

# Midland FRC *in focus*

## IN THIS ISSUE

December 2008

- ◆ Welcome
- ◆ FDR training
- ◆ Letter from the Editor
- ◆ The Canberra Experience
- ◆ Children in Focus Seminar
- ◆ Working with Geraldton FRC
- ◆ Outreach
- ◆ Business Support Team
- ◆ Tips from the Team

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**CENTRECARE**

*"People Making Time for People"*

Welcome to the latest edition of Midland FRC in Focus. It has been a very busy and productive 2008. We are fully staffed and have provided services to over 1900 clients. Our Children In Focus Seminar has seen over 400 parents participate in this educational and powerful seminar.

The Child Consultancy Service was launched in April 2008 and since then feedback from both parents/carers and children has been very positive indeed. In 2009 we will be offering a continuation of our Child Focused and Child Inclusive service. We look forward to continuing to provide high quality services to families in 2009. On behalf of the Midland FRC, we wish you a restful and happy New Year.

Congratulations to Stephen Clarke, Midland FRC Manager, who was elected as the Chair of the WA Family Pathways Network in July 2008. The Network is funded by the Attorney General's Department to facilitate communication between agencies involved in the Family Law Sector.

Karen Kickett, the FRC Indigenous Adviser, delivered a presentation at the November Family Pathways Network Seminar. The presentation included her professional and personal experiences of the FDR process for Indigenous families, particularly grandparents. Karen was the first Indigenous speaker to present at the Family Pathways Network Seminar Series.

Karen has been invited to participate in research being conducted by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies, as a WA representative. Karen travelled to Canberra to share her experiences of working as an FDR practitioner with Indigenous and non Indigenous clients. This research forms part of the Government's review of FDR training. Karen returns to Canberra in 2009 to continue with her contribution towards this important research.



*Left to right, Karen Kickett, Julie Jackson, (Legal Aid) Kerry Blom, (Wanslea Grandcare) and Stephen Clarke, (Manager, Midland FRC)*

## Family Dispute Resolution Training

In October, Stephen Clarke and Christine Novatsis, from Centrecare, delivered five days of FDR training to 11 trainee practitioners. Two trainees were from the Midland FRC; Heleen de Jager and Aldine Pugh. They are both psychologists by profession and are enjoying the challenge of working in the FRC. The training was rewritten to reflect the changes in the Family Law Act. During the training, guest speakers included Norma Williams and Farida Lang. Norma provided an interesting update on the new accreditation requirements for FDRPs. Farida delivered a thoughtful presentation on the impact of parental separation and conflict on the development of children. The Specialist Family Violence Service in Centrecare, delivered training on the impact of Family and Domestic Violence on families.

As a result of the training, Heleen and Aldine are now involved in co-mediation as the final step towards becoming fully accredited practitioners with the Attorney-General's Department. This reflects the commitment of the FRC to assist staff in achieving the highest levels of professional training.



*Participants at the October FDRP Training.  
Midland FRC staff include Heleen, standing, third from left,  
Bohdanka, Aldine and Stephen. Mike is seated, front right*

## Letter From The Editor

As the editor of the Midland FRC newsletter, I would like to introduce myself. I joined the team in December 2008 as a Family Advisor, with a portfolio for Community Development. I look forward to this role with great enthusiasm as I will be combining the skills that I have obtained from my studies at Notre Dame University. I graduated in 2002 with a Degree in Commerce specialising in marketing. After working in this area for several years and realising that something was missing.

I returned to Notre Dame to begin my studies in the field of Counselling in 2004. In October of this year I finally threw in my study hat and have commenced employment at Midland FRC, where, interestingly enough, I did my practicum in March this year! My experience at the FRC was one of seeing practitioners genuinely caring about the outcomes for children after family separation and focusing on the best interests of children as well as assisting families to improve relationships...wow I was impressed! Based on this experience

I participated in the FDRP training at the Midland FRC in October to take the necessary steps in becoming an accredited Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner. I will also take this opportunity to invite you all to make any contributions or provide feedback about this newsletter to: [mfrc@centrecare.com.au](mailto:mfrc@centrecare.com.au)

A big thank you to those who kindly contributed to this issue.

**Bohdanka Vagner**

In October, we facilitated our highly popular quarterly FDRP Forum. This event continues to attract support from practitioners interested in discussing and developing professional and good practice principles. The Forum included a review of practice in Family and Domestic Violence, Child Inclusive Practice and issues associated with the Government's new accreditation requirements for FDRPs.

**The next Forum is on 30 January 2009.**

**The agenda will include:**

- **What constitutes genuine effort?**
- **Therapeutic FDR**
- **Cultural considerations in FDR**
- **Update on Family Court research and Certificates**

## The Canberra Experience

In the month of September, Aldine Pugh and Heleen de Jager, had the privilege of attending the Family Relationship Centre orientation training in Canberra. The purpose of the training was to provide an overview of the Government's expectations and requirements for the operation of the Family Relationship Centres as well as the role of the Attorney General's Department. The meeting also provided a platform for discussion on issues that could have a potential impact on service delivery. A wide range of topics were addressed on day one and included but were not limited to the following:

- Important Family Law Reforms and changes outlining the implications for FRC service delivery.
- A discussion on various models of service delivery.
- A presentation and discussion on the Screening and Assessment process within different centres as well as some information on the different roles of staff members within each centre.
- An informative presentation on Child Focused Service Delivery intended to demonstrate how centres can remain focussed on the best interests of the child/children while dealing with clients.



*Heleen de Jager and Aldine Pugh*

On the first evening, delegates were invited to attend a dinner at a local restaurant, whilst day two commenced with a lovely breakfast; followed by a brisk walk to the Canberra Rex Hotel (nobody told the South African colleagues that Australia can be so cold!). The morning wakeup and warm up was followed by a panel presentation on engaging with other services in the Family Law System, followed by a presentation on the relationship between the centres and the Family Relationship Advice Line (FRAL) and TDRS (Telephone Dispute Resolution Service). The vital role and function of these services was explained, followed by an interesting presentation on how to browse the Family Relationship Centre (FRC) and Attorney's General Department (AGD) website.

The afternoon of day two was taken up with a discussion on "Practitioner Issues" and "Working across Centres". John Scollen from Catholic Social Services, took all the new Centrecare staff under his wing and hosted a thoroughly entertaining evening at a Turkish restaurant. The final day involved an overview of all the topics discussed and raised during the week as well as group discussions on nominated issues, concerns, and needs.

All in all the training was a big success, which provided Aldine and Heleen with more knowledge and a clearer understanding of the Government's expectations and practical requirements for the operation of the Centres.

The last hours of the Canberra experience were spent sightseeing and although footsore, the ladies were enlightened by the wonders of Canberra. To conclude their experiences Aldine and Heleen made sure that their sore feet and hard work were rewarded with gifts sponsored by VISA and their wonderful but unsuspecting husbands!

*Heleen and Aldine would like to thank Centrecare for this opportunity*

## Children In Focus Seminars and Centrecare Counsellors

The Children In Focus Seminar was officially launched in April 2008, and jointly facilitated by Midland FRC and Relationships Australia. The Seminar provides an opportunity and a forum for parents and carers to receive valuable information about the Family Law changes, as well as important information on the developmental needs of children. Over 400 people have attended this Seminar. The facilitators focus on the importance for parents to make a shift from their current conflicting relationships with their ex-partners onto their children's needs and best interests. In October 2008, we introduced Centrecare Counselling Staff as part of the Seminar, in response to client and facilitators feedback. The presence of a counsellor in the seminar provides immediate access and referral pathways for clients in need. Immediately after the Seminar, qualified counsellors from Centrecare are available to all participants for a brief and confidential discussion. Talking to a qualified counsellor can help parents explore and deal with the challenges they may be experiencing, which will enable them to put aside their personal issues and focus on their children.

Feedback from parents, who have attended the seminar, has been consistently positive. Below are examples of feedback, from mums, dads and grandparents:

- *"Excellent presentation emphasising the critical importance of the needs of children when parents separate"*
- *"How to manage to keep the conflict away from kids"*
- *I found it extremely helpful. It made me more willing to talk."*
- *"This is a fantastic idea all around. Nine years ago, this was not available for those newly separated"*
- *"The DVD was a real eye opener"*
- *"It was a constant reminder that children come first"/"It was great, thanks"*



## Working with the Geraldton Family Relationship Centre

The Midland and Geraldton FRCs have formed a very close professional relationship during 2008. Our Team Leader Norma Williams travels to Geraldton, on a monthly basis to provide ongoing professional support, mentoring and supervision. This has been of tremendous value and has assisted a number of newly appointed staff achieve their FDR supervision hours. This has proven to be a very successful model of inter agency collaboration. In October, our child consultant, Farida commenced offering services to children accessing the Geraldton FRC with the intention of delivering a child consultancy service.

## Outreach Services

Services are provided to two outreach locations in Kalgoorlie and Northam. The location in Northam is based in a newly built community centre. FDR services have been successfully delivered in Northam and we are anticipating the demand increasing as families become aware of our new location and services. In Kalgoorlie we have established relationships with our colleagues at the Centrecare branch which has an excellent reputation for delivery of high quality family relationship services programs. FDR is provided by Midland FRC Practitioners in collaboration with Centrecare Kalgoorlie Practitioners on a fly in fly out basis. Feedback received from clients reflects the responsive nature of this service.

## Useful contacts

Family Relationships Advice Line  
1800 050 321  
[www.familyrelationships.gov.au](http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au)

Legal Aid  
(08) 9261 6222  
[www.legalaid.wa.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.wa.gov.au)

Child support Agency  
(08) 9338 2584  
[www.csa.gov.au](http://www.csa.gov.au)

Centrecare Counselling Services  
(08) 9325 6644  
[www.centrecare.com.au](http://www.centrecare.com.au)

Law Society of WA  
(08) 9322 7877  
[www.lawsocietywa.asn.au](http://www.lawsocietywa.asn.au)

Financial Counsellors Assoc WA  
(08) 9325 1617  
[www.financialcounsellors.org](http://www.financialcounsellors.org)



# ***Business Support Team***

## ***Out and About***

The Business Support Team have attended various training and workshops. The team have enjoyed and valued being provided with the opportunity to attend these workshops and training, enabling them to put names to faces and network with others within the sector. “We have gained a wealth of information to pass on to our clients about our service and other services,” says Julie Cawston, Client Liaison Officer.

The FRSP Online Training was attended by Paula Bennett and Jacinta Nuuamoa. They have since applied their new skills, knowledge and wisdom on data entry to other staff members. This has proved to be very productive training!

Attendance at Centrecare Corporate’s Vibrant Workplace Workshop has ensured that the Business Support Team has become even more focused on meeting the needs of parents and carers at the Midland FRC. To further enhance our vibrant team, we recently took part in a Meditation Retreat. Our meditative sighs are now justified and prove that the sighs heard from the Business Support Team have nothing to do with data entry!

We were invited to observe a family and domestic violence role-play in a workshop jointly presented by Centrecare’s Specialist Family Violence Service and the FRC. It was highly valuable for the team to experience a screening & assessment interview “live”. This provided us with a unique and first hand experience and opportunity to increase our understanding of the work undertaken by the FDRs.

It is great to work with experienced and skilled colleagues that provide this very valuable service to families everyday.



### ***New Business Support Team Members***

*Laura Gordon, Jacinta Nuuamoa, Client Liaison Officer and to Paula Bennett and Sandra Allan (our invaluable data hands and administrators).*

## ***Tips from the team***

1. *After Screening & Assessment, prepare for Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) by writing a list of aims and goals that you wish to achieve keeping your child's best interests in mind and bring this list along with you to FDR to help keep you focused.*
2. *Try to arrive at your FDR session 10 minutes early so that you can feel settled before you commence the FDR session.*
3. *Agree that you are in a partnership to achieve the best results for your children, focus on children's needs rather than on each other's lifestyle.*
4. *Ask for "time out" during FDR to think about how the session is going.*
5. *Keep your children as the central focus when mediating with the other parent.*
6. *Make the best use of the children in focus seminar and don't be worried about asking questions of the facilitators– they are there to help you.*
7. *Read the information for Midland FRC Parents and Carers Booklet which contains lots of useful information on the family law changes and how we work at the Midland FRC*



**The Midland FRC team** ( missing were: Aldine Pugh, Heleen de Jager, Bohdanka Vagner)

## **Working with other agencies**

Midland Family Relationship Centre is committed to working collaboratively with service providers in meeting the needs of the local community. The Midland FRC, in partnership with Relationships Australia, (RA) continues to provide the venue for RA's eight week anger management group for men.

In addition, the Midland FRC and Relationships Australia will continue to work collaboratively in delivering the Children in Focus seminar. The aim of this seminar is to assist parents in becoming child focused to ensure that the needs of the children are the first priority for all parties involved in the dispute resolution process. As a key member of the WA Family Pathways Network, we are committed to ensuring that families are able to access, in a timely way, the most appropriate services to assist in the period following separation. Please contact us on (08) 9436 0600 or email [mfrcc@centrecare.com.au](mailto:mfrcc@centrecare.com.au) for further information on the Midland FRC or counselling services that may help.