Family Inclusion Strategies Hunter (FISH)

President Report
Year in Review 2021

President: Felicity Kime

Date: 10 December 2021 – presented at AGM

Also see slides attached.

FISH Plan 2020-2022

We continue to work hard on the FISH Plan. This report covers our progress in each of the plan elements:

- Community Engagement
- Community Education
- Submissions, Grants & Research
- Support and Advocacy Service

Community Engagement

- FISH has engaged with community in a range of ways, partnering with researchers, educators, service providers, parent leaders nationally and globally and policy makers.

- Our active involvement in the Hunter Community Alliance has supported our leadership skills and contributed to a broader community-based movement to make the Hunter Valley a safer and more just community for everyone.

- Our partnership with Grandmothers Against Removals NSW (GMARNSW) continues. We have partnered with GMARNSW to help launch the peer support project report. Aunt Deb Swan spoke at the event. We also partnered to advocate to state and federal government to implement parent advocacy.

- We met with Minister Landry, her team and the Department of Social Services to promote peer parent and family advocacy and the role of parent and family leadership in child protection. We also presented at a federal government interdepartmental committee organised by the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

- We are currently partnering with ACWA, Absec and Life Without Barriers to organise a NSW state-wide discussion on parent and family participation in child protection processes with NGO peak bodies and government and will be proposing new family inclusive initiatives, including peer parent and family advocacy.

- We remain actively involved in the Family Inclusion Network of Australia and the International Parent Advocacy Network, as Committee Members and Directors.

Community Education

- Workshops are our main activity in community education. We did not conduct any workshops for workers or carers in 2021 due to COVID restrictions and the demands of other work. Hopefully we can get back to this in 2022.

- We held our first-ever parent workshop in June 2021; a pilot restoration workshop for parents working towards their children coming home. Three mums attended and gave positive feedback.

- The parent workshop was also the first time to parent leaders have co-facilitated a FISH workshop (usually done by a parent and worker). This was an amazing achievement.

- In the upcoming year we hope to run the restoration workshop a few more times, and develop other workshops, including an introduction workshop for parents new to the CP system.
- We also attended all six CSCs in our area. We introduced the peer support and advocacy team and discussed parent experiences and tips with casework teams. We plan to start visiting non-government agencies in the new year.

Submissions, Grants & Research

- In terms of government submissions, we had a quieter year than usual. In July, we made a submission to support the successor plan to the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*. We promoted peer parent and family support and advocacy as a family inclusive practice and as essential to improve child and family experience of child protection an out-of-home care.
- We had a very active year submitting grant applications. In total, we submitted 6 grant applications. Of those, 2 are pending an outcome and 2 were successful. Our 2020 grant from the Sisters of Charity Foundation supported a lot of peer support work this year. Funding from the Tucker Foundation will be used in early 2022. We received our largest grant yet from the Ian and Shirley Norman Foundation; $140,000 each year for three years starting in January 2022.
- Tracy Norman continued her very generous support for us ion 2021 with two separate $20,000 donations towards our peer support and advocacy service.
- In research, we continue to partner with The University of Newcastle and Life Without Barriers in three research projects looking at parent experiences of peer support, parent peer experiences, and family inclusive practice from the perspectives of family, carers and practitioners.
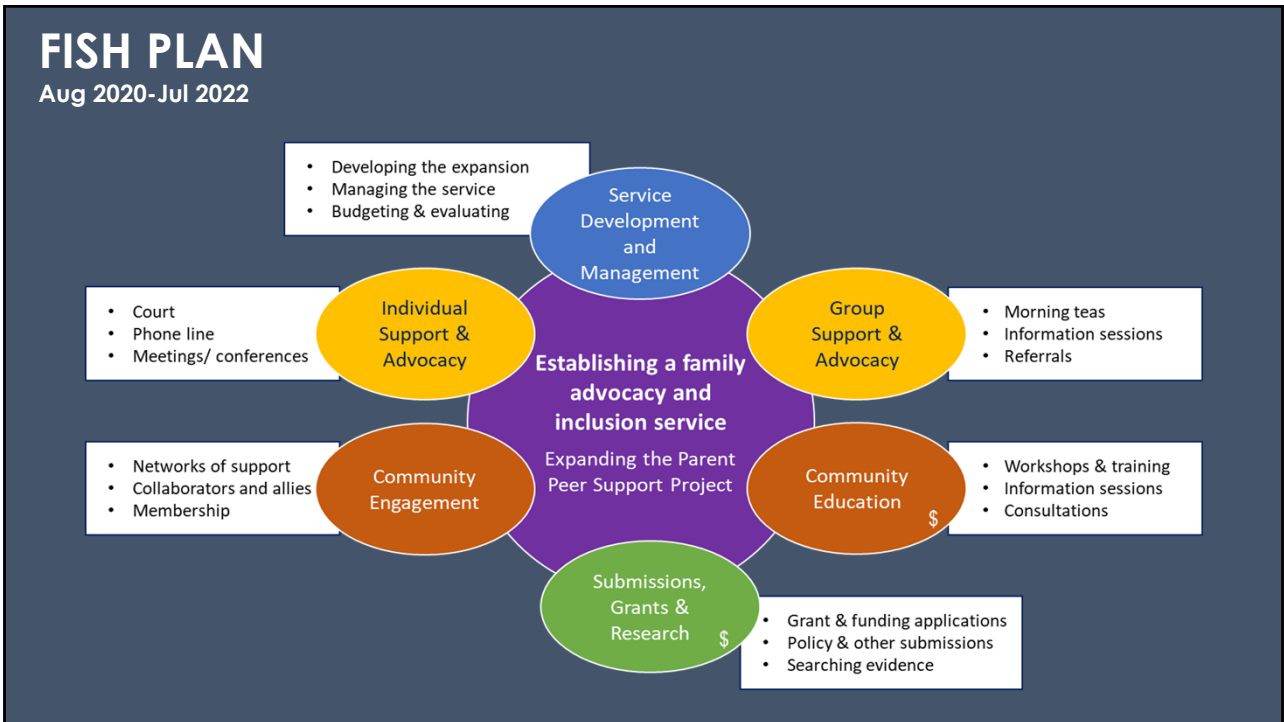
Support and Advocacy Service

- Our new service has been going for one year now. We currently have a team of three peer support workers and one part-time service manager. We are looking for new peer support workers and two are currently in the recruitment process.
- We continued with our usual support activities – court, phone, and group support. We extended group support beyond morning teas to include an information session on occasion on a topic relevant for parents, e.g., self-care, family time. Court support has been on hold until this week due to COVID restrictions and peer worker availability. Phone support continues to be steady.
- Our new initiative is moving into meeting support and advocacy. We developed a three-staged approach to supported preparation, participation, and debriefing. We have done introductory training on our approach. We are about to pilot six meetings with a DCJ casework team which will have a brief evaluation and debriefing involving our team and the casework team.
- Peer workers continue to attend a team meeting, individual supervision, and group supervision every month, and can debrief after each support event.
- Between January and November 2021, there were a total of 533 support events, 22 of which were morning teas or other group support. The main people spoken to were mothers (78%) and 13% were fathers. Other people spoken to included DCJ and non-government workers, lawyers, and grandparents.

To conclude, thank you to all our members, allies and supporters for a great year for FISH. We have achieved so much and it is not just the people working on things right now. It goes right back to that meeting seven years ago in a café when the idea of FISH started. Thanks everyone.

Felicity Kime

President & Peer Support Worker, FISH
10 December 2021

See slides on above report next page …

Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter (FISH)

President Report
Year in Review 2021

FISH PLAN
Aug 2020-Jul 2022

- Developing the expansion
- Managing the service
- Budgeting & evaluating

Service Development and Management

- Court
- Phone line
- Meetings/ conferences

Individual Support & Advocacy

Group Support & Advocacy

- Morning teas
- Information sessions
- Referrals

Establishing a family advocacy and inclusion service

Expanding the Parent Peer Support Project

- Networks of support
- Collaborators and allies
- Membership

Community Engagement

Community Education

- Workshops & training
- Information sessions
- Consultations

Submissions, Grants & Research

- Grant & funding applications
- Policy & other submissions
- Searching evidence

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Hunter Community Alliance
- Family Inclusion Network of Australia (FIN A)
- Grandmothers Against Removals NSW (GMARNSW)
- International Parent Advocacy Network (IPAN)
- Department of Social Services
- ACWA, Absec and LWB
  partner in organising state-wide discussion

CONSULTATIONS, GUEST SPEAKING, PANELS

Wandiyali
Shared Stories Training
Practitioner Group Supervision x 2

Emerging Minds
Panels about parenting and working with parents

Parenting Research Centre (PRC)
Client Voice Project

DCJ / Office of the Senior Practitioner
Consult on proposed family resources

DCJ, Mayfield CSC
Planning for meeting support pilot

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Pilot June 2021
First-ever parent workshop
First-ever co-facilitated by two parent peers

Restoration Workshop for Parents

PARENT WORKSHOP
restoration
for parents working towards their children returning home
Developed and co-facilitated by parents for parents
June 2021

for parents working towards their children returning home
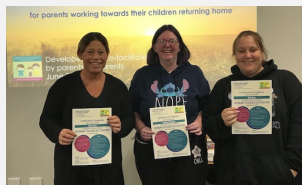
INFORMATION SESSIONS
Run in morning teas sometimes

Monday 24th May 2021
10.30-12.30 am

INFORMATION SESSION
SELF CARE
For parents and family involved in child protection and out-of-home care

Held at Samaritans, Meeting Room
32 Brunker Road, Broadmeadow

Discussion, tips & activities, including:
❖ What is self care?
❖ How you can practice self care
❖ Complete a self care exercise with other parents

DCJ / CSC TEAM MEETING VISITS
Introducing peer support and advocacy team. Talking about parent and family experiences.

Christmas & Family Time
with children in care
INFORMATION SESSION
Monday 6th December 2021
10.30 am-12.30 pm
support each other in a difficult time and share ideas and tips

SUBMISSIONS

Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter (FISH)
building better relationships

Parents and Family:
A small part of the problem, a huge part of the solution

A submission to support the successor plan to the

National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

DONATIONS

Two $20,000 donations from Tracy Norman in 2021

(in addition to $20,000 in 2020)

GRANTS

Six applications submitted

Two successful

Tucker Foundation
$12,498
Ian and Shirley Norman Foundation
$140,000 per year for 3 years

Two pending outcome

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation
Preparing Stage Two app.
Stronger and Resilient Communities Grant
Submitted – awaiting outcome

RESEARCH

Continuing to partner in three research projects with The University of Newcastle and LWB

1. Parents' experience of peer support

2. Peers' experience of providing support and advocacy

3. Family Inclusive Practice

Future plans to conduct research in partnership with peers as co-researchers.

SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY SERVICE

Impacted by COVID
Court Support

Phone Support

Group Support
• Morning teas
• Info sessions
• Workshops
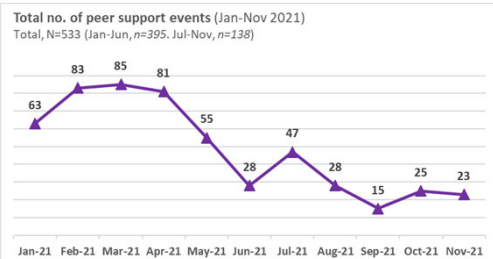
Meeting Support
New addition currently in planning
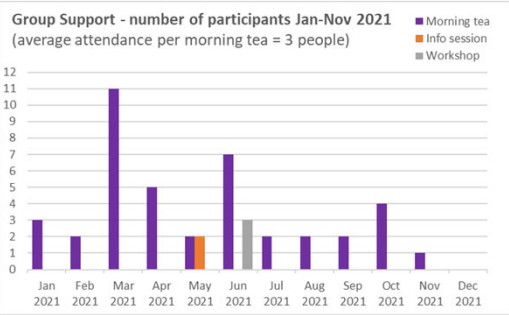
Total no. of peer support events (Jan-Nov 2021)
Total, N=533 (Jan-Jun, *n=395*. Jul-Nov, *n=138*)

63, 83, 85, 81, 55, 28, 47, 28, 15, 25, 23

Jan-21 Feb-21 Mar-21 Apr-21 May-21 Jun-21 Jul-21 Aug-21 Sep-21 Oct-21 Nov-21

Group Support - number of participants Jan-Nov 2021
(average attendance per morning tea = 3 people)
■ Morning tea ■ Info session ■ Workshop

Jan 2021, Feb 2021, Mar 2021, Apr 2021, May 2021, Jun 2021, Jul 2021, Aug 2021, Sep 2021, Oct 2021, Nov 2021, Dec 2021

Main person spoken to - Individual Support Events
(Jan-Nov 2021) *(n=509)*
Total support events @ 30 Nov 2021, N=533

Worker (other), 18, 4%
Father, 64, 13%
Support person, 3, 1%
Carer, 1, 0%
Other relative, 1, 0%
Friend, 0, 0%
Lawyer, 3, 1%
Worker (DCJ), 7, 1%
Grandmother, 6, 1%
Grandfather, 2, 0%
Other , 5, 1%
Mother, 399, 78%

■ Carer ■ Father ■ Friend ■ Grandfather
■ Grandmother ■ Lawyer ■ Mother ■ Other
■ Other relative ■ Support person ■ Worker (DCJ) ■ Worker (other)

MEETING SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY
Family Inclusion Strategies Hunter – Three-Staged Approach

BEFORE meeting

DURING meeting

AFTER meeting

supported preparation

supported participation

supported debriefing

TALK WITH PARENT/FAMILY
Cover:
- Peer support worker role in and around the event.
- What to expect, e.g., agenda, roles, process.
- What the parent/family wants to happen, any worries, things they want to say, do, and ask, and what they want from the peer support worker.
- What others might expect of the parent/family.
- Records, reports, etc. that need to be read, brought to the meeting, or may be used.

OBSERVE & TALK
Make sure:
- Workers ask questions, listen, and actively consider parent/family views and positions in conversations and decision making.
- Parent/family are clear about what is being asked and decided, what they wanted to cover is included, and their ideas are discussed and included in planning.
- (If needed) Parent/family have private time to consider initial plan ideas and propose changes before finalising.

REFLECT WITH PARENT/FAMILY
Consider:
- What happened, what it was like for the parent/family, what worked well, and what could be improved.
- Parent/family ideas for future meetings; changes, do same.
- Feedback to each other about role, contributions and how everyone worked together.
- Additional support needed for parent/family.
- Feedback for workers or others and follow up needed with or by them.

RESPOND TO PARENT REQUEST
- Assess peer availability
- Check other supports
- Set number of meetings

CONTACT MEETING CONVENOR
- Introductions
- Meeting purpose & roles
- Expectations

REVIEW OR FINALISE COMMITMENT WITH PARENT
- Check meeting number
- Check other supports
- Continue or end

CONTACT MEETING CONVENOR
- Debrief
- Follow up actions
- Two-way feedback

v.20/11/21

FISH MEMBERSHIP

TOTAL members @ 10 December 2021

59

General members: 52
Committee members: 7

Lived experience (committee members)
(at 10 December 2021)

No, 2, 29%
Yes, 5, 71%

Lived experience (all members)
(at 10 December 2021)

No, 18, 31%
Yes, 41, 69%

Lived experience (general members)
(at 10 December 2021)

NA (agency), 2, 4%
No, 16, 31%
Yes, 34, 65%

FISH members: Relationship to child who is/was in care
(all members, N=59) (at 10 December 2021)

Mother
NA/agency/worker
Grandparent
Father
Kinship carer
Prefer not to say
Nil response
Sibling
Godmother