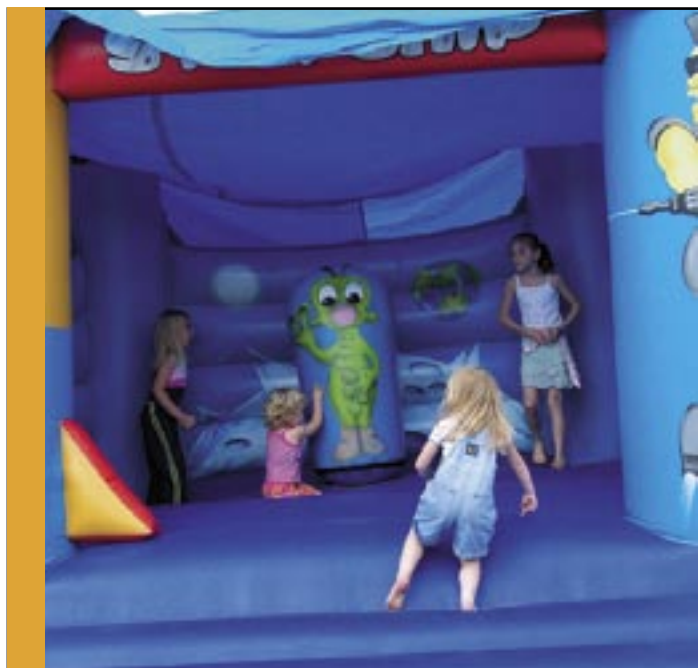
JOINT MEETING TO BE HELD: On November 25th both family Services Networks will be coming together for the first time with a morning forum followed by lunch. This will give an opportunity to meet others working in the child and family sector, share the work they are undertaking and discuss issues of mutual interest.

Contact details

For further information on the CC NOP Project, contact Deb Tipper. For specific Learning and Development requests/information, contact Marnie Easson. Both available on (02) 4353 4688.

KBT Network Open Day

On Saturday, November 6th, the residents from the suburbs of Killarney Vale, Bateau Bay and Tumbi had a chance to get together at Cynthia Street Neighbourhood Centre. The day was a success with fun children's activities, a BBQ and information about what different community organisations offer to residents in the area. The day was organised by local residents who used their numerous skills and talents to make the day the success it was. See photos right and below.



The aim of the KBT network is to assist agencies and community members to share information and work in partnership to assist communities to improve the wellbeing of children, families, their communities, and address drug and alcohol issues through a range of assets based and social capital community building initiatives.

For further information about the KBT Network, contact Jane McCarthy at Cynthia Street Neighbourhood Centre on 4332-7450



Kids Day Out 2004 another successful day!



On Sunday November 7th, thousands of Central Coast families converged on the Ourimbah Campus for the annual Kids Day Out. With loads of fun to be had from children, bucketfuls of information to be offered to parents and carers, and fine weather as well, the hard work of the organising committee and others paid off once again. The crowd was estimated at some 15,000 people. The organising committee has already begun the task of organising next year's event already. See photo left.

Anyone interested in being part of this group, please contact John Roberts on (02) 4329-7155.

'In the Money' funding seminar: 16th November

Over 100 people attended this recent seminar, organised by the Central Coast Community Council and supported by Wyong and Gosford Councils. There were numerous workshops and presentations about different aspects of seeking and obtaining grants and funding.

Those attending came from a wide variety of organisations, including children's services, community and health services, recreational groups, senior citizens groups, landcare groups.

For further information contact Nancy Nicholson at the CCCC 4329 7155

Central Coast - Community Networks and Interagency Meetings

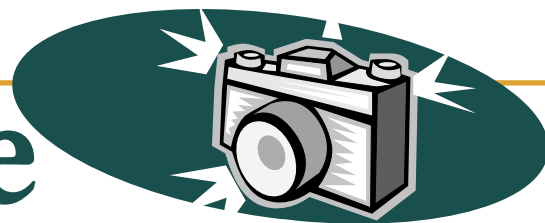
NETWORK	MEETING DATES	CONTACT
CALD/ NESB Families with Children Working Group	Venue and timing varies	Deb Tipper Tel: 43534688 Mob: 0409 048 169 debt@bensoc.org.au
CC (OOSH) Out of School Hours Forum	Once/ term, usually on Wednesdays	Sharron Jones Wyoming Community Centre Ph: 4323-7483 wcc@fastlink.com.au
CC Aboriginal Interagency	Last Thurs of month 9-12.00. Venue varies	Mick Pittman Ph: 4320-3155 mpittman@doh.health.nsw.gov.au Erla Ronan erla.ronan@godford.nsw.gov.au
CC Child & Youth Strategy (Jigsaw)	9.30-11.30am 1st Wed of each month	Catherine Serventy Ph: 4320 2126 Mob: 0414 855 247 Email: cserventy@doh.health.nsw.gov.au
CC Child Protection Middle Managers Group	Tues 9.30-12.30pm Quarterly	Anne Boyle Ph: 4320 2865 Email: aboyle@health.nsw.gov.au
CC Disability Interagency	Quarterly	Shirley Hobbs CCDN Ph: 43242355 managerccdn@bigpond.com
CC Domestic Violence committee	1st Tuesday/ month 2 pm	Tamara Lee Ph: 43203595 or Chris Smith Ph: 43202575 talee@doh.health.nsw.gov.au christine_smith@agd.nsw.gov.au
CC Early Childhood Intervention Coordination Project	Quarterly in schoolterm time	Helen Anglias Ph: 4946 9199 Fax: 4946 9852 Email: hanglias@tscnsw.org.au
CC Family Support Services Managers	Thursdays , Mingara, every 6 weeks approx.	Joyce Blade/ Peter Simmonds Ph: 43 401585 Email: gcfss@ozemail.com
CC Funded Children's Services meeting	Wednesdays, Monthly	Jenny Taafe Children's Services Adviser Ph: 43233334
CC Neighbourhood Centres Forum	9.30-12.30pm, 1st Wed of each Month. Venue varies	Gillian Holton Chairperson Ph: 43885801 Email: bvnc@idx.com.au
CC NESB/ CALD Interagency	9.30-11.30am 1st Thurs every 2nd month	Pari Batha/ Edna Wachter Ph: 43 237483 Email: wcc@fastlink.com.au
CC SAAP Network (Chairperson)	10-12noon 4th Tues of each Month	Suzanne Checkley Ph: 43344755 Email: scheckley@samaritans.org.au
CC Private Directors meetings	Thursdays, Monthly Venue changes	Amanda Grasby Ph: 0425221350
CC Out of Home Care Interagency	Every 6 weeks, alternating Tues / Thurs each mtg	April Edler Ph: 4352 3721 Email: april.edler@wesleymission.org.au.

Central Coast - Community Networks and Interagency Meetings

NETWORK	MEETING DATES	CONTACT
CC Youth Interagency	10.00-12 noon, 1st Tues of each month, Venue alternates	Sarah Masters (Wyang SC) Ph: 4350 5385 or Tina Davies (Gosford CC) Ph: 43258814
Children of Parents with Mental Illness Network (COPMI)	Quarterly: Narara Horticultural Research Station	Ruth Phelan CCH Ph: 43727275, Email: rphelan@doh.health.nsw.gov.au
DoCs Community Partners Advisory Gp	Currently on hold	Tom Mangan Ph: 4323 3334 Fax: 4323 3998
Gosford Children's Services Interagency	Used for information distribution only	Kylie Payne Ph: 43258352 Email: kylie.payne@gosford.nsw.gov.au
Gosford Family Services Network	Monthly 3rd Wednesday	Deb Tipper Ph: 43534688 Mob: 0409 048 169 Email: debt@bensoc.org.au
Joint DoCS & Councils	Quarterly	Tom Mangan Tel: 4323 3334 Mob: 0414 648 392
Men's Advocacy & Practical strategies Working Party (MAPS)	Monthly 3rd Tuesday	Robert Boyle Benevolent Society Ph: 4353 4688 Email: robertb@bensoc.org.au
Violence Against Women Network/ Steps to Respect	Thurs Quarterly at Ourimbah Uni	Chris Smith Ph: (02) 4320-2575 Fax: (02) 4320-3179 Email: christine_smith@agd.nsw.gov.au
Women's Health Interagency group	Quarterly	Amanda Whinn CC Women's Health Ph: 4320 3741 Email: awhinn@doh.health.nsw.gov.au
Wyang Child & Family Health Collaboration	Monthly- 3rd Thursday 8.30 – 9.30 Gateway	Virginia Hunter Ph: 43287900 Email: vhunter@doh.health.nsw.gov.au
Wyang Family Services Network	2nd Tuesday 9-11.00am Monthly	Deb Tipper Ph: 43534688 Mob: 0409 048 169 Email: debt@bensoc.org.au
Wyang Interagency	9.30-11.30am, 3rd Thursday of every month at Cynthia St Neighbourhood Centre	Jane McCarthy Ph: (02) 4332-7450 Email: csnc@idx.com.au; Address: PO Box 124, Wyong 2259
Wyang Youth Matter Forum	Every 2-3 months	Sarah Masters (Wyang SC) Ph: 43505385 Address: Wyong Shire Council PO Box 20 Wyong 2259
Youth Commitment	Second Wednesday 8.30-10am every 2nd month	Rachel Fry Ph: 02 43 293 230 Mob: 0402 8488 10 Email: rachael@snare.com.au

*Please contact us if there are errors in or changes to this information

The Big Picture



NSW Regulations for Children's Services

Children's services must provide a safe and appropriate care and educational environment for children as outlined in legislation. The regulation covers areas such as the staff who work in services and their level of qualification, the size of a service and the ratio of staff to children, physical requirements of building spaces and equipment, health and safety and administrative requirements.

The new *Children's Services Regulation 2004* - what it means

A new Children's Services Regulation came into effect on 30 September 2004. It was developed following extensive review and consultation with child care providers and other stakeholders.

The *Children's Services Regulation 2004* replaces the *Centre Based and Mobile Child Care Services Regulation (No 2) 1996* and the *Family Day Care and Home Based Child Care Services Regulation 1996*.

When will the new regulation affect licensed child care providers?

Existing children's service providers have a 15-month transition period before the new Regulation fully takes effect. This means that your licence retains the same conditions until 1 January 2006. You will have to apply for a new licence if your current licence expires before 1 January 2006, but will not have to meet Parts 3-7 of the regulation, which cover the physical and operating arrangements of services, until 1 January 2006. All other Parts of the new Regulation, such as processes for seeking a further licence, will apply from the time you are granted your new licence.

The 2004 Regulation requires existing licensees to lodge applications for their new licences six months before the

current licence expires. For example, if your current licence expires on 5 February 2006, you will need to lodge your licence application by 5 August 2005.

As of 1 January 2006, licensees will be required to comply with all the terms of the new Regulation - except for any conditions in relation to physical space which are subject to savings provisions (see *the fact sheet*). The only general exception to this is the requirement for a separate sleeping area for under twos, which comes into effect on 1 January 2008. New licensees are subject to all the requirements of the new Regulation from 30 September 2004. Also on 30 September 2004, the children's services aspects of the *Children (Care and Protection) Act 1987* were replaced by *Chapter 12 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

How to find out more

On the Central Coast, your DoCS' Children's Services Advisors (CSAs) are: Jenny Taafe, Shauna Williker, Alison Wallace
Contact Phone 43233 334

Review of NSW Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention 2000

The Child Protection Senior Officers Group members and other agencies mentioned in the Guidelines will be working on a minor up-date to the guidelines which will be re-issued in February 2005. A full review of the Guidelines will commence in December 2004 and a new edition of the Guidelines will be issued in 2006.

For further information:

http://www.nswfamilyservices.asn.au/Main/News/CPIG_Review.doc

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, (SNAICC),

SNAICC is the national non government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Recently announced, the Australian Government is to provide SNAICC with \$4 million to establish a new national resource centre. Funding has been approved as part of the governments National Agenda for Early Childhood and the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. The centre will focus on resourcing and supporting Indigenous children's services to deliver programs focused on child abuse prevention, early intervention, family support and early childhood development.

For further information: <http://www.snaicc.asn.au>

Some specific things available on the website include:

- **Our Future Generations: National Indigenous Child Welfare and Development Seminar:** as the major event to recognise SNAICC's 20th anniversary SNAICC convened this seminar in July 2003. A full report with over 50 presentations papers is available from the SNAICC office. A copy of the recommendations from the seminar can be downloaded from the website.
- **Parenting Project:** SNAICC carried out a parenting consultation project in partnership with the Department of Family and Community Services during the first six months of 2004. The project consulted with Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander parents, carers and families to find out what additional parenting information and support governments should provide. The project included a national workshop and SNAICC intends to publish a report on the project soon after the election.

More information: SNAICC Project Officer, Tracey Borg - 039 482 9380

SNAICC report on Child Abuse in the NT

In July 2003 SNAICC published, *State of Denial: the Neglect and Abuse of Indigenous Children in the Northern Territory*. The report outlines serious flaws in child protection policy and practice in the NT and includes a series of reform proposals. Since the release of the report the Northern Territory government has announced a review of the child protection system. The review will consider the recommendations from *State of Denial*, copies of which are available from SNAICC or can be downloaded from; snaicc.org.au

Commonwealth AICCA Review

The Commonwealth Government is to review its funding for Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies, AICCA's, over the next 18 months.

SNAICC and the Commonwealth have agreed on the need to review the Commonwealth's AICCA program and on terms of reference for the review. SNAICC believes that the AICCA's need additional long term support to work in the area of family support and primary prevention to compliment their funding and activities in relation to child protection and alternative care.

The review will be conducted over the next 18 months and will include an external stakeholder group with representation from SNAICC.

<http://www.snaicc.asn.au>

Seven Priorities for Indigenous Children.

Briefing paper outlining SNAICC's seven major priorities for governments to address for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Paper was presented to political parties and governments in the lead up to the 2002 Federal Election.

<http://snaicc.asn.au/news/documents/Sevenpriorities.pdf>

Improving access to child care.

Paper provided to the Childcare Reference Group and Commonwealth Government on the childcare needs of Indigenous families. (Dec 2002)

http://www.snaicc.asn.au/news/pdfs/chdcare_dec-2003.PDF

Improving DOCS' Purchasing of Services

In addition to providing direct services to the community through our network of regional offices, DoCS currently spends in excess of \$500 million a year on purchasing services from the non-government sector. Executive Director, Strategic Services, Toni Milne, said that with DoCS' recent \$1.2 billion budget enhancement, this amount is set to rise and by the 2007/2008 financial year, 65 per cent of DoCS' budget will be spent on purchasing services. "The purchase of these new programs will create an increased demand on the purchase of services from the non-government sector. "With such a significant and expanding funding commitment, DoCS needs to make sure the money is well spent to effectively meet the needs of families and communities across the State."

To do this, DoCS is undertaking a thorough review of purchasing practices to move beyond the traditional 'grants'

approach to a more strategic approach that makes sure that funded programs have clear objectives, high service delivery standards, appropriate performance measures and effective evaluation.

There will also be a focus on innovation and incentives to encourage high performance from the services DoCS funds.

The non-government sector plays an invaluable role in providing an array of services ranging from family support to youth services to out-of-home care and accommodation services, said Ms Milne.

DoCS plans to consult widely with the non-government sector, including setting up a reference group comprising representatives from peak community services organisations.

"The review of purchasing practices will be comprehensive and cover all of DoCS' programs and is expected to take several years to complete," Ms Milne said.

From: Inside Out Sept/ Oct 2004 p8

http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/html/news_publications/insideout.htm

Changes to the Department of Family and Community Services

Source: FACS website

Following the appointment of the Fourth Howard Ministry, there will be significant changes for FaCS and its portfolio:

- Senator the Hon Kay Patterson will remain as Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues. Assisting her will be Mrs Sussan Ley MP as Parliamentary Secretary for Children and Youth Affairs.
- The focus of the department will be on providing policy advice, income support and assistance to families and their children, senior citizens and community groups.
- The Department will now also be responsible for gender issues and the Office of Status of Women will move to FaCS from The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C).
- The Finance portfolio will be expanded through the creation of a new Department of Human Services which will bring together six agencies, including Centrelink and the Child Support Agency.
- The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations will be expanded to include assisting Australians to move from welfare dependence to employment. This expansion will bring together responsibility for income support payments for working age Australians (including Newstart, Parenting Payment and the Disability Support Pension) with the extensive range of programs designed to help people meet their obligations to try to find a job.

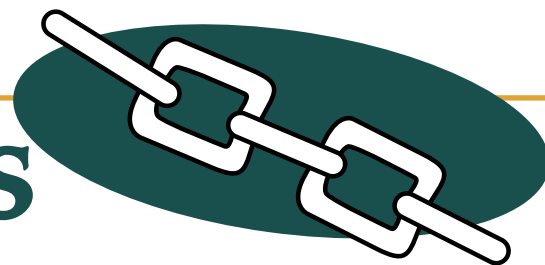
http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/news/minister_26october2004.htm

Did you Know?

The NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs has developed a new portal: <http://www.aboriginal.nsw.gov.au>

Have you seen the Indijreaders website?
www.indijreaders.com.au

Learning Links



Learning and Development Project Update

Thank you to all the participants and presenters of the Learning & Development workshops held to date. The response to these workshops has been overwhelming. Following are the workshops run to date:

Guiding Children's Behaviour

Presenter Sue Wyatt, with assistance from Ingeborg Stiefel.

We had an overwhelming response to this workshop. Some comments from the participants:

"I really enjoyed the workshop and feel that I have gained new knowledge to help me in working with children"
"Opportunities for a support network were made available to all which enhances the lives of all involved in this field of work and the people using these services."

STOP PRESS: We are organising two more of these workshops for this year to cater for people who could not attend the last workshop. If you registered, but the workshop was full you will be contacted and invited to attend these workshops. If you did not register, but are interested, please contact Marnie Eason ASAP on 43534688 or marniee@bensoc.org.au

Working With Families in Complex Situations

Presenter Bronwen Elliot.

This workshop was incredibly popular. Most participants found the workshop to be an invaluable networking and skill development opportunity, providing a chance to see how things are done in other agencies. Some comments from the participants:

"I enjoyed the case study because it made me more aware of the different perspectives of each interagency"
"I enjoyed the interaction/participation and opportunity to interact and learn of other services"
"(I gained) New strategies to use, the importance of working together with other organisations"

Accidental Counsellor

Presenter: Rose Quigley.

Many of the participants expressed the need for further training in this area which we will look at in the following months. Some comments from the participants:

"Very helpful information which I hope to be able to apply to relevant situations, using the handouts to confirm the information"
"Really good, clear content, which I hope to find helpful & applicable in work & everyday life"

Conflict Resolution

Presenter: Robyn Gaspari.

Most participants felt a follow up training session on Advanced Conflict Resolution Skills would be of benefit, which we will look into next year. Some comments from the participants

"Thank you for an "interesting & informative" course"
"Thank you for providing such high quality training at the cost so affordable"
"Interesting, engaging, plenty of content & right degree of control of group & process"
"Robyn was easy to listen to, and comfortable which made learning enjoyable"

Vicarious Trauma

Presenter Carolyn Cousins.

Excellent feedback for this workshop, including this comment emailed to us:

"I would like to thank The Benevolent Society for funding yesterday's training on 'vicarious trauma'... Even 'though it is a subject about which I feel strongly, I had felt a reluctance to attend any more 'local' training due to having been disappointed at the (to me) sometimes inadequate styles of presentation of previous trainings on other subjects. It was therefore with delight that I found the day's workshop facilitated by Carolyn Cousins so professionally presented. I thoroughly enjoyed the day."



Training Calendar

We are now in the process of drawing up a calendar of Learning & Development workshops for the first part of 2005. We have had valuable input from workshop participants as well as our Central Coast Networks of Practice Learning & Development Questionnaire as to the type of workshops you are interested in attending and we hope we can provide you with a good mix.

Topics currently being considered include:

- **Bringing Family Support & Children's Services Together** we are hoping to hold two of these in each local government area. They will provide an opportunity for children's services staff and family support service staff to learn about each other's services and needs, understand the range of services available and how to refer to different services.

- **Aboriginal Cultural Awareness training/forum** We are working in conjunction with local Aboriginal representatives and DOCS staff to assist in supporting this training.
- **Privacy & confidentiality**
- **Advanced Conflict Resolution**
- **Working with men**
- **Strengths based assessment for families**
- **Increasing and supporting children's participation in family and child protection work**

A calendar will be sent out once the details have been finalised. As always, we would love any feedback or ideas on topics you would like to see the Learning & Development team present.

If you have any questions or suggestions, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Marnie Easson on (02) 4353 4688 or marniee@bensoc.org.au

DOCs NGO training unit

DoCS' Non Government Organisations (NGO) Training Unit offers learning and development opportunities for staff in DoCS-funded non government organisations (NGOs). Through the unit, funded services can register for free accredited and non-accredited training at regional venues across NSW. The courses aim to meet regional needs identified by DoCS and DoCS-funded agencies including SAAP Services.

Training is provided by a mix of internal and external facilitators. You can also apply to attend courses run by other training providers, as listed in the online training calendar.

If you are working for a DoCS-funded service, you may be eligible to attend a course. Our online training calendar shows the courses available in your region.

For further information: Dylan Thompsett is the Project Officer with this unit covering the Central Coast - NGO Training Unit. Phone Dylan on 9209 6455 or Dylan.Thompsett@community.nsw.gov.au

http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/html/comm_partners/training.htm

LOCAL TRAINING / CONFERENCES	29 November - 1 December	Bringing men in: how to engage with men for the benefit of everyone in the family Conference and training workshop, Callaghan, NSW Further information: Ph: Janine Bendit (02) 4921 86
	Friday 3 December 9.00- 5.00 pm	"Making It Count" Taking action on men's health and wellbeing in the Hunter Hunter Home-Start, 2A -37 Griffiths Road Lambton, Newcastle \$75 (includes lunch, resource kit) Further information: Greg Millan - Men's Health Consultant Mobile: 0417 772 390 Email: gmillan@bigpond.net.au
	Friday 3 December	Central Coast Connexions Conference Citigate Sebel Waterfront Resort, The Entrance "Think About the Links - Violence, Abuse and Neglect" Violence, Abuse and Neglect Services. The conference will explore ways of thinking about the links between different forms of family violence, including domestic violence, animal cruelty, child abuse and neglect, and sexual violence. Further information: Download conference brochure (PDF 488K) Tamara Lee - Ph: (02) 4320 3585 Email: talee@doh.health.nsw.gov.au or Valmai Miller - Ph: (02) 4320 2865 Email: vlmiller@doh.health.nsw.gov.au

NOVEMBER 2004

17-19 Nov 2004	<p>Creating Connections - Siblings Australia, Adelaide, SA Further information: Siblings Australia Email: info@siblingsaustralia.org.au. Web: www.siblingsaustralia.org.au</p>
22-25 Nov 2004	<p>Indigenous Studies: Sharing the Cultural and Theoretical Space Canberra, ACT The aim of the conference is to encourage and provide for discussion of intercultural approaches to research and related matters. Further information: Graeme K Ward, AIATSIS 2601 Email: conf2004@aiatsis.gov.au. Web: www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/conferences/aiatsisconf2004/firstnotice.htm</p>
23-24 Nov 2004	<p>Churches and Social Enterprise, Melbourne, Vic This conference focuses on the tradition of entrepreneurship in the Church and examines new strategies for the support of parishes and the wider community. Further information: Web: www.partnerships.org.au/ChurchesAndSocial%20Enterprise.htm</p>
24-26 Nov 2004	<p>Building bridges and strengthening bonds: Broadening our understanding of Third Sector across regions and diversity, Brisbane, Further information: ANZTSR Conference, Queensland University of Technology Email: anztsr2004@qut.edu.au. Web: www.anztsr.org.au/conf.htm</p>
28 Nov - 2 Dec 2004	<p>International Education Research Conference' Melbourne, Vic "Doing the Public Good: Positioning Education Research" Further information: Web: www.aare.edu.au</p>

DECEMBER 2004

6-8 Dec 2004	<p>Education and Social Action Conference Sydney, NSW Further information: Centre for Popular Education, UTS, PO Box 123, Broadway NSW 2007 Email: cpe@uts.edu.au</p>
7 Dec 2004	<p>Social Capital: Past, Present and Future Beechworth, Vic The Symposium will focus on past, present and future conceptual and practical issues concerning social capital. Further information : Dimi Giorgas -dgiorgas@csu.edu.au or Rachael Williams -rawilliams@csu.edu.au . http://www.tasa.org.au/conference.other.html#dec2004</p>
8-10 Dec 2004	<p>A Future that Works - economics, employment and the environment Newcastle Phone: 4921 7283 http://e1.newcastle.edu.au/coffee/conferences/2004/index.cfm</p>

JANUARY 2005

21-23 Jan 2005	<p>Health In Difference HID5 Melbourne, Vic Theme is 'Separate and Together'. It recognises both the diversity among those in our varied communities as well as the enormous benefits of coming together to work on shared concerns and needs. Further information : http://www.latrobe.edu.au/arc> Melbourne, Vic</p>
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Congratulations to Glenning Valley Child Care Centre

This local child care centre was recently named Small Business of the Year in the NSW Training Awards, and then became a finalist at the National awards. This is fabulous recognition for a local service which aims to increase staff skills through training courses. Congratulations!!!!



The Centre has achieved the highest possible ratings in all 10 indicators of quality practice from the National Child Care Accreditation Council. The Centre has always placed an emphasis on training and started its traineeship program in 2000. Since then, it has employed 11 trainees as well as providing numerous training placements for schools, colleges, TAFE NSW and universities. The Centre believes that ongoing training will allow them to provide the highest level of care and education to children in the region.



NSW Training Awards Win at Glenning Valley

We won the award based on the type of training provided at the centre, the culture of training within the organisation and programs on offer for trainees.

In 2000 we developed a training plan to address the training needs of our centre. This included staff and parents. We review it annually to ensure it still meets the needs of the service and set goals accordingly.

We support many students from the differing training providers in the area- the university, schools and Registered Training Organisations. We have long established links with these groups.

At the centre each of our trainees are allocated a work place supervisor that acts as a mentor to develop their skills, give feedback and support. This has developed the skills of the trainees as well as the senior staff.

All of our staff hold formal qualifications or are working towards them. Many are also upgrading their qualifications. They are supported with flexible leave, training days off, paid study leave and the use of centre resources to complete projects and assignments.

The benefits have been low staff turnover (we haven't had a change of trained staff member for many years) high motivation, an exciting and innovative program reflecting best practice in the industry.

We believe there is a direct correlation between the training of the staff and the quality we provide so it is a high priority in our service.

We were so proud of winning this award as it recognised the big effort of all of the staff put into the centre. Outsiders to our industry have little understanding of the training and skill development we are all involved in and the winning of this award was fantastic recognition.

Thanks to the Director, Mary Louise Clifford, for providing information and the photo. Mary Louise can be contacted on 43891788.

New Resources

Coping in times of stress and disaster

The Salvation Army has released this booklet, which aims to help you identify some of the common signs of acute stress in yourself or loved ones in response to disturbing news or events. It provides tips for coping and suggests when professional help may be required. A hard copy of the booklet is also available by calling (02) 9266 9690 or:
http://www.salvos.org.au/SALVOS/NEW/RESOURCES/DOCUMENTS/booklets/Coping_in_times_of_Crisis_or_Disaster_0804.pdf

Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy Resource Kit

The resource kit provides an introduction to the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy.
<http://www.familiesfirst.nsw.gov.au/uploads/41f247db-5d83-4449-b548-f3902ed6b5ec6.pdf>

Employing Staff In NSW

(Courtesy LCSA July 2004 newsletter) The Office of Industrial Relations has published three new guides in the 'Employing Staff in NSW' series. The guides look at recruiting employees, working hours and rosters, book keeping, leave entitlements, OHS and termination.

- Kindergarten and child care centres - a guide to employing staff in NSW
<http://www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au/resources/Kindergarten.pdf>
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff - a guide to employing staff in NSW
<http://www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au/resources/ATSI.pdf>
- Social and community services - a guide to employing staff in NSW
<http://www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au/resources/SACS.pdf>

For hardcopies contact OIR Publication Sales on phone (02) 9020 4528

Toolkit For Local Reconciliation Groups

(Courtesy LCSA July 2004 newsletter) This toolkit contains information to help individuals and groups at various stages of involvement with reconciliation. It will help organisations who want to start a local reconciliation group, sustain existing group or grow. It will help groups to plan what they want to do, manage themselves, fundraise, make the most of their strengths, build links with other groups, work with the media, have fun and make a difference.

The material is very practical, with lots of 'how to' information and tips – how to decide your priorities, how to share the workload, how to prepare a media release and how to set up a learning circle. The resource is aimed at people in the community who want to work for reconciliation together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander people. In the spirit of reconciliation, the Toolkit encourages a collaborative approach.

Available from: www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/2000/17/

Making it meaningful...Government/community sector relations – Dr Margot Rawsthorne and Fiona Christian, August 2004

A research report prepared for Western Sydney Community Forum, in relation to the development of a compact between the NSW Government and non-government organisations. This report details findings from an action-oriented research project undertaken by Western Sydney Community Forum as part of its work in relation to the development of a compact between the NSW Government and community sector organisations, entitled Working Together for NSW. The report details findings from three separate research processes: an e-discussion; an on-line survey; and focus groups.

http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/download/Making_it_Meaningful.pdf

Youth Accommodation Directory

The new 2004 Youth Accommodation Directory is now available. Compiled by the Youth Accommodation Association, the directory gives a comprehensive list of all youth accommodation and related services in NSW. To order your copy of the directory, phone 9698 5833 (ext 2) or email vacancy@yaa.com.au

The Mental Health Rights Manual

This previously published manual is now available as an on-line facility containing comprehensive and up to date information and legislation covering a wide range of issues relevant to mental health. This resource is designed to empower consumers, carers, mental health clinicians and those with an interest in mental health. The Manual provides a legal framework of the mental health system; a description of key documents, it discusses legal rights in relation to medical treatment, it explains the functions and powers of guardianship and financial management tribunals and gives an understanding of the criminal justice system. It also covers the rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities and their carers, issues such as employment and vocational rehabilitation, accommodation options, privacy and confidentiality, benefits, allowances and dealing with government departments. It also provides guidelines for the protection of children and issues relating to medical treatment of children. It looks at culture, ethnicity and mental health with an emphasis on health and the mental health rights of asylum seekers. A wide range of contacts for mental health services, government agencies and support groups are provided as well as useful information on accessing complaint mechanisms and legal services.

For more information phone MHCC on: (02)9555 8388 or access via the website:

<http://www.mhcc.org.au/rightsmanual/mhrm.html>

Spirals of Strength

A new resource kit (book and DVD) for working with vulnerable families from a strength's approach was launched at a national conference in Newcastle last month. 'Spirals of Strength' has received interest from national organisations as it discusses ways of working with children, families and teams from a solution and strength perspective. The accompanying DVD provides excellent resource material to train workers and promote discussion amongst experienced staff.

Further enquiries about purchasing the kit can be made to (02) 4942-1621 or email creativetimes@samaritans.org.au

The Early Childhood Learning Resources Project

Funded by the Australian Government, Department of Education, Science and Training, the work is being undertaken by Monash University, University of Melbourne, Curriculum Corporation and Early Childhood Australia. The purpose of the Early Childhood Learning Resources Project is to develop, pilot and distribute a set of high quality, innovative early childhood resource materials that nurture and support early literacy and numeracy development of children from birth to five years.

The resource materials

A number of resource materials will be developed. They will address the learning needs of all young children: boys and girls; those in low socioeconomic areas, rural and remote regions and Indigenous communities. The materials will be suitable for use in a wide range of settings – at home as well as in playgroups and other early childhood services and programs that support young children and their parents. The resource materials include:

- **self-assessment and environmental audit tool:** a way for practitioners to assess their current environment and practices to determine their effectiveness in stimulating young children's developing literacy and numeracy skills
- a range of activities and other resources including **Clever Cards**, this website, and a **CD-ROM**.

<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/learning/>

Sharing the Stage is designed to help you improve the way your organisation includes children and young people in decision-making. It challenges adults to change the way we do things and share some of our decision-making so that children and young people's participation is effective.

Sharing the Stage is based on our interviews with children, young people and adults working with them. From the Commission For Children And Young People

For further information and full copy: <http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/publications/tpssharing.html#pdf>

Understanding Children: Foundations for quality. Jeannette Harrison.3rd ed. 2004.

Jeannette Harrison examines quality care and the positive outcomes it has on children's development and behaviour. Based on recent research this textbook is illustrated by case studies. Includes plans and strategies to promote responsible behaviour in children. Great text for students and early childhood professionals who are committed to providing quality environments which will guide and nurture young children.

Email: resource@prodevcsrap.act.edu.au

Environmental Education: Its a Living Thing

This training focuses on environmentally sustainable practice and what that looks like in the early childhood setting. Training will provide strategies to implement sustainable practice as well as exploring: Our values and their impact on our behaviour towards the environment; our existing practice in relation to the environment; taking the next step towards sustainable practice; involving children in the process; and connecting the staff, families and community in the process. To find out more contact Helen Nippard, trainer & environmentalist at Lady Gowrie Child Centre on voctrain2@gowrie-sydney.com.au



Clearing House



Welcome to the Clearinghouse and its 'Worker Support' theme. The materials contained in both this section and the Practice Tips following are all related to this theme. Those cited represent only a small portion of the many valuable resources available, and each can in turn lead you on to other interesting websites and/or articles.

CC Networks of Practice Worker Support Interaction group

For those interested, The CC Networks of Practice currently has an Interaction group looking at issues to do with Worker Support. It is exploring possible models of peer support and shared clinical supervision, informal support structures and how we might be able to establish some pilot practice groups on the Central Coast.

If you work with families and or children, and are interested in this topic either as someone wanting more support or wishing to offer your professional expertise in supervision, debriefing from incidents or generally supporting staff, please contact Deb Tipper on 43534688 or debt@bensoc.org.au



Australian Info

Voice of Frontline workers: Burnside research

The aim of this research was to demonstrate how family support workers engage with disadvantaged families in service practice. Workers' points of view and the meanings given to their practice are the primary concerns of this study. The term family support is used generically to refer to services provided to disadvantaged families by Burnside... There were two specific purposes of the study: to explore how workers' understandings of child abuse risk and protection factors are used in front-line practice; and, to address implications for good practice. The study was conducted in family support services run by Burnside in South West Sydney. Several critical case examples are used to highlight the complexities of, and some important dimensions to, practice.

<http://www.burnside.org.au/content/The%20Voice%20of%20Frontline%20workers%20in%20early%20intervention%20in%20child%20abuse%20and%20neglect%20.pdf>

Supervising for Success: The Support and Supervision of Residential Care Staff by Susan Rennie, Manager, Adolescent Residential Care, The Salvation Army Eastcare. Presented ACWA 2002 Conference; 2 to 4 September 2002 Sydney

The data collected in this study demonstrated that supervision has tangible benefits to residential care practice in a number of different ways.

- Staff receiving supervision reported feeling supported and valued as a result. They identified that supervision contributed to their ability to deal with the stresses and frustrations of the job. This is likely to reduce staff turnover and burnout.
- Staff receiving supervision reported enhanced understanding of young people. This enabled them to more effectively deal with a number of challenging situations. In some cases it may have prevented or minimised inappropriate reactions and responses to behaviour.
- Staff reported that supervision contributed to their sense of being part of a team. As team-work is integral to good practice in residential care this is an important function.

http://www.acwa.asn.au/Conf2002/Conf_proceedings/06%20Susan%20Rennie.doc

The Harveys

This beautifully presented and compassionate collection of short stories by Jennifer Lehmann is guaranteed to prompt lively discussion..... A theoretical framework for exploring the stories is provided, plus discussion guides for each story. Social justice issues predominate, as the author encourages those in the business of helping people to engage in 'reflective practice'. This book will be a great resource for teachers of social work, education and health, and a valuable tool for all human service professionals to use in their practice.

<http://www.innovativeresources.org/>

Working in Welfare: what it feels like, what it means, Hugh Crago

Realistic, and controversial, analysis of working in welfare. Describes what it feels like to work in a welfare agency and offers an interpretation of these experiences.
[Psychotherapy in Australia](#) Vol 6, No 2 February 2000

The Growth Connection 'Mentoring: A discussion Paper'

A mentoring relationship is usually where one wiser and more experienced person assists another person to grow and learn. This discussion paper contains information about the benefits to all in developing a mentoring relationship.
<http://www.growconnect.com.au/mentor.html>

Useful Websites

Narrative Connections:

An international network of narrative practitioners. It is our hope that this network will assist narrative therapists to:

- seek out others who are interested in narrative ideas in their own area
- build a sense of community of practice
- find narrative supervision and teaching options in their own area, and
- seek out other people to refer to in other parts of the country and/or world.

Email: newsandconnections@dulwichcentre.com.au

Website: <http://www.dulwichcentre.com.au/>

National Occupational Health and Safety Commission

The National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) is Australia's national body that leads and coordinates national efforts to prevent workplace death, injury and disease in Australia. There is a series of factsheets and other relevant information. Some examples include:

Workplace health and safety responsibilities & Stress and Burnout at Work

<http://www.nohsc.gov.au/OHSInformation/NOHSCPUBLICATIONS/factsheets/rspon1.htm>

Workcover NSW

WorkCover promotes workplace health and safety, and provides a worker's compensation system for the employers and workers of NSW. Resources and training are available through this website. Specific information relating to the Health and community services industry are also available. See:

<http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/Industry/HealthAndCommunity/default.htm>

Workers Health Centre

The Workers Health Centre is an independent, non-profit making organisation. We enjoy a close working relationship with industry, Government, trade unions and community groups and our clients include companies in the construction, manufacturing, service and hospitality and community sectors, putting us in the best position to cooperatively develop excellent workplace health and safety solutions. Offers a range of services including medical, rehabilitation, safety audits; up-to-date information, consultancy on multilingual workforces & training.

<http://www.workershealth.com.au/index.html>

Clearinghouse International

Workforce Development/Training Resources

From the **National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information**, a service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The workforce development/training information is designed to enable trainers, practitioners, social work educators, and other stakeholders to locate the most current workforce development/training information and materials for the child welfare workforce.

<http://child-abuse.com/>

The Nonprofit Good Practice Guide is a one-stop website for widely-accepted and innovative nonprofit practices offering Preferred Practices and Pitfalls, Glossaries, Resources, Trends and Web site Profiles within ten topic areas, one being Staff development and organisational capacity.

<http://www.nonprofitbasics.org/TopicArea.aspx?ID=6>

ELSC Practice Guides: Managing Practice Chapter 1: Supervision and Team Leadership

This guide draws together information and knowledge to help first-line managers do their job. It provides pointers to using this material in the workplace. It supports critical thinking and methods so that first line managers can apply, adapt and develop the material to their own particular work environment, current priorities and as an aid to their own continuing professional development.

<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/practiceguides/bpg1/section1/text.pdf>

Practice Tips



This issue, Practice Tips will take the form of a special article written for the magazine by a local worker, Martine Langoulant. Martine currently works for Burnside facilitating the volunteer arm of the New Steps Home Visiting Program. She's spent a lot of her career working with families with young children. Martine has discovered her passion lies in group work and training and when she's not at work, growing things, playing with bits of material and pretending to be a writer!

Worker Support: Do we really get it?

Before we set out, Where are we going?

This article is not about answers. It's about questions. Nor is it an academic or theoretical article. It's a gathering of thoughts, experiences and ideas over 18 years of social working. My hopes in writing it are that:

- you will begin to reflect on your own experiences, acknowledge and value them
- the importance of Worker Support will be clarified and reinforced
- different forms of Worker Support will be identified and
- your thinking about how you might get more of what you need will be stimulated

Along the way you will come across "Windows of Opportunity", sets of themed questions to assist you to discover your own answers (see References). You could use these questions in a number of ways:

- for personal reflection by simply focussing on the question
- as a topic for journal work
- to facilitate conversations with friends and colleagues
- in team building contexts
- within supervision

Each of us has a different story to tell of our work experiences and the relationship we have with Worker Support. My story is only one. I hope that this article offers you an invitation to reflection and questioning, and some ideas to make your journey a safe, satisfying and happy one!

My journey – pot holes, detours, big bad wolves and all!

How many of us will admit that we left University or TAFE with our self-affirming "certificate" under one arm and our "do-good" basket under the other, believing we were invincible because we had a mandate to change the world? Into the welfare woods we went, cloaked in commitment and zeal, only to discover that life out there in "helping land" wasn't what we expected. I for one thought I'd packed all I needed. I wrote the essay on the interface between the professional and the personal (and got a distinction), I understood that sometimes you can "take your work home with you" and that isn't healthy. I even read whole paragraphs in a book about the power of tears, just in case I found the need to occasionally cry along the way. Sadly, I had all the answers before I really knew

what the questions and challenges were.

There have been experiences in my social work journey that I could never have been adequately prepared for. No amount of training could have prepared me for seeing a 40 year old woman take her last breath, and then being asked to assist the nurse to remove the morphine pump and catheter, and gently prepare the body for a waiting family. Which workshop could have taught me how to sleep after witnessing a dying man's violent fit that left his brother and I covered in vomit and blood? How do I rest in the relative affluence of my air conditioned home, when this morning I sat in 40 degree heat and watched a mother cut up bath towels to make nappies because she couldn't afford to buy any until pension day. Which text book contained the chapter on how to erase the pictures left in my head after viewing a video showing the brutalised genitalia of victims of child sexual abuse? Was I in the cafeteria drinking coffee during the lecture titled "Guilt Free Notifications – Easy as 1, 2, 3". Did I miss the conference that outlined strategies on how to listen day after day to stories of power, control and abuse without getting angry?

For many health and welfare workers, the workplace itself, quite aside from client issues, is the source of stress and despair, littered as it is with obstacles and constraints. Many workers function in organisations which are chronically under-resourced and overstretched. And what about those attempting to work within systems and models of service delivery that represent the antithesis of their own professional philosophy and values?

Theories abound about why people get into the helping professions. I believe many are drawn to the work of supporting, assisting and caring for others out of a deep concern for the well being of the human soul, a belief that all beings have a right to justice, to lives free from violence and abuse, and to opportunities for personal fulfilment. Paradoxically, I believe that it is the sensitivity and compassion driving these beliefs and concerns for humanity that leave many workers vulnerable to burnout.

There have been crystallising moments in my journey when I have realised that I'm carrying too much...those private moments when you "hit your thumb with a hammer" and it all comes pouring out...all the injustice, anger, grief, frustration and despair. These moments are usually followed by a flood of self doubt. "You're too sensitive for this work"... "If you were a true professional you wouldn't react this way"... "You're weak".

Since graduating 18 years ago I've had friends who have repeatedly changed jobs in an attempt to escape stress; one colleague who shared with me her struggle with her work and 3 weeks later suicided; my own experience when three months leave without pay seemed the only solution. Some people leave and take up fine arts, never to be seen again. Others experiment with part time work hoping that will make a difference. Some, overwhelmed by despair, become cynical and hardened, giving up their ideals and beliefs and becoming part of the systemic furniture. What sets us apart from each other? Who survives and who doesn't? What makes the difference to the outcome for workers? Which workers are better able to get up the next morning and deliver an appropriate and useful service, and hence achieve better outcomes for their clients?

These are the real questions, questions that cannot go unanswered if we as a community of workers are to sustain ourselves and each other, and continue in our work.

Recognising and naming worker burnout

One of the things I know about therapy and healing is that if you can assist a person to find a name for what they are experiencing, and facilitate the process of normalising that experience, they are well on the way to taking control of that previously debilitating phenomena. During the three months I took to reflect on my own experience of burnout, something very synchronistic occurred. It happened upon a one day workshop being held by The Benevolent Society in

Campbelltown. The title of the workshop was "Vicarious Trauma" and it focussed on the experiences of those working with survivors of violence. To quote the workshop notes:

"Workers in contact with survivors of violence often take on and/or suffer from the stories of violence and degradation they hear/see. This can develop into loss of hope, meaning, connection and awareness of all aspects of life. It is also known as Vicarious Trauma."

Those two words – **vicarious trauma** – and the other material presented at the workshop, shifted my perception of my experience from one of personal dysfunction, to one where I could recognise the insidious and cumulative effects of being witness to ongoing stories of human suffering. I also began to realise the impact of attempting to survive this form of work within an unsupportive organisation.

Six weeks later when I returned to work, I felt for the first time in 15 years that I had finally grasped the concepts of worker burnout and worker support. Perhaps it came home to me more strongly and clearly because it was no longer just an intellectual understanding, but one born of personal experience, crystallised by the **naming** of that experience. I returned to my job knowing that there were some fundamental changes I needed to make if I was to continue in the work I had chosen as my path.

Window of Opportunity: Passion!

What is your passion? What gives you energy, inspiration, desire, meaning? What fires you?
What brings strong emotions alive for you?
They may be emotions of love, joy and amazement. They may also be feelings of grief or anger.
Describe how you feel when you feel passionate? How does your world change?
How are you different when you have passion compared to when you can't find that energy or enthusiasm?

There is a Japanese word to describe a work related phenomena. The word is "karoshi" and it means "death by work overload". Have there been times when your passion for work and your will to keep going has faced "karoshi"? How do you know when the challenges of your work life are contributing to a slow "death" of your work soul?

Building support through "Calm", "Reflection" and "Analysis"

The Dalai Lama speaks these words in his book *The Art of Happiness at Work*:

"Millions of people are subjected to various forms of unfairness...We need to fight against injustice outwardly, but at the same time we have to find ways to cope inwardly, ways to train our minds to remain calm, and not develop frustration, hatred or despair. That is the only solution. We may find help from our belief systems, whether we believe in karma or in God, but we can also use our human intelligence to analyse the situation and to see it from a different perspective. That will help." P 24

Calm, balance and sanity begin at home.

Being supported as a worker begins with **you supporting**

yourself. I've spent years teaching **Self Care** in therapeutic and educational groups, only to discover at critical points in my working life that I have failed to practice what I preach.

Self Care is about **discovering** those aspects of life that are guaranteed to energise and replenish you, and then **doing** them. The process is simple:

- Imagine your energy supply as a rainwater tank. The tap when turned on represents all that you give out in the course of your working week. In order to continue to give out, something has to go in at the top.
- Imagine all the "things" that make you feel good, that energise you. The beach, a bush walk, bike ride or bath; fishing, foot rubs, friends or food; massage, manicure, movies or mosh pits; snorkelling, sailing, singing or sleep.
- Figure out what works for you and commit to doing at least one of those things at least once a week, **without fail.**

Attention to **Self care** brings renewal and balance, and can eventually lead to an enduring sense of calm. In addition to actually "doing" self care activities, there is also benefit to be had from **sitting still and reflecting.**

I do my best **reflecting** in the veggie garden around 6 am. Sitting in the early morning light, hearing the birds going about their business and watching the cat do his patrol along the back fence, provides me with time to reflect on the previous day and order my thoughts for the one ahead. Calmness does not necessarily travel with me the whole day,

but at least I know that I will make room for it tomorrow morning. There are even fleeting moments when I feel at peace in an imperfect world, despite the fact that the caterpillars have made a meal of my silver beet and the birds have stolen the strawberries!

Window of Opportunity: Peace

What does peace mean to you? How do you find peace? What do you need?

How do you know when you have found it?

Take some deep relaxing breaths and picture your place of peace.

Go there now and describe the sensations: the sounds, sights, tastes, smells and touches.

Journal about this scene or this place. What themes come up for you?

Are they related to peace, tranquillity and serenity, or some other parts of your life?

Are peace and freedom inter-related for you?

Finding your "reflection" at work.

Finding your reflection at work sustains you and helps to maintain a healthy self image and an enduring connection with your work identity.

"Just as mothers who struggle alone to cope with young children easily lose faith in themselves, without the genuine appreciation and praise of partners and other adults, so welfare workers need real encouragement, not empty rhetoric, and they will respect it and cherish it if it comes from those who know what it is like at the front line." Crago, H.

It is unrealistic to expect that we can survive working in an industry that is so challenging of our human emotions simply by taking care of ourselves at home. We need to connect with other human beings who are having similar experiences and "reality check" our feelings and beliefs with them.

How much time do you spend talking to colleagues about the challenges of your work? It is interesting to take note of how much informal support goes on in the lunch room or over the photocopier. Many of us have the luxury of regular contact with people doing the same or similar work within organisations. However, many workers in health and welfare are isolated by the very nature of their work. They can't rely on these daily informal connections to sustain them.

More formalised peer support is often necessary, either in and of itself, or as an adjunct to the informal "around the photocopier" variety. Team meetings represent a wonderful opportunity for workers to debrief and seek support from others who understand the challenges of the work. At my current place of employment, we have an agenda item at the end of the weekly team meeting called "Successes and Challenges". This time in team meetings provides an opportunity to tell what you've done well over the week, and indicate areas of challenge which may require a bit of debriefing and/or support.

Checking in with yourself weekly like this can also give you clues as to whether your own **self care** is working. Work experiences which have distressed you and put you off balance previously, may begin to have less impact due to your personal efforts at self care.

There is enormous strength to be found in receiving positive feedback from your colleagues. Our team "mates" are the people who really know us and our work (if we are connecting regularly). These are the people who can reflect back to us who we really are as workers. The team I "live with" presently have overcome many obstacles together. We draw strength from each other through the feedback we are able to give each other formally and informally. We are not embarrassed or threatened by saying "You did that really well" or "Can I ask for some advice on ...?" This is strength-based practice at its very best.

Window of Opportunity: Strengths

Think about a time when you felt secure, confident and in touch with your strengths. What happened?

What did you do? What helped you feel this way?

What were those strengths? What does inner strength mean to you?

What other words do you think of when you think of "strengths"?

What do these words mean to you?

Many people have lived through traumatic, frightening or exhausting events, yet do not consider themselves as having any particular positive characteristics. Why do we find difficulty in acknowledging our strengths, our determination, our courage, our positive qualities?

Ask not what you can do for your organisation, but what the organisation can do for you!

Recently I was sent a power point presentation about Home Visiting which used the analogy of a "scaffold" to describe the relationship between the home visitor and their client. Home visitors provide a scaffold for parents of young children, a scaffold which supports, nurtures and strengthens the parent while they nurture, bond and "grow" the child. Eventually the scaffold can be removed and the family stands alone, its own internal and external supports in place.

Likewise the agencies we work for, whether we are home visitors, family support workers, nurses, childcare workers, or counsellors, should provide a scaffold to support and strengthen us as we do our work. Without the organisational scaffold, our capacity to be a scaffold for our clients is diminished.

Organisations within the health and community welfare industry often fail to recognise the importance of investing in the well being of their staff. Some pay lip service to worker support via human resource and occupational health and safety policies, but fail to deliver by way of debriefing, supervision and ongoing performance review and development. Dysfunctional health and welfare agencies range from those with incompetent or unqualified management where ignorance is the problem, to those with management who turn a blind eye to the issue of worker stress. The practices of some agencies include ignoring, sidelining and even vilifying any employee who speaks out about the lack of adequate worker support.

Isn't it ironic that agencies whose core business is to address the health and well being of the community, fail to address the same issues for their staff, and in some cases maintain practices which are abusive.

"The job of supervisors and administrators is to create regular, effective spaces where staff pause to consider and question what they are doing, share their doubts, and discuss their strong feelings, rather than simply acting them out... help[ing] staff to keep in mind the meaning of what they are doing, to remember the past and plan for the future."
Crago, H.

There are a variety of ways that organisations can create "space" for staff to survive and thrive. The obvious forms of organisational support are supervision and performance review.

Supervision is an opportunity to follow the Dalai Lama's suggestion of using "our human intelligence to **analyse** the situation and to see it from a different perspective". With the support of a skilled supervisor, we can be facilitated to apply our professional knowledge to our experiences and emotional responses to work. It is in supervision that I have been able to cut through the feelings I carry of despair and powerlessness, and reorient myself by drawing on the professional knowledge I also carry around with me.

I have been heartened in the last 2 years to experience a solid organisational commitment to worker support that is backed up by action. **Supervision** is a priority for management. Within the workplace, we are required to attend monthly supervision with our Co-ordinator. These sessions are structured via a set of strength-based questions, the **Practice Reflection Tool** (see insert), which each worker completes prior to and/or during their supervision session. In addition, we have the benefit of bi-monthly external supervision from an appropriately qualified and experienced health/welfare professional. This supervision can be individual or group and is paid for by the organisation.

A yearly **Performance Review** is conducted involving a structured format which invites the employee to identify and discuss their strengths, and nominate areas of challenge where further development of skills may be indicated. This process enables the worker and supervisor to create a focus for selecting training opportunities in the future. Importantly, the organisation provides a realistic training budget for each employee.

In addition, our wisdom, experience and knowledge is respected and drawn on, with management and the CEO extending regular invitations to staff to provide input into policy and service development.

Being valued by your organisation is a crucial aspect of worker satisfaction. An organisation that values its workers should be encouraging them with regular and productive support and supervision. Really creative managers may even go as far as to offer regular team building opportunities, invite staff to present their work successes within larger contexts, or support them to become involved in other activities which will expand their learning and experiences.

Window of Opportunity: Stamps, Stickers and Stars.

One of the proudest moments for young children is receiving an elephant stamp or silver star on a piece of work.
When was the last time you received acknowledgement for something? How did it feel? Were you able to receive the acknowledgment with the total acceptance, pride and thrill of a young child?
Sometimes we can't rely on other people to provide us with stamps, stickers and stars we crave or wish for. So we need to learn to give ourselves recognition and encouragement for our achievements, our efforts and our triumphs.
What are you going to do for yourself next time you'd like some recognition?

Going beyond the organisation – the truth is out there!

With the birth of the Family Services Network (facilitated by the Benevolent Society), wonderful and hopefully enduring connections seem to be forming out there. At the inaugural Gosford FSN meeting which I attended, we were invited to form into small working groups to focus on areas of interest, including Worker Support.

A collection of 7 workers from a range of disciplines and agencies congregated around a table and began to share their thoughts on worker support. Ideas and experiences flowed and as they did, similarities emerged. Three people in that group, including myself, had taken leave without pay in an attempt to make sense of and recover from experiences of vicarious trauma and burnout!

Finding your way from here

Window of Opportunity: Hope

What does hope mean to you? What are your hopes?

Think about your hopes for the future, for the earth, for your friends and family, for your peace of mind, for your old age, [for your work].

How easy is it to hold on to hope?

What keeps you hoping, believing, trusting – especially through the dark times we all experience?

Create a collage of images that, for you, express hope.

Following 3 months of self imposed “exile” from work three years ago, the path to restoration of my hope and passion for welfare related work has not been without obstacles and pot holes. It has necessitated ongoing reflection on what’s important to me in my work, asking myself questions about how to create balance between work and the rest of my life, and letting go of ego and admitting that there are some aspects of health and welfare work that don’t fit for me.

The journey continues. Today I feel I have a deeper understanding of what it takes to sustain me in my work and life. Tomorrow another challenge may appear unexpectedly. In the remaining years of my work life I will need to come back again and again to particular questions to keep myself on track....reflecting, re-arranging, and restoring.

Here are some questions that I will be asking myself. Perhaps you could use them too...

- Q. *Are you prepared to put time into supporting yourself so you can better support others?*
- Q. *When was the last time you put something in your tank?*
- Q. *Can you think of a place where you could go to just be still and reflect? When and how often can you do this?*
- Q. *Do you know someone who you could connect with regularly to just let off some steam about the challenges of work? Can you call them tomorrow!?*
- Q. *How could you structure in some formal worker support at your place of employment?*
- Q. *What is your organisation offering you in the way of support?*

The gift of that initial connection was the realisation for some that they are not alone in their experiences. By having the courage to share their struggle, they were supporting and assisting each other to move through the self doubt that can plague you in the face of work related challenges. This group continues to meet to discuss issues and build ideas and strategies that may assist others. Getting involved in activities outside your organisation can assist you to maintain a bigger picture and a clearer perspective on work issues, while providing you with an opportunity to connect and share ideas with others. Additionally, seeking connection with workers from the same professional discipline as you might also provide an opportunity for meeting of like minds.

- Q. *How could you join with other workers in your organisation to invite management to consider options for improving structured worker support?*
- Q. *What other options do you have for support beyond your organisation?*

Much of the work we undertake in the health, welfare and community sector is based on **HOPE**...hope that change is possible. (If we didn’t believe this we’d probably be packing pastries at Sara Lee!) It is my hope that the ramblings above will in some way facilitate change (where necessary) in how we as workers perceive and access the support we need.

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Practice Reflection Tool

Worker: _____ Date: ____/____/____

• What has worked well for you this month (include strength based strategies):

• Identify at least two highlights for the month (outcomes for families)

• What issues if any, have come up for you this month and how have you attempted to address them:

• Are there any issues you need support with?

• What do you hope to achieve in the next month (particularly in terms of your operational plan and your own personal development):

• What we have agreed to do in the month:

ACTION REQUIRED	BY WHO

Worker: _____

Coordinator: _____

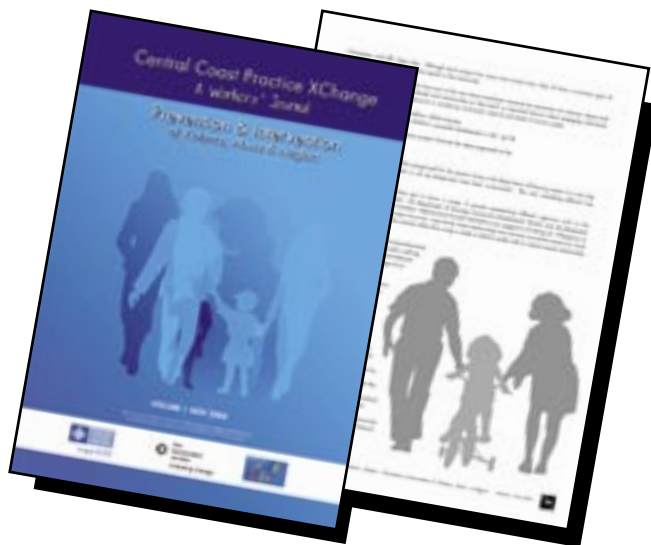
(Developed by Wendy Orth, UnitingCare Burnside Family Services Co-ordinator)

The Central Coast Practice X-Change: A Workers' Journal

At the time of going to print, this new 64 page journal was itself at the printers, ready for its launch and distribution in late November as part of the 16 days of Activism against violence against women and children”.

A partnership project between the VAN (Violence, Abuse and neglect) Service of Central Coast Health and the Central Coast Networks of Practice project, this journal contains 18 articles of various lengths and subject matter showcasing Preventative and Intervention work around violence, abuse and neglect.

Distribution of this free journal will commence on launch. If you want a copy please contact either Deb Tipper 4353 4688 or Tamara lee on 4320 3585



Thank You To Contributors

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FEEDBACK

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of
THE FAMILY NET-WORKS
will focus on Children's Participation:
including them in service provision

Children's Participation