

## 9. Child and Family Centres

---

Child and Family Centres are still a relatively new initiative, which is reflected, in their small numbers in the Audit and within the child welfare/family support system as a whole. Some of these programs included:

***Family and Youth Services, Canberra Children's Family Centre, Barnardos Australia (ACT).*** The Centre offers family support, substitute care and supported accommodation services for disadvantaged children, adolescents and their families in the ACT and surrounding areas. The programs reflect the problems of Canberra, with a population of young families and an increasing population group of adolescents. The centre has a Temporary Family Care Program which offers family crisis and respite care to families with children aged between 0–12 years, and families in which children or parents have a mental illness.

***Family Child and Youth Health Service, Health and Human Services (Tas.).*** The Service provides a range of primary health care services to meet the needs of families, children and young people. Services included: Child Health Screening used to monitor children aged 0–12 years; a Parent Information Assistance Service that provides free telephone information and referral on issues of concern to parents; a 'Wetaway' Enuresis program that provides a service to children who are wetting the bed after 5 years of age; Youth Health Teams who work with young people 12–24 years to foster their capacity to manage and maintain better health. Examples of youth specific activities that have been developed are: young offenders program; size and self image; promoting health in schools; and self-esteem for school refusals.

***Family Services Programs, Centacare (NSW).*** Family Services is a division of Centacare that provides a range of programs to support and assist families at a variety of centres in Sydney and its surrounds. Programs include: family support services; Parentline; relationship family counselling; family and child mediation services (assisting separated couples to make their own agreements concerning parenting arrangements, child support and settlement); financial counselling; school counselling and STAR Programs (counselling for students at risk interventions at nominated Catholic schools); child sexual assault counselling services; Vietnamese child protection service (Casework for children at risk and their families, child protection education for the Vietnamese community); early childhood intervention service; marriage relationship and parent education (offering groups for parents, step parents, men and separated/divorced people); Holyoake NSW Institute on Alcohol and Addiction (offering groups for adults and children).

Two-thirds of the programs were located in New South Wales, run by large non-government agencies (Barnardos and Centacare in particular), although the NSW Government has indicated support for the concept, strongly investing in the development of the *Schools as Community Centres* project (see *Personal safety and Protective Behaviours programs*, page 61 above). Of the remaining programs, most were located in Western Australia and Queensland. In the case of the former, along with large, well-established centres operating in Albany, Armadale, Langford and Roeburne, a new 'one-stop' centre was recently opened in Manjimup.

***Manjimup Family Support Program, Manjimup Family Centre Inc. Manjimup (WA).*** The Family Support Program offers a number of services including: modelling of appropriate parenting behaviour through supported playgroups, parenting courses and support groups for men and women; one-to-one parenting counselling sessions and referrals to other agencies; at least six parenting and self-development courses per year (for example, anger management groups; Sexuality In Relationships; Drugs in Perspective; Living with Teenagers; Domestic Violence Rescue Service and Domestic Violence Support Group, which received an honourable mention in the 1998 Australian Violence Prevention Awards; and in collaboration with Waratah Sexual Assault Support Centre, domestic violence training days for professionals in the health and social sector.)

Operating as a service 'hub', the centres are quite suited for operation in regional centres, and in rural and remote areas of Australia where services are less frequent and the agencies that are available need to offer a range of services. Recognising this, the Queensland government recently announced a move to fund a number of 'one-stop shops' in regional areas. In the Audit, one-third of the 52 Child and Family Centres were located in regional centres and/or rural or remote areas.