



EVENT REPORT

CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRES

A Forum Exploring the Role of Child Advocacy Centres
in a Child Focused Approach to Child Protection

SOCIAL POLICY SEMINAR

28 February 2008

1:30 – 4:30pm

**City West Lotteries House
Conference Room**

BACKGROUND

WACOSS has consistently called for a ‘whole of community’ approach to protecting children. We consider that protecting and nurturing children is the single, most important investment that the government and community can make. We know that children do best when the agencies they come into contact with are able to complement each other rather than work in isolation of each other.

In September 2006 WACOSS convened a Forum for the NGO Sector on Child Protection and Wellbeing. Discussions held during the Forum focused on the need for a genuine “whole of community” approach to protecting children. This approach was also reinforced in WACOSS’ 2007-2008 pre budget submission¹ and the 2004 report commissioned by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Child Protection *Caring Well: Protecting Well*². It was widely recognised that children do best when the agencies they come into contact with are able to complement each other rather than work in isolation of each other.

In 2006 Natalie Hall, Manager Special Projects, Metropolitan Services with the Department of Child Protection was awarded the 40th Anniversary Churchill Fellowship to research multi-agency services for children who had been harmed. As part of that research Natalie traveled to the USA, Canada, UK, Sweden, Poland and Hong Kong to study what multi-agency services are provided to children and families where the child requires a forensic interview, medical examination, legal services, counseling and family support services.

¹ WA Council of Social Service (Oct 2006) *A Vision Beyond the Boom: WACOSS Pre-Budget Submission o the State Government 2007-2008*, Perth

² Harries, M., Harris, T., Diamond, S. and Mackenzie, G. (2004) *Caring Well – Protecting Well: Investing in systemic responses to protect children in WA*, The Ministerial Advisory Council on Child Protection Western Australia, Perth

Natalie's research led her to the conviction that the Child Advocacy Centre model of service delivery offers a holistic, child focused approach to child protection. Child Advocacy Centres consider and accommodate all the needs of the child. They have been operating for twenty years and not only have they been found to be the preferred model for children and their families, but they are also cost effective and efficient.

The NGO sector is ideally situated to play an important role in the establishment of Child Advocacy Centres. NGOs often have strong connections to community and family, they are usually locally based and locally focused and families are often more likely to trust non government providers as they are not perceived as the "welfare". In addition, NGOs do not have the same statutory, political or bureaucratic constraints that government departments do and as a result, they can work more flexibly with families and individuals and play a lead role in local collaborative approaches.

In response to the interest shown by the NGO sector in learning more about Child Advocacy Centres WACOSS hosted this Social Policy Seminar.

EVENT SUMMARY

The objectives of the seminar were to;

- Learn about a range of Child Advocacy Centre models and how they offer a child focused approach to child protection.
- Discuss what would be an appropriate model for Western Australia and what role the NGO sector could play.
- Create an Action Plan for progressing the establishment of Child Advocacy Centres in Western Australia.

Attendees listened to Natalie Hall talk about Child Advocacy Centres and the research she did as a Churchill Fellow. Natalie explained that she didn't undertake the research with an idea to specifically focus on models of Child Advocacy Centres, but rather to learn more about a child-focussed immediate and long term approach to child protection, to see what others were doing well and how they were doing it.

Forum attendees learned that the Child Advocacy Centre model of service delivery provides

- Child focused services
- A tested multidisciplinary team model
- Timely responses
- Information sharing and planned joint responses
- Comprehensive assessments and service provision and
- Case review and tracking³

³ Hall, Natalie. Child Advocacy Centres in Australia – A Way Forward. Improving multi-agency services for children who have been harmed. Winston Churchill Trust Fellow 2006.

They also learned that this was a model that could be, and has been, applied in other areas such as adult sexual assault and domestic violence. Natalie commented that the main benefit to this approach was that it reduced the number of interviews a child was subjected to, thereby reducing any additional trauma.

Attendees were also presented with some photographs highlighting both the interior and exterior of a number of different models of Child Advocacy Centres. What was immediately apparent was the focus on creating welcoming and safe spaces for children, no matter what the budget or space constraints were.

Forum attendees were also provided, in the form of a short DVD, with a powerful example of how a Child Advocacy Centre functions from a child's perspective.

This was then followed by a panel of speakers that included Natalie Hall (Churchill Fellow), Basil Hanna (CEO Parkerville), Glenda Kickett (Djooraminda) and Cheryl Barnett (DCP ED Metropolitan).

Cheryl Barnett spoke of her twenty years of experience in the field of Child Protection and her involvement in the establishment of the current Child Interview Unit. The Child Interview unit has just undergone an evaluation and a number of recommendations have been made, as there is no room for expansion decisions need to be made. Cheryl articulated that although the Department for Child Protection support the model there is no money at this stage for the establishment of a CAC and all of their energy is focused on the reforms coming out of the FORD Review.

Basil Hanna spoke to attendees about his significant involvement with the CAC model, a recent conference he had attended and the decision Parkerville made to branch out and adopt the development of a CAC in Armadale as a centre of excellence. Basil explained that the reason this model works is that the child is the focus in the provision of services for abused children. According to Basil challenges included raising the money to build the centre and bringing people together. "The centre will be built sometime next year (2009) but bringing people together will take a lot longer". Basil informed attendees that he was planning to bring out a specialist team from America in October 2008 to discuss Child Advocacy Centres. The current plan was to have them talk to senior decision makers on the first day and run a workshop, with invites to the sector on the second day.

Glenda Kickett spoke to attendees about the work she does at Djooraminda. She emphasized that, in her experience, it is when children feel safe that they disclose. A child may come to them for one issue but it is only when they are feeling safe and secure that the full extent of abuse will be disclosed. Glenda commented that it is vital that children who are victims of abuse have their stories validated, confirmed and acknowledged. It is important that they are central to the services provided and are supported.

The forum was organised by Rebekah Garwood, WACOSS Senior Policy Officer – Children and facilitated by Lisa Baker, WACOSS Executive Director.

RSVP LIST AND PROGRAM DETAILS

1. Penny Chellew	Playgroup WA
2. Stephen Clarke	Midland Family Relationship Centre
3. Farida Lang	Midland Family Relationship Centre
4. Belinda Gibson	Midland Family Relationship Centre
5. Kedy Kristal	Patricia Giles Centre
6. Jennifer Jamieson	Djooraminda
7. Laka Togiapoe	Djooraminda
8. Alan Cock	Djooraminda
9. Emma Lewis	Djooraminda
10. Barbara Wood	Leederville Early Childhood Centre
11. Nicole Leggett	Women's Council for D&FV Services
12. Tina Dean	Ngala
13. Paul Overall	MercyCare
14. Margaret Cook	COMIC WA Children of Mentally ill Consumers
15. Linda Sharman	Wheatbelt Aboriginal Health Service
16. John Ambrose	WA NILS inc
17. Kylie Wallace	Parkerville Children and Youthcare
18. Michelle Roozey	Parkerville Children and Youthcare
19. Stephan Lund	Anglicare WA
20. Mary Quinn	Koolkuma Women's Refuge
21. Graeme Jarred	Parkerville Children and Youthcare
22. Petro Recchia	Parkerville Children and Youthcare
23. Jayne Major	Rocky Bay Inc
24. Michelle Ruzich	Parkerville Children and Youthcare
25. Louise Durack	WOMEN'S Healthworks
26. Julie Coverley	SMAHS
27. Glenda Hicky	Ruah Community Serves
28. Joanne Smith	Princess Margaret Hospital Child Protection Unit
29. Mark Lema	Disability Services Commission
30. Elizabeth Talikowski	DCP
31. Aileen Boyer	Armadale Community Family Centre
32. Helen Cheng	St Francis Xavier Catholic Church
33. Sue Clear	DCP
34. Sue Chaprian	DCP
35. Donna Bannister	Foundation Housing LTD
36. Lori Hayward	Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service
37. Sheryl Tan	Djooraminda

Time	WACOSS - CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRES SEMINAR	Who
1:30	<p>Welcome and outline for today</p> <p>Objectives of the Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learn about a range of Child Advocacy Centre models and how they offer a child focused approach to child protection. ▪ Discuss what would be an appropriate model for Western Australia and what role the NGO sector could play. ▪ Create an Action Plan for progressing the establishment of Child Advocacy Centres in Western Australia. 	Lisa Baker
1:40	Introduction	Lisa Baker
1:50	Natalie's presentation followed by a DVD viewing	Natalie Hall
2:50	Afternoon Tea	
3:00	<p>Panel Discussion Natalie Hall (Churchill Fellow), Basil Hanna (CEO Parkerville), Glenda Kickett (Djooraminda) Cheryl Barnett (DCP ED Metropolitan).</p>	Intro by Lisa Baker followed by the Panel
3.45	Question time	
4:15	<p>Where to from here?</p> <p>Thank you Natalie, Basil, Glenda and Cheryl</p> <p>Thank everyone for coming</p>	Lisa Baker Rebekah Garwood
4:30	Close	

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

WACOSS continues to advocate that the Western Australian Government, through the Departments of the Attorney General, Health, Indigenous Affairs, Police and Child Protection, implement the Child Advocacy Centre model of service provision for child protection, support and prosecution of cases. The Child Advocacy Centre model of service delivery expands and enhances the responsibility for holistic child focused responses from Police and DCP at the assessment and investigation end of service provision, to comprehensive multi-agency response focused on assessment, investigation, therapeutic intervention, medical evaluation, prosecution and family support.

In addition, panellists and a number of attendees thought that a state reference group should be created consisting of a committed group of people from agencies committed to working towards this CAC form of service provision.

Interested persons are encouraged to contact Rebekah Garwood at rebekah@wacoss.org.au or Basil Hanna at bhanna@parkerville.org.au