

# Midland FRC *in focus*

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Welcome to the second edition of Midland FRC in Focus. This quarterly newsletter provides information on what has been happening at the Midland FRC. Since the beginning of the year, the Centre has been increasingly busy. We have continued to meet the need from parents and carers for advice and support around parenting issues. Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) has assisted a large number of families to develop child focused Parenting Plans. These Parenting Plans have saved families the unnecessary cost and stress of going to the Family Court. Feedback from parents has consistently shown that by involving themselves in Family Dispute Resolution, they have been able to focus on what is best for their children.

The figures show that over the last three months, we have conducted over 450 intake assessments, 120 FDR/joint sessions, completed 90 parenting plans and dealt with over 3,000 telephone enquiries. Currently, the waiting times at Midland Family Relationship Centre are the best across the State with parents and carers only waiting on average 5 days for their first assessment and 3 weeks for FDR/joint sessions. The team is very proud of this achievement and we remain committed to avoiding unnecessary delays in helping families resolve parenting disputes .

To meet the growing needs of our community ,we have appointed two new staff members, Claire Gill and Belinda Gibson. Claire brings with her a wealth of experience and knowledge of the mediation sector having worked in the area for the past five years, including a period with Centrecare Mediation. Belinda Gibson, a qualified psychologist, has recently "migrated" from Melbourne where she was working in the family violence field. This brings our team up to seven practitioners. By May 2008, all of the team will be fully accredited to practice in Family Dispute Resolution.

The picture below shows the team preparing for the Festival of Hearts promotion which saw us hand out over 200 red roses to members of the local community to celebrate the strength of families.



*The Midland Family Relationship Centre staff: L-R Michael Tkacz, Claire Gill, Mary Macbeth, Gaina Brown, Farida Lang, Norma Williams, Karen Kickett, Peta Lewis, Julie Cawston and Stephen Clarke (Manager). Missing from the photo, Belinda Gibson.*



# WA Family Pathways Network Conference 7th February 2008

On the 7th February the staff at the Midland Family Relationship Centre attended the WA Family Pathways Network Conference held at the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle. Throughout the day, local and national guest speakers such as Michelle Scott (pictured opposite) WA's Inaugural Children's Commissioner, Clara Kirika from the Department for Child Protection, Dr. Jennifer McIntosh, and Magistrate Jill van der Wall, discussed the changes to the Family Law Act and how these changes may affect children of separating parents.

The theme of the conference was "Climate Change – the New Family Law Environment" The focus was on the involvement of children in the FDR process and changes to the Family Law Act. The conference included discussions and workshops about family violence, indigenous affairs and the roll out of the final stage of FRC's which will total 65 from July 2008.



*Pictured at the WA Family Pathways Network Conference is L-R Louise Durack, (FPN Development Officer) with Michelle Scott, (WA's Inaugural Children's Commissioner), and our Executive Manager Melissa Perry.*



*L-R Mike, Karen, Donna (Attorney-General's Dept) Stephen at the Canberra FRC conference, March 2008*



*L-R Magistrate Jill van der Wall with Bevan Warner (the conference MC) and Rhonda Griffiths, Family Lawyer*

## Annual FRC Attorney General's Conference— March 2008

Two of our team members, Karen Kickett and Michael Tkacz, attended the Annual FRC Conference with manager, Stephen Clarke. The conference was held in Canberra. The conference looked at the impact compulsory family dispute resolution was having on families, the importance of effective screening in cases where there are issues of family violence, indigenous affairs and the roll out of the final stage of FRC's.

Stephen, Mike and Karen all delivered presentations to the conference, with Mike and Karen focusing on Indigenous Family Dispute Resolution and Stephen talking about his experiences of Midland's close working relationship with the Family Relationship Advice.



*L-R Mike, Karen and Sue (Manager Rockhampton FRC) speaking at the Canberra FRC conference, March 2008.*



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# We are here to help you!

## Festival of Hearts

### Outreach Services—Festival of Hearts

On Valentine's Day the Midland FRC organised its first Festival of Hearts event. The objective of the promotion was to celebrate relationships, the strength of families and to increase awareness and promote the centre in the local community. The staff at the Midland FRC handed out 200 free red roses and cards to families to pass onto someone they love. In some cases people receiving the rose indicated that this was the first time they had received a valentine's gift. The day proved to be both very successful and enjoyable for the staff and local community members.

### Professional Development

Over the last month the staff at the Midland FRC have been working very hard at building relationships with partnering organisations. In building collaborative relationships with external agencies, we have had a number of our team members deliver training sessions. Belinda Gibson, one of our newest members, presented information at the Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) staff meeting pertaining to the Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) process and the recent and future changes to the Family Law Act. This same training session was also delivered by Belinda to the Centrecare counselling. Mike Tkacz also delivered training to practitioners at Legal Aid about our model and discussed the impact the changes to the Family Law Act were having on families attending our centre. Karen Kickett, our indigenous adviser, also conducted a training session to workers at Legal Aid. Karen spoke to Legal Aid practitioners about a range of indigenous issues that are relevant to their work. Stephen Clarke, the Centre manager, provided training to Centrelink's state-wide managers which focused on FRC services, changes to the Family Law and the FDR process. In turn, staff at Midland FRC have received training from stakeholders; the team leader from Centrecare Family Violence Service and a representative from Centrelink both came to one of the Midland FRC team meetings, to talk about their organisation to improve referrals between the respective services.

### Future Services

On May 27 2008, we shall be launching our child inclusive model of FDR. This will involve, in appropriate circumstances, our child consultant seeing children to talk with them about how they are coping with their parent's separation. With their agreement, these views will be shared with their parents in a follow up meeting to help them formulate a child focused parenting plan. Feedback from parents and children, who have used this service in other FRCs, has been very positive. We are hoping that this new service, along with our Children in Focus seminar, will enable our practice to effectively safeguard and promote the best interests of children.



Family Advisors - Norma Williams - left, and Farida Lang - right, presenting local Midland community members a single red rose for St. Valentine's Day.



Midland Family Relationship Centre staff preparing the roses for the Festival of Hearts event. Left to right, Farida Lang, Mary Macbeth, Gaina Brown, Stephen Clarke and Julie Cawston.

### 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, 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 to deliver the Children in Focus seminar for parents and carers. 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. These are being held at the Midland FRC with groups starting on 9 April. We will be offering daytime and evening sessions. To book, please contact the Midland FRC on 9436 0600.

### 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)

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If you would like to add your contact details to this list please email  
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