

YOUNG FAMILIES SUPPORT SERVICE, QLD

What has the project been doing since the report in the previous bulletin?

The Young Families Support Service (YFSS) has continued to provide a high level of one on one individual support for pregnant and parenting young people in Townsville. Our existing groups, the Preparation for Parenthood Program and the Young Parents Group have continued to be very successful and are becoming very widely known within the community. As a result of Action Research we have developed two new groups to fulfill a need that has been identified. A Parenting Skills for Toddlers group was run as well as an Anxiety/Stress Management group. These groups are specifically aimed at young parents. The Young Families Support Service has submitted our six monthly report to Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services and has conducted a second Reference Group Meeting.

The project has full time Social Workers (Brooke and Deborah) whose roles include individual casework, provision of emotional and practical support, group facilitation and coordination and action research.

What has been learned in the last six months that may be of interest or value to other developing projects?

There have been many learnings over the last six months. Some of them include:

- Feedback about the service can come from clients at any time, usually when you least expect it. It is therefore important to have mechanisms in place to record informal feedback as soon as possible after it is received. Each worker now carries an exercise book which is to be used for clients who give verbal feedback. They are asked if they would like to record their feedback in the book, otherwise the workers records the feedback on their behalf.
- The increase in profile of the project, through better promotion of

the service and attending more community meetings has served to increase the referrals from non-government / community agencies. The development and maintenance of strong networks is a very important aspect of the services' work and has greatly contributed to its success. It is therefore important that the time is taken to do this is factored into the project planning and funding agreements.

- A playgroup that had been running successfully with the assistance of one of the project Social Workers and a representative from Playgroup Association of Queensland dissolved when the workers moved away to allow the playgroup to become independent. Feedback from two of the original group members on why the group collapsed included reference to the fact that the group needed that coordinator who was not one of the group members. They needed "one person who could do all the organising and make all the decisions". Also it was identified that transport needs to be available to assist young families to access playgroups.
- The project workers have continued to see the importance of transport for young families in the community. The home visiting aspect of the service is extremely important as public transport in Townsville is limited and very expensive.

How has the community responded to the project so far?

The community has always responded positively to the project. We meet a need that is not otherwise met. Community agencies and other government agencies are large referral sources and are willingly involved in partnerships with Young Families Support Service. We accept self referrals and have found word of mouth between young people and past participants has helped us access young people who we may not otherwise have reached. Feedback from our reference group, which consists of government and community agencies and participants of the project, has been very positive.

THE PLATFORMS STRATEGY CITY OF MOONEE VALLEY, VICTORIA

What has the project been doing since the last report?

The latter half of 2003 has been an exciting time in the life of the project with the City of Moonee Valley and the Centre for Community Child Health continuing to work in partnership to implement the Platforms Project. Examples of some of the activities that have been occurring are detailed below:

Many early childhood professionals across Moonee Valley have been trained in the use of the Parent's Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) tool. The training covered issues associated with children's development, the importance and credibility of parental concerns, the development and validation of PEDS and how it is administered, scored and interpreted in real life settings.

With the assistance of project staff, maternal and child health nurses, childcare and family day care staff have been trialing PEDS in the course of the normal practice since November 2003 as a tool for eliciting parental concerns. Many preschools and two local primary schools (Avondale Heights and Debney Meadows) commenced trailing the tool in February this year. Initial feedback indicates that, in general, trained professionals are finding the tool to be user friendly and valuable in providing opportunities for parents to raise concerns in a focused way, with professionals' confidence in the tool increasing as they become more familiar with it.

Project staff have attended a number of meetings and forums where they have presented an overview of the Platforms project and the implementation of the PEDS tool in the local community. These forums have included parent information nights, annual general meetings and local government seminar presentations. Each has provided an opportunity to increase the community's awareness