



FAR SOUTH COAST  
Family Support Service Inc.

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# Annual Report 2021-2022

# 1. Chairperson's Report

Welcome everyone and thank you for making the time to attend our 2022 AGM, the 34<sup>th</sup> such meeting since our date of incorporation in August 1988.

This has been another year of changes and challenges, all of which the service has negotiated with aplomb. Kristina Brenner, who was appointed as Executive Office in March 2021, was unable to continue in this role due to ongoing health issues. This was a blow for both Kristina and our service as the impact she'd made in such a short space of time had galvanized the strategic direction of the organisation. That said, we were grateful to James Brown and Ben Deighan, who stepped into the Acting Service Manager and Acting Business Manager roles respectively and kept things running smoothly. With Kristina able to return later in the year, albeit in a reduced hours capacity, we now have a management structure that is well placed to continue the organisational progression of the past few years.

In other staff changes, we farewelled Pauline Wellington after 30 years of invaluable service! Congratulations Pauline on a truly remarkable career with Family Support, and we will all miss your wisdom and professionalism at the service. Our Family Worker team was also strengthened this year with Suzanne Milligan coming on board. A qualified Counsellor, Suzanne brings a raft of experience and skills, and has fitted well into the team in a relatively short space of time. Hans Schmidt-Harms, who recently completed a student placement at Family Support, has also taken on a casual role and has become a valuable member of the Family Worker team, bringing a fresh perspective and enthusiasm to his work. Sarah De La Motte, a long-term volunteer at our Bega Playgroup, has also joined the team as our Playgroup Co-facilitator, and continues to provide great support to this weekly program.

Our staff still remain our greatest asset and have, unsurprisingly, risen to every challenge 2021/2022 could throw up. During all the upheaval, the team has adapted, supported their clients and colleagues and put in the extra yards whenever they were needed. I'm sure the Board would like to join me in thanking the group for their continued endeavour and commitment.

Two of the highlights for me this year has been our progression towards our twin goals of establishing both a Play Therapy service and a Men's Behaviour Change program. Thanks to Westpac and the IMB Foundation, both Kellie Bateman and Valerie Schmid-Oke are well on their way to becoming accredited Play Therapists. Jade Dryden and James Brown are completing their Graduate Certificate in Men's Behaviour Change, and this represents the first stage of becoming an accredited organisation to deliver these types of programs.



Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Board members for continuing to give their time, expertise and wisdom to this excellent service. It is a pleasure working with you and a privilege to be part of this organisation making a difference in our community. A special thanks must go to the resigning Geoff Johnston for his contributions at Board level over the past few years, and a huge welcome to Graham Stubbs who has joined our governance team as his replacement.

Here's to another fruitful year at Far South Coast Family Support Service.

**Joanna Rideaux**  
**Chairperson**



***Members of FSCFSS (from left) Jade Dryden, Valerie Schmid-Oke, Kellie Bateman, Pauline Wellington, Kylie Dummer, Kristina Brenner, Joanna Rideaux, James Brown.***

*Photo: Amandine Ahrens, Bega District News.*



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## 2. Who We Are

Far South Coast Family Support Service (FSCFSS) is a community-managed, not for profit organisation that has been operating in the Bega Valley Shire since 1987. FSCFSS provides critical support and early intervention services to families with dependent children throughout the Bega Valley Shire with the goal of strengthening the skills, capacity, resilience and wellbeing of families and children.

Primarily funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, the service is incorporated as an Association under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*. The organisation is a registered Income Tax Exempt Charity (ITEC), has Deductible Gift Recipient Status and is registered with the Australian Charities and Not For Profits Commission. We are part of a network of Family Support Services in NSW and a member of two community services peak bodies: NSW FamS and the NSW Local Community Services Association.

Services are primarily provided under two main programs: Targeted Earlier Intervention and Intensive Family Preservation. The range of services provided in both the lower- and higher-needs programs include case work, community education, home visiting, parenting support groups, counselling, advocacy and referrals. We have also been fortunate this year to have received seed funding and other opportunities to begin extending our services into new but related fields, including commencing training in Play Therapy (child-focused) and Filial/Interplay Therapy (family-focused), and training to begin our process of becoming qualified to deliver tailored parenting groups and supports specifically for fathers and male carers in the future.

Working from a 'whole of family' perspective, staff support diverse child and family needs, including matters relating to parenting, relationships, child wellbeing, safety, substance abuse, family violence and children's development. The organisation adopts a client-centred, strengths-based approach that values the clients' experiences and expertise.

## 3. Our Philosophy

Far South Coast Family Support Service:

- Recognises the social, environmental, economic, physical, emotional and cultural factors which influence family wellbeing
- Recognises that families have multiple forms, not necessarily biologically based
- Understands that every family is unique, and believes that social, cultural, racial and linguistic identities should be celebrated



- Believes that all members of a family should be safe from violence and abuse
- Values the knowledge, resilience and skills that exist in every family unit, and the rights of families to make informed decisions about their own parenting
- Helps families take control of factors that will enhance their independence and self-reliance
- Recognises the integral role of families in communities, and the importance of community building in strengthening families and networks
- Aims to be flexible and continually responsive to the changing needs of families and communities

Our team works within and abides by the *Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics*, a national accountability framework that designates methods of consultative, client-centred service and culturally appropriate service provision. All workers within the organisation, including Board members and volunteers, possess an active Working with Children Check and Criminal Record Check.



*Some amazing snaps from our Bega Playgroup*



## 4. Guiding Principles

### **Purpose**

**We build on our community's  
strengths**

### **Vision**

**To create a place where we all belong  
and thrive**

### **Values**

- **Integrity**
- **Collaboration**
- **Advocacy**
- **Innovation**
- **Professionalism**



## 5. Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan for 2021-2026 includes the following priorities:

### Our Three Strategic Directions

#### We will actively seek to fill service gaps by:

- Maintaining outreach as a prominent component of our service delivery
- Finding new ways to support the unique needs of isolated communities
- Partnering with preschools, schools and other child-related services to build the capacity of children and families and support them to live their best lives
- Delivering an age-appropriate play-based support service for children too young to benefit from traditional counselling
- Establishing a drop-in service that reinforces our position as the first port of call for diverse social support matters
- Delivering targeted services to men that inform, empower and encourage responsibility
- Learning from and working with Aboriginal communities to promote the inclusion of Aboriginal culture in the wider community
- Becoming a 'one stop shop' that streamlines service delivery

#### We will continuously improve our organisation by:

- Ensuring that our policies and procedures provide a safe framework for service delivery
- Implementing a rigorous risk management system across all areas of the business
- Using structured planning and evaluation processes for all of our programs and activities
- Embedding quality improvement and reflective practice techniques into our everyday work
- Investing in staff professional development and education
- Diversifying funding sources to achieve sustainability

#### We will support people and culture within and outside of the organisation by:

- Continuing to take a strength-based and trauma-informed approach to teamwork and service provision
- Ensuring we are known as an employer of choice
- Ensuring our Board is representative of our community and client base
- Working with community and stakeholders to adapt to local needs and changes
- Being a strong voice for the community
- Being an agent for social justice
- Maximising partnerships in the delivery of programs and services





## 6. Our Partners in 2021/2022 – Thank you!



Bega Valley  
**CDAT**



## 7. Acting Business Manager's Report

2021/2022 has been yet another remarkable year for Far South Coast Family Support Service. From the business perspective, we have seen a number of changes, both planned and enforced upon the organisation, and as a group we have dealt with these events remarkably.

With Kristina Brenner, our previous Executive Officer, on extended leave from November 2021, the Board decided to alter the management structure and appoint myself as Acting Business Manager and James Brown as Acting Client Service Manager. This change in structure allowed both of us to concentrate on the key areas of the business that we were most equipped to support. Two new staff members have joined the family worker team this year, to lend support to an increase in overall demand for services. Suzanne Milligan as Counsellor and Family Support Worker, and Hans Schmidt-Harms as Child Youth & Family Worker. Both have brought fresh faces and plenty of enthusiasm to the team, and increased their workload accordingly as circumstances changed within the organisation.

In March 2022 we embarked on an IT re-structure, moving away from standalone computers and individual IT document management. With the support of Colin Halliday from Strategic Group, and DCJ funding from the Social Sector Transformation Fund, we were able to move the business into the collaborative IT working environment that is Microsoft 365. The team at FSCFSS are now able to utilise the benefits of shared work calendars, cloud-based document management systems, and access a variety of communications channels through Microsoft Teams. These IT changes have had a very positive effect on the work of the team, as we transition towards a more paperless system that supports both office based and remote working environments. Part of this IT re-structuring has also included a migration to Xero accounts software, which will provide a number of efficiencies in both the payroll and financial management systems.

In terms of funding this year, we have continued to roll out our technology assistance program to clients. Thanks again to the Social Sector Transformation Funding, we were able to supply families in need with over 30 laptops, Wi-Fi dongles and headphones. Support from the Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal has allowed for staff members to complete trauma informed training, and successful grants from both the IMB Foundation and Westpac have assisted with costs associated with Play Therapist accreditation for two staff members. Thanks also to the StandbyU Shield & Bendigo and Adelaide Community Bank Project, which supplied our service with personal safety watches to support at risk clients in relation to family and domestic violence.

The 2023 financial year looks set to another bumper year for the service, with a male specific parenting program called Caring Dads due for commencement in September 2023, and a six



month Play Therapy pilot program set to begin in February 2023. I'll look forward to sharing these and other developments in next year's report.

**Ben Deighan**

**Acting Business Manager**

## 8. Community Profile

Bega Valley Shire Council's population forecasts are for a population of 34,538 residents in the Bega Valley Shire in 2019<sup>1</sup>. As at the 2016 Census, 20% of households across the Bega Valley Shire were couples with children; 11% of these comprised couples with young children (aged under 15 years) and 8.7% of these households were single-parent families (n=1257), 3.5% (n=511) of whom had young children.<sup>2</sup>

Overall, households with children number slightly lower in the Bega Valley Shire than Regional NSW across all age groups: babies and pre-schoolers (0-4 years) are 4.4% compared to 5.8% Regional NSW; primary schoolers (aged 5-11 years) 7.9% compared to 8.9% Regional NSW and secondary schoolers (aged 12-17 years) 7% compared to 7.3% for Regional NSW. Within the Bega Valley Shire compared to non-Indigenous families, Indigenous families have a higher proportion of coupled families with children (29.1% versus 24%), as well as a higher proportion of one-parent families (33.3% versus 10.3%)<sup>3</sup>.

In the 2016 Census<sup>4</sup>, 3,864 people resident in the Bega Valley Shire were born overseas and 5% had arrived in Australia within the 5 years prior to 2016. 4% of people were from a non-English speaking background, and only 0.2% of the population in the Shire report difficulties with English. The most common countries of birth other than Australia are the United Kingdom (5.1%), New Zealand (1.1%), Germany (0.4%) and the Netherlands (0.3%). 2.8% of the Shire (n=905) identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Bega Valley Shire scores 968.7 on the SEIFA index of relative disadvantage, which is lower than the Australian average (100)<sup>5</sup>. The SEIFA index measures the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage, based on a range of attributes such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment and jobs in relatively unskilled occupations. Eden, at 874 on the SEIFA index, is the most disadvantaged area of the Shire and ranks as the 685<sup>th</sup> most

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<sup>1</sup>Bega Valley Shire Council (2016a). 'Bega Valley Shire Community Profile', ProfileID Community Profile. <http://profile.id.com.au/bega-valley>

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> Bega Valley Shire 2016 Census results Community Profile .id Consulting Pty.Ltd.

<sup>4</sup>ibid

<sup>5</sup>ibid



disadvantaged area of Australia out of 8248 regions, which is in the lowest 10<sup>th</sup> percentile of the nation. 5.7% of people in the Bega Valley Shire (n=1816) report having a disability that necessitates assistance with daily activities. 34.8% of adults in the Shire completed school to Year 12, with the majority of adults exiting school at lower grades.

13,404 people living within the Bega Valley Shire are in the labour force (52.6% total participation), with 50.4% of these workers in full time employment, 41.6% in part time employment, and 6% looking for work<sup>6</sup>. The most common bracket for weekly household income ranges from \$400-\$499 per week (11% of households). 37% of all households are considered low-income households.<sup>7</sup> 10.35% of people in the Bega Valley Shire (n=3516) identify as being unpaid carers for a person who is aged or has a disability or long term illness. 6.4% (n=2187) of people living within the Bega Valley Shire are unpaid carers of children other than their own.<sup>8</sup>

Bega Valley Shire Council's own community profiling documents highlight what we already see on the ground - that youth/child services and facilities are a top area of concern for residents in Bega and Merimbula districts, while the need for more attention and funding in Eden is a top concern within the Eden district. These service gaps highlight some critical issues affecting families raising children in environments where extended family support may be unavailable, where financial disadvantage is an ongoing constraint, and where social and/or geographic isolation can impede a family's capacity to either provide or engage with opportunities to enhance the wellbeing and healthy development of family members.

## 9. Funding

In 2021-22, FSCFSS received funding from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice through the Targeted Earlier Intervention program for \$275,558.38 and funding through the Intensive Family Preservation program for \$283,153.24. The service was also supported by grants from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, the IMB Foundation, Westpac Safer Children Safer Communities, Social Sector Transformation Fund and the Social Sector Support Fund.

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<sup>6</sup>ibid

<sup>7</sup> ibid

<sup>8</sup> ibid



Additional funding received in 2021/2022			
15/09/2021	Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal	FRRR - Transforming Trauma	\$10,000
27/09/2021	Westpac Safer Children Safer Communities	Westpac Safer Children Grant	\$50,000
30/09/2021	Social Sector Transformation Fund - DIRECT (SSTF)	(DCJ) Variation payment	\$7,000
14/10/2021	AMH Motor Group	Donation	\$550
03/11/2021	Social Sector Support Fund (SSSF)	(DCJ) Initial Grant	\$100,000
07/12/2021	IMB Foundation	IMB Play Therapy Funding	\$10,000
30/03/2022	Social Sector Support Fund (SSSF)	(DCJ) Additional Funding	\$30,449

*The audited Financial Statements for 2021-2022, detailing acquittals of all funding received, will be tabled at the Annual General Meeting.*

## 10. Board of Directors

The voluntary Board of Directors presides over all governance aspects of the organisation and provides critical support and guidance to management and the family worker team. Most Board members hold longstanding positions with the organisation. Their dedication and commitment towards the organisation is deeply appreciated.

An annual Risk Management Schedule is overseen by the Board to hold the organisation accountable to funding bodies, regulatory bodies and the community, ensuring organisational compliance with statutory and non-statutory obligations. FSCFSS maintains Directors' and Officers' Liability insurance for Board members. Board meetings are held bi-monthly on the second Tuesday at 12pm.

Far South Coast Family Support Service	
Board Member	Position held
Claire Lupton	Vice Chairperson
Graham Stubbs	Treasurer
Geoff Johnston	Board Member
Joanna Rideaux	Chairperson
Katherine Boland	Board Member
Kylie Dummer	Secretary
Mary Hourigan	Board Member
Paul Brunton	Board Member





## 11. The Team

In 2021/2022 the service employed six permanent part-time staff, four casual employees and provided three placements for community service Students. All staff (aside from the Acting Business Manager and Admin Support) undertake direct work with families (at people's homes, at the office premises and other locations, such as schools or other services). The increase in full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing that we have seen this year has been due to additional DCJ and external grants that we have received for a variety of projects and programs, whilst our core funding has remained unchanged. Our challenge in future years will be to explore additional methods of sustaining our new programs and higher rates of service delivery whilst recognising that our primary funding amounts remain fixed, and our additional grants are all time-limited.

<b>Far South Coast Family Support Service</b>	
<b>Staff Member</b>	<b>Position held</b>
Ben Deighan	Acting Business Manager
Hans Schmidt-Harms	Child Youth & Family Worker
Jade Dryden	Child Youth & Family Worker
James Brown	Acting Service Manager
Kellie Bateman	Child Youth & Family Worker
Kristina Brenner	Executive Officer
Pauline Wellington	Admin Support
Sarah De La Motte	Playgroup Co-Facilitator
Suzanne Milligan	Counsellor & Family Support Worker
Taylah Abraham	Student placement
Valerie Schmid-Oke	Child Youth & Family Worker

## 12. Professional Development

The Family Support Service is committed to sustained, quality training for all workers, including (when possible), students and Board of Directors. The professional development activities undertaken by the team in the past year are detailed below, with a number of these training sessions attended by multiple staff:



- AOD First Aid Training
- Southern NSW Regional Community Drug Action Forum
- Psychological Safety at Work Webinar
- Men's Behaviour Change Graduate Certificate
- Postnatal Depression and Anxiety Therapy
- Accidental Counsellor
- SSTF Not for Profit Leadership coaching
- SSTF Not for Profit Sustainability group coaching
- St John's First Aid
- Caring Dads
- Interplay Play Therapist Accreditation
- Solution Focussed BT with Depression & Anxiety
- Infant Mental Health
- Tuning into Teens facilitator training
- Solution Focussed BT Managing Trauma

Staff continue to access internal and external clinical supervision on a regular basis, and the caseworkers have also participated in bimonthly peer supervision to enhance their partnerships and professional practice.

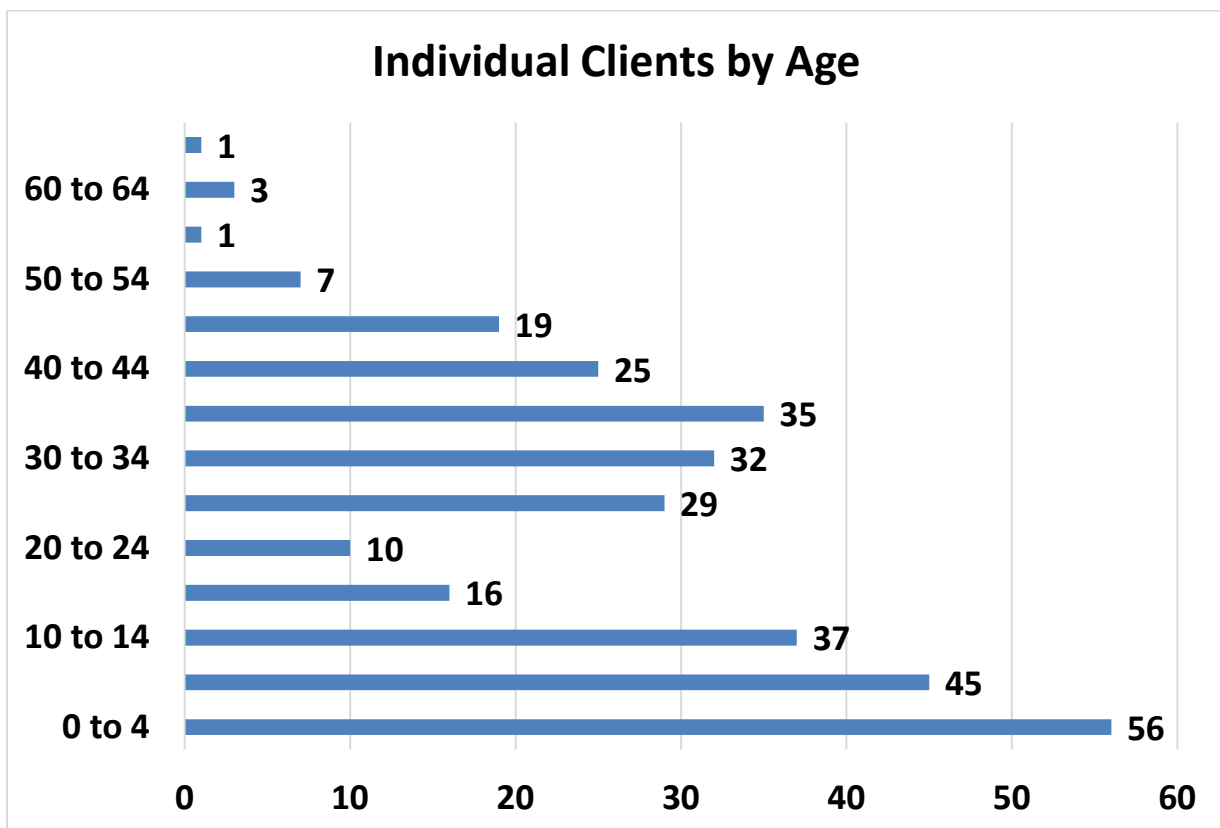
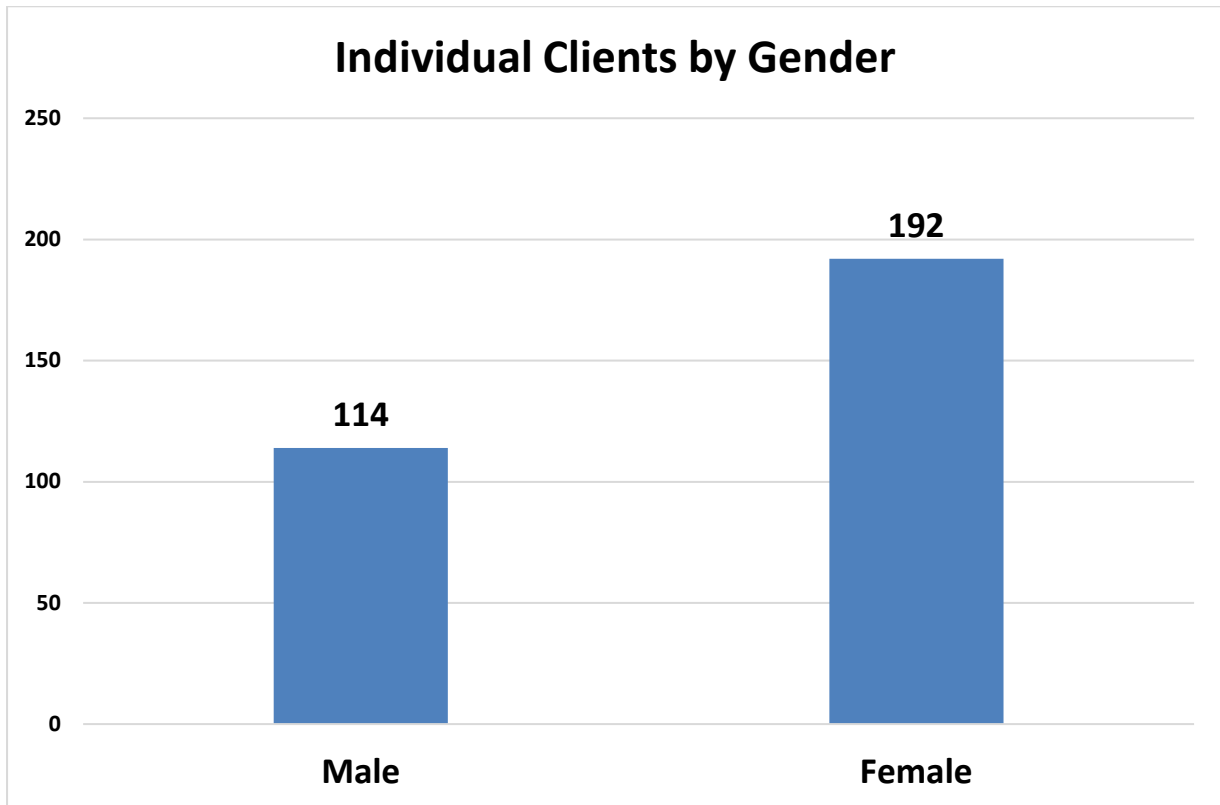
## 13. Core Service Delivery: Family Services

The core of our service delivery includes supporting families under two programs both funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice: Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) and Intensive Family Preservation (IFP). Multidisciplinary services are offered by our caseworkers to support a variety of family and child needs including parenting education; casework; home visiting; support attending and utilising government and educational services effectively; delivering groups to adults and children; and delivering events and activities to families on a wider scale in the community.

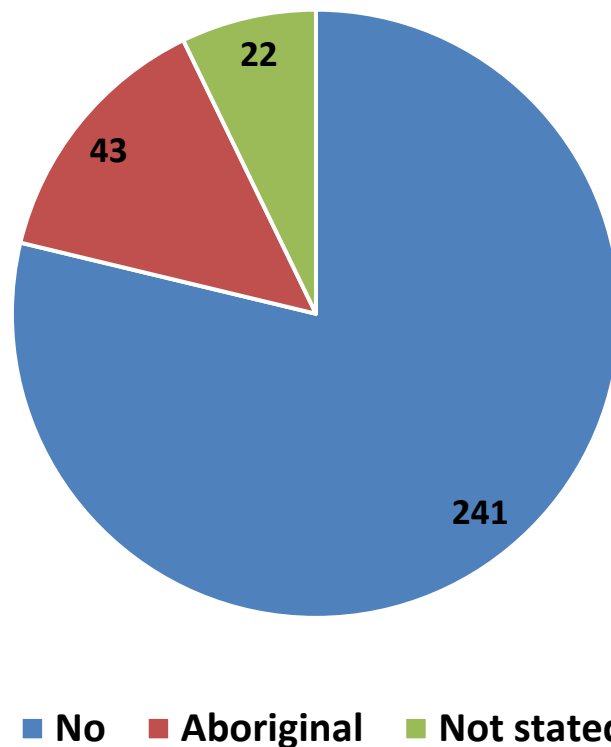
A new data collection system – Data Exchange (DEX) – has been introduced for reporting TEI outcomes, replacing the former CYFS Excel Data Collection tool. The Community Data Solutions client database used by our organisation interfaces with DEX and enables periodic upload of data. All staff have received training in data recording and reporting thanks to the ongoing support of FAMS and have begun using the new reporting processes. Over the next 12 months this new system should continue to provide us with more informative and thorough evaluation data that will help us to better assess our own service quality and make continuous improvements as needed.



## 13.1 Who Do We Support? A Snapshot...



## Individual Clients by Indigenous Status



## 13.2 Our Targeted Earlier Intervention Program

In 2021/2022, we continued to deliver service in the *Targeted Earlier Intervention Program (TEI)*. The types of services provided under TEI include casework with families and individual adults; group education for children and adults; and community-based activities and events that address family wellbeing at a primary prevention level.

As part of the TEI contract, Family Support Service delivers services under three areas:

- **Community Connections:** Community Sector Coordination and Community Engagement
- **Community Support:** Social Participation, and Information, Advice and Referral
- **Targeted Support:** Family Capacity Building and Parenting Programs/ Playgroups

Now under a five-year TEI contract, approximately 50% of our funding is dedicated towards supporting families with children under 18 with an early intervention focus. However, due to demand and community need we often find that some long term and/or high-needs families participate in this program because other more appropriate or more intensive services in the community are already at capacity and cannot take on these families.



## TEI Support Services in 2021/2022: Clients by Referral source:

Far South Coast Family Support Service	
Referral source	Individual Clients
Centrelink / DHS	1
Community services agency	37
Educational agency	19
Employment/ job placement agency	1
Family	57
Friends	9
General Medical Practitioner	1
Health Agency	18
Internal	14
Legal agency	1
Not stated/inadequately described	3
Other agency	11
Self	51
Unknown	108

In 2021/2022 our staff provided 2289 occasions of family capacity building activities; advocacy; counselling; casework; information and referral; court support; and school liaison support to a total of 432 clients. These figures do not count the many additional individuals who took part in community-based activities such as educational talks at schools, or interaction and support to individuals who were not officially registered as 'clients' due to a request for anonymity.





## TEI Support Services in 2021/2022: Number of Cases, Clients & Services

Far South Coast Family Support Service					
Service Type	Cases	Sessions	Individual Clients	Client Attendance	Unidentified Clients
Community Engagement	12	71	77	467	695
Community sector co-ord	2	2	0	0	20
Education and Skills training	2	10	0	0	128
Social participation	2	16	11	67	182
Education and Skills training	1	3	4	12	0
Social participation	3	18	9	51	86
Education and Skills training	2	8	6	13	0
Family Capacity Building	6	76	20	140	0
Information/advice/referral	5	32	13	41	0
Specialist support	3	8	9	17	0
Counselling	45	157	75	216	16
Education and Skills training	1	1	2	2	0
Family Capacity Building	106	928	212	1,655	27
Indigenous social participation	1	1	2	2	0
Information/advice/referral	120	588	217	836	255
Intake/assessment	85	152	165	271	2
Material aid	43	108	79	170	3
Mentoring/Peer Support	1	1	1	1	0
Parenting programs	33	101	58	213	268
Supported playgroups	4	8	9	19	0

### 13.3 Adult Educational and Parenting Programs

- **Tuning in to Teens** - An Emotionally Intelligent Parenting Program for adolescents ages 10 – 18. This was delivered in term one in Partnership with Headspace Facilitators: Jade Dryden and Els Paijmans.
- **Tuning in to Kids** - An Emotionally Intelligent Parenting Program for adolescents ages 10 – 18. To be delivered in October 2022. Facilitators: Jade Dryden and Suzanne Milligan.
- **Bega supported play group (Bega Playgroup)** - ongoing weekly during school terms, attended by parents, carers and children under 5 years old. Attendance between 5-20 individuals regularly. Facilitators: Valerie Schmid-Oke, Kellie Bateman and Sarah De La Motte.



- **Love Bites** - a Healthy Relationships program that is delivered to year 9 and 10 students throughout the high schools in the Bega Valley. Jade completed updated manual training and coordinated the delivery in Eden Marine High and Bega High to around 325 students.
- **Caring Dads** – James Brown and Jade Dryden completed the Caring Dads program facilitator training in November 2021 and have been delivering this alongside the Men’s Behaviour Change Program training that they are undertaking with ECAV. Caring Dads is for men who are committed to changing behaviours in order to be better, more child-centred fathers. The program was developed in Canada by the University of Toronto and is quite new to Australia. Over 17 weeks participants:
  - Develop awareness of controlling or harmful attitudes and behaviours
  - Learn how different parenting choices can positively or negatively affect children’s physical, emotional, psychological, social and educational development
  - Develop positive strategies and skills to improve family life
  - Learn how to cope better with upsetting emotions
  - Develop strategies and skills to repair and strengthen their relationships with their children
- **Men’s Behaviour Change Program** - Jade and James are both in the process of completing a Graduate Certificate in Men’s Behaviour Change. Jade will have completed the 8 units of competency in December 2022. Once all academic components and practical group work is completed, our next step will be to commence the process of applying for Provisional Registration with DCJ with the aim of becoming the first Men’s Behaviour Change Program provider on the Far South Coast.
- **Circle of Security** - Accredited parenting program, delivered by all qualified caseworkers with clients as appropriate – in 2021/22 this program was delivered to clients in both one on one and group sessions, and this has also been done in the past when there is enough community/client interest.

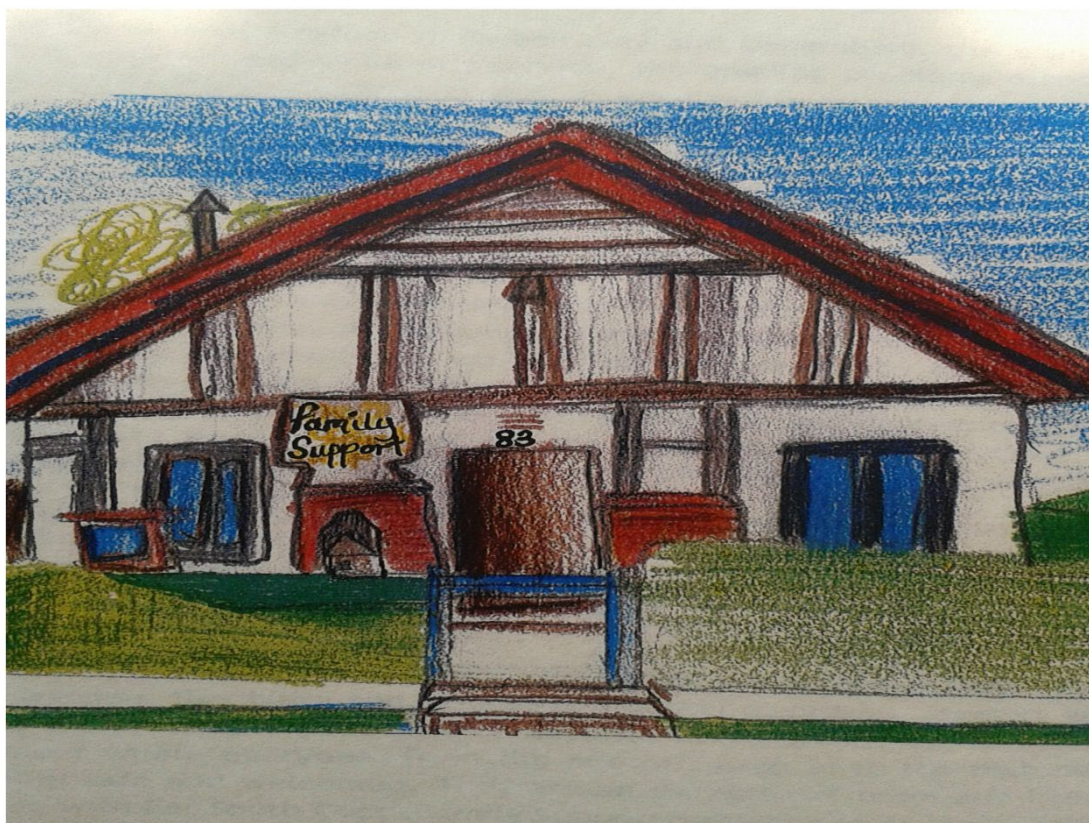
## 13.4 Drop In and Outreach

Our service also assisted a large number of one-off service users and community members on a ‘drop-in’ basis. Often these are people referred by other services (such as DCJ, Centrelink, Housing and Mission Australia). These occasions of service are documented as ‘one-off’ assistance to record the family’s details and their evaluation of the services provided.



We continue our twice weekly outreach visits to Eden, making our service available to the Eden community on a drop-in basis on Fridays at Headspace and by pre-arranged appointments on Wednesdays. In addition to the Eden space, we have also secured the option of a second meeting room in Merimbula thanks to the support of Graham Stubbs, Executive Officer of Bendigo Community Bank Pambula and Bega. Having alternative meeting spaces outside of our Bega offices is an important part of our longer-term strategic direction where the service is able to connect and support people from the wider surrounds of our LGA.

Our caseworkers continue to conduct home outreach on an almost daily basis to a variety of clients, usually for those families in our IFP program but also for TEI families who have higher level needs.



## 13.5 Our Intensive Family Support Program

Between July 2021 and June 2022, the service worked with 6 families in the Intensive Family Preservation program and remained at capacity (5 families) throughout the year. The funding guidelines for this program require that the families must be directly referred from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and are considered high risk or very high risk families due to the complexity of their life circumstances. As a result, if referrals are not received from this government department, our organisation is unable to deliver this service.



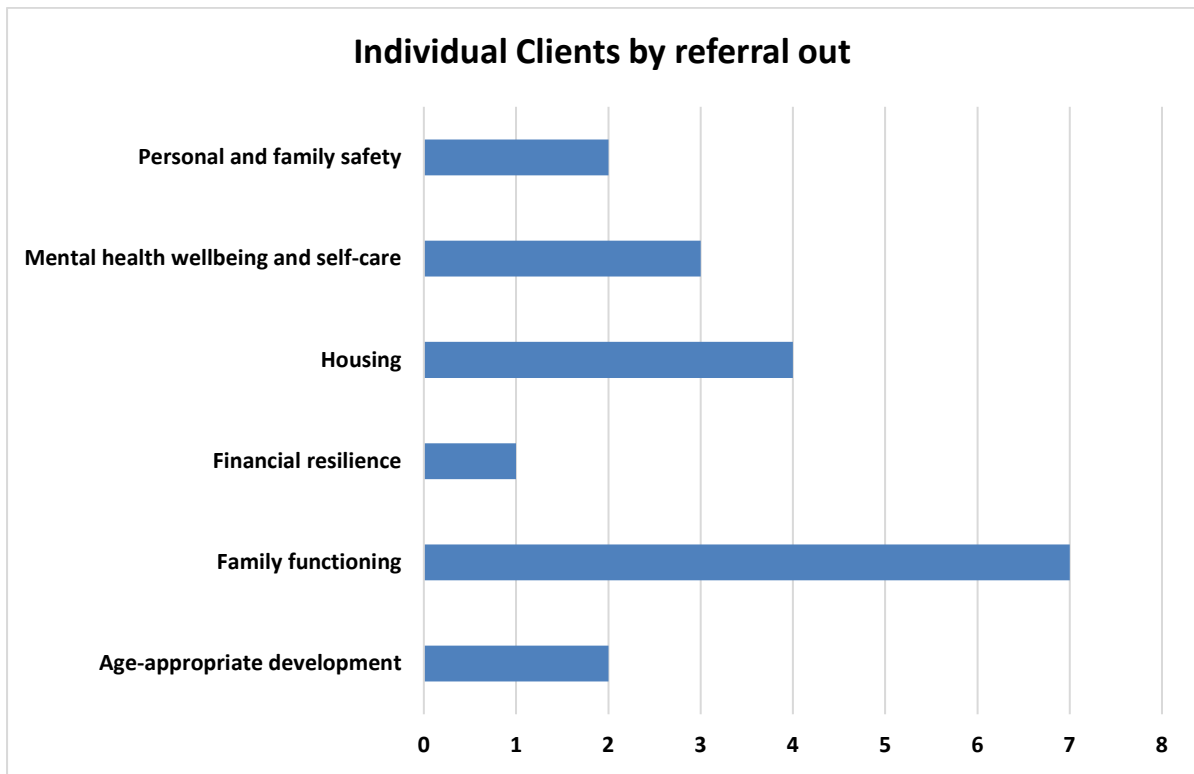


The primary reasons that families are referred to our IFP program are due to concerns about parenting and children’s wellbeing, including child protection matters. As well as working with parents in the IFP program multiple times per week, over the past 12 months staff have continued to undertake more intensive one-to-one work with children and young people involved in the program. This work enables staff to draw on a variety of creative tools to actively engage children and young people, including puppets, drawing and therapeutic card games to address children’s concerns about issues such as bullying, anxiety and dealing with anger.

Many IFP families have complicated family law matters and related concerns regarding their children. Housing vulnerability and risk of homelessness is a common issue for many families in this program (as well as in our TEI program). The severe shortage of rental properties and associated housing affordability remains a critical issue in the Bega Valley. Staff have assisted many families with obtaining temporary crisis accommodation and advocated on behalf of homeless families with both public and private rental managers. Women and children who experience domestic violence are often referred from domestic violence specialist services, such as Far South Coast Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, Staying Home Leaving Violence, the Women’s Resource Centre and the police Child Wellbeing Unit for ongoing support.



## 14. Service Outcomes – What Did We Achieve and Did We Make a Difference?



### 14.1 Outcomes for Children and Young People

- Improved school attendance
- Reduced school suspension
- Access to specialist medical and dental treatment
- Access to mental health counselling
- More secure housing
- Participation in school excursions and out-of-school activities
- Increased opportunities for recreation and social inclusion
- Reduced conflict in the home
- Strategies for dealing with bullying





## 14.2 Outcomes for Families and Parents

- Reduced conflict between parents and children/young people
- Evaluations showed that most parents engaged in one-on-one services or group programs learnt new parenting skills and resources to assist them with future needs
- More secure housing
- Improved physical/material amenity of home life – e.g. utilities remain connected, children have food and school clothes, broken white goods replaced or repaired
- Increased understanding of and empathy for children’s physical and emotional development and needs
- Referrals to specialist services to address specific issues – e.g. mental health practitioners, domestic violence services, social housing providers
- Support obtaining NDIS plans for children with a disability

## 15 Programs and events for all

2021/2022 was certainly another busy year for our regular programs and one-off events. As communities continue to recover from bushfires and the ongoing effects of the pandemic, we were pleased to report that our variety of programs were up and running again.

### 15.1 Circle of Security Parenting Program

Whilst we often offer Circle of Security as a one-on-one program to cater to individual parenting needs, the team has also delivered Circle of Security as a group program for parents. Circle of Security emphasises secure attachment as the foundation for strong bonds between parents and children to nourish their physical, social and emotional development. One of the most powerful outcomes reported by a participant in the evaluations was:

- *“To be in the moment for my kids. . .being able to name being bigger, stronger, kinder and wiser as it helped me identify the ways I need to be most helpful to my daughter. . . recognising the importance of connection rather than attention”.*



## 15.2 Love Bites Program

This program is run in local secondary schools with Year 10 students and focuses on healthy relationships. Students are encouraged, through art, drama and role plays to think about what constitutes abuse in relationships, and how to support someone living in that situation. Jade Dryden delivered the Year 10 program at both Eden Marine and Bega High Schools. In 2022 Jade also began delivering Love Bites Junior (friendship-themed) programs to year 7 students at Sapphire Coast Anglican College.



*Student creativity at Love Bites*

## 15.3 Tuning Into Teens & Tuning Into Kids Programs

These evidence-based parenting programs, developed by the University of Melbourne, were run in partnership with Headspace, Bega. Both programs are conducted over 6 sessions and focus on building emotional intelligence in children (aged 4-12 years) and adolescents/young people (aged 12-25 years). Els Paijmans, a Headspace family mental health clinician, co-facilitated with our staff members Jade Dryden and Hans Schmidt-Harms, and ran the programs in Bega and Eden.

These groups were rated very positively in participant evaluation, with comments that the material was very practical, skills oriented and 'easily translated into practice'.



## 15.4 Bega Playgroup

Bega Playgroup, is a weekly supported activity group that meets on Tuesdays for 3 hours over an 8 week period in school terms. The group is co-facilitated by Valerie Schmid-Oke, Sarah De La Motte and Kellie Bateman.

Dear Val, Kellie, Sarah and Family Support Services

We would like to say thank you for running the best playgroup in town, you are always here to welcome us and provide healthy morning tea.

I really enjoy coming to the playgroup with my little boy. It is a comfortable casual place to meet other parents / grandparents and children.

Thank you very much ♥

Lots of love from Quynh, Dave, Bà, Anh, Chi and Khoi 2020

—2022—

### ***Some great feedback!***

The program is designed to engage with mothers and carers of young children (under 5 years of age) who are socially isolated, often sole parents and sometimes experiencing economic hardship. The group provides opportunities for participants to develop friendships and support networks, acquire new skills (such as basic sewing or other crafts), learn about children's developmental stages and share strategies and ideas to help mothers and carers feel more confident in their parenting. The program is planned a term ahead with a strong focus on providing opportunities for isolated mothers and their children to engage in a range of activities designed to foster growth and social inclusion.









***Busy times at Bega Playgroup!***

The concurrent programs for parents and young children is what makes the structure and style of this group distinct from a playgroup and has been a hallmark of the success of this model. Mothers get to spend time in activities with other adults, whilst their children are separately and creatively engaged. Participants have been referred to the group by early childhood nurses, pre-schools, family day care and local domestic violence services. We have had participants (mothers, carers, grandparents and children aged 0-5 years) from Bega, Pambula, Merimbula, Quaama, Bermagui, Tura Beach, Cobargo, Candelo and Bemboka and the group is open to all.

The service gratefully acknowledges and thanks the Bega Uniting Church for offering use of their hall and kitchen at no cost. We also offer thanks and acknowledgement also to the James Kirby Foundation and Clubs NSW for their financial contributions to assist with program costs.

Parents, carers and children who attended the group were referred by Community Health, Staying Home Leaving Violence Program, Playability, DCJ, Women's Resource Centre, Bega Valley Family Day Care, Mackillop Family Referral Service and Southeast Women's and Children's Service.





## 15.5 Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention

Family Support Service staff participated in a range of community development activities and strategies to raise community awareness about domestic and family violence. The service is an active participant on the Bega Valley Domestic and Sexual Violence Committee.

This year our service partnered with the Bendigo & Adelaide Community Bank and StandbyU to roll out personal safety watches within our existing client group who were living within domestic violence situations. The StandbyU Shield is a world first safety solution that uses technology to create a secret and secure way for people to stay connected to loved ones and be in control of their lives.



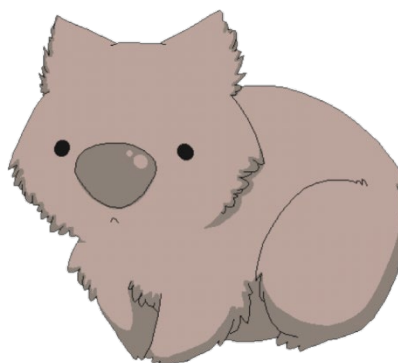
## 15.6 Potoroo Palace Family Fun Day

This year, thanks to funding from Clubs NSW, we were able to host our Family Fun Day at the local wildlife park, Potoroo Palace.

Over 80 parents, carers and children attended the event in June 2022 and were treated to train rides, animal feeding, craft activities and a monster sausage sizzle.



The event aimed to strengthen relationships within families, build connections between families and the wider community, and most importantly bring everyone together and have fun!







***A healthy spread at the Family Fun Day***

Fun Day Co-Coordinator Valerie Schmid-Oke, highlighted the need for these events, *“with recent circumstances and costs of living it’s been difficult for local families to come together and have fun. It’s great as an organisation that FSCFSS can support events that connect community and create belonging. We need to make sure we are keeping focussed on children’s needs, support for parents, and part of that is a holistic approach that ties in with members of the community across the whole Bega Valley.”*

## **16. Meetings and Networking**

FSCFSS has strong interagency relationships with other organisations providing support to families in the Bega Valley. These relationships enable us to build strong case management approaches to working with families who require a mix of support. Building and maintaining these relationships at the local level is a critical component of the work we do.

Services we regularly collaborate with include a range of mental health care providers, child and family nurses, Anglicare, Staying Home Leaving Violence, SEWACS, DCJ Child Protection caseworkers and managers, Housing NSW, police domestic violence liaison officers, Far South Coast Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, Women’s Resource Centre, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Headspace and Southern NSW Family Referral Service (FRS).



Staff at FRS generously offered use of their large training room for FSCFSS staff to conduct parenting programs and also made it available for a variety of training exercises.

## Family Support staff also participated in:

- Meetings with DCJ Community Reform and Commissioning and Planning staff re: TEI performance framework
- Meetings with DCJ Manager – Child Protection
- Meetings with Katungul Aboriginal Medical Service staff
- Eden and Bega Interagency Services meetings
- Bega Valley Local Domestic and Sexual Violence Committee
- Bega Valley Youth Network
- Bega Valley Community Drug Action Team
- Family Case Management - Bega Valley Local Managers Group and Caseworker meetings
- NSW Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee and PCYC
- Regional Homelessness Forum – convened by Housing NSW
- Management Committee of Southern Women’s Group
- Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN)
- Justice Connect

## 17. Library

The free-lending library collection continues to be an appreciated resource for families and other service providers. The Service is kept up to date with new releases/titles by the local bookshop and also different organisations who provide professional training for our staff.

The library comprises non-fiction books and professional journals, covering a range of issues: pregnancy, parenting, child and adolescent development, raising optimistic and resilient children, children with disabilities, communicating with children and young people, women’s health, men’s health, mental health, depression and anxiety, grief, trauma recovery, post-separation parenting, to mention just some. Books for younger children, teenagers and Indigenous stories not found in local library collections are in great demand. The library is a valuable asset in our work with families and Pauline is to be congratulated for her management of this valuable resource and for maintaining a contemporary collection.





***Learning occurs at all levels and all ages. We do our best to pass on specialist knowledge and skills in programs such as the Bega Playgroup, where we support children’s literacy and learning through books, games and activities.***

## 18. Referral Networks

Over the past year Family Support Service has maintained two-way referral links with a large number of community agencies, both government and non-government including:

- Bega CSC (NSW Department of Communities and Justice)
- Adult and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Southern NSW Family Referral Service (Mackillop)
- Far South Coast Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service
- Women’s Resource Centre
- Housing NSW
- School counsellors, Home School Liaison Officers and Aboriginal Liaison staff
- Sapphire Coast Tenancy Scheme
- Staying Home Leaving Violence
- SEWACS and Southeast Youth Accommodation Service (SEYAS)
- Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice
- Women’s Health nurse
- Child and Family nurses
- Bega Maternity Ward





- Katungul Aboriginal Corporation Community and Medical Services
- NSW Legal Aid
- Mission Australia
- Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre
- Catholic Care
- Campbell Page and Reconnect
- Anglicare and NILS (No Interest Loans Scheme)
- Post Separation Co-operative Parenting Program (Anglicare)
- Bega Valley Family Day Care
- Playability
- Flourish
- GP's – Mental Health Care Plans
- Centrelink social workers
- NSW Police Child Wellbeing Units
- St Vincent de Paul
- Salvation Army

## 19. Angel Flight

FSCFSS continued as local referring agents for Angel Flight, a service that links parents and children needing to access medical services in Sydney, ACT or Melbourne with a volunteer pilot and plane to transport them to their destination, where they are collected by an “Earth Angel” who takes them to the medical facility. This is a fantastic service for people in rural areas which is provided free of charge.

Angel Flight services were provided on two occasions in 2021/2022 to families with children requiring urgent specialist medical attention, equating to thousands of dollars’ worth of irreplaceable in-kind support from volunteer Angel Flight pilots, drivers and assistants, to whom we are deeply grateful.

## 20. What’s Next for Us?

In line with our new Strategic Plan, we will continue our outreach activities and home visiting, especially to isolated towns, and maintain all our current support work with families, children and young people. We will also increase our planning and evaluation activities to develop more structure and evidence-based processes for what we do. We will continue to partner with local services and collaborate to use our complementary skills for the benefit of the community.



With regard to our reporting requirements with DCJ, there is ongoing commitment within the organisation to record meaningful data that provides useful insights about the work we perform. This not only meets our obligations with regards to funding agreements, but also allow us to demonstrate our service effectiveness and client outcomes when applying for non-government funding.

Our ongoing commitment to providing support services tailored directly to men will continue with our 17-week Caring Dads program, as well as our continuation down the path to becoming the Bega Valley's first accredited Men's Behaviour Change Program service.

By the end of 2022 both Valerie Schmid-Oke and Kellie Bateman will become qualified as Interplay Play Therapists. From February through to June 2023 we will run a Play Therapy pilot project and open the service to the broader community. This will provide much needed service to young people in our area who have experienced trauma and due to their age, may not benefit from traditional forms of counselling.

Finally, at a staff level, we will continue to work together to define what it means to become an employer of choice, and how to get there as a team. It is critical that we continually aspire to attain this goal and improve upon it even after we feel we have reached it. Offering flexible work arrangements, a pet-friendly workplace and team building activities are some changes that we have already started implementing, but there is much more to do. Staff retention is a critical goal of any workplace, and the most direct method of achieving this is by ensuring all employees love what they do.

***We can't wait until you see what's to come for the Family Support Service next year!***

