



Supporting families with children in care

FINFORMATION

The Family Inclusion Network of WA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and the Noongar Nations; we honour and pay respect to elders and their people, past and present, and walk together in reconciliation.

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Fin WA Newsletter

We have had a very busy few months with high demand for our service, as well as some changes in our staff. In the midst of the business, there are also many exciting developments occurring and moments of joy that keep us going in this work. We continue to support each other, and remain connected to our values as we respond to various challenges.

Goodbye and thank you to Sharon

It was with sadness that we said farewell to our Senior Advocate, Sharon Davies, in August after 2 years with Fin WA. Sharon was a committed and proud Advocate in her time with Fin WA. Her calm presence and wealth of experience will be missed. We wish her well in her new position with the Ombudsman's Office, and we are sure she will add great value to her new work environment.

Congratulations to Caitlin

We are very pleased to welcome Caitlin Green to the position of Senior Advocate. Caitlin has been an Advocate with Fin WA for the past 2 years, and brings a great depth of experience working with families from her time working with the Department of Communities, as well as with Fin WA. She also has great skills in supervision through her work as a field education supervisor and liaison for social work students.

Caitlin is a very skillful and dedicated worker, and we look forward to her leadership in the role of Senior Advocate.

Welcome to Emma Truman-Neil

We have very much enjoyed having Emma with us on her final Social Work placement over the last six months. Her work updating the very extensive "Finding Your Way with the Department" document, and with the Family Partner Program has been much appreciated.

We were so impressed with her skills and relational qualities that we are pleased to be able to offer Emma some casual work to build on the updating of the Finding Your Way document, to develop a comprehensive training package to accompany this document. This is a complex piece of work that brings together legislative, legal and practice frameworks to explain the child protection system to workers and families. Fin WA has been delivering this training for many years so it will be invaluable to have the work consolidated into a clear package. Emma will work on Tuesdays and Wednesdays until November.



Special Guest comes to Bringing Up Great Kids Playgroup

Our Bringing Up Great Kids Playgroup enjoyed a special guest appearance from Aunty Booka, the mascot for Paint the Town REaD, a national literacy initiative last term. Paul Chang, the Project Officer from our funding partner, The Smith Family, delighted the children and parents by escorting Aunty Booka to attend the group for story and rhyme time, as well as a picnic in the garden.

Our supported playgroup is held at Sudbury Community House in Mirrabooka each Wednesday of the term from 9.30am - 11.30am.

**We are also running the BUGK workshop series at Roseworth Child and Parent Centre on Wednesday afternoons from 12.30 - 2.30 pm. Please contact Jo for more information:
Ph: 9328 6434**

Peer Work Sector Forum -

elevating the voice of parents within child protection.

On Wednesday 26th June Fin WA hosted a Forum to discuss Peer Work in Child Protection with the wider sector. The purpose of the day was to discuss the value, as well as the 'how to' include parents as Family Partners (Peer Workers) in the child protection space in the Western Australian context.

This day was attended by over 40 participants from NGO's, and the Department of Communities, as well as people with lived experience of the child protection system. We were heartened by the goodwill, enthusiasm, wisdom and experience that was shared on the day.

Jessica Cox, from Life Without Barriers in NSW shared some of the key findings from her Churchill Fellowship about the way Family Partners can educate and influence both workers and parents, providing a bridge between parents and the system, building hope for parents and case workers.

We were privileged to hear from three Family Partners who have been training with Fin WA, to learn something of their journey, and how the system can be improved by listening to, respecting and including parents in the processes.

As allies and partners in this work, we encourage you to continue conversations with us about the role Family Partners could play in your organisation, and how to elevate the voice of those with lived experience in your practice. Please also consider families that you know who may be interested in being trained to become a Family Partner.

A Guide for Parents -

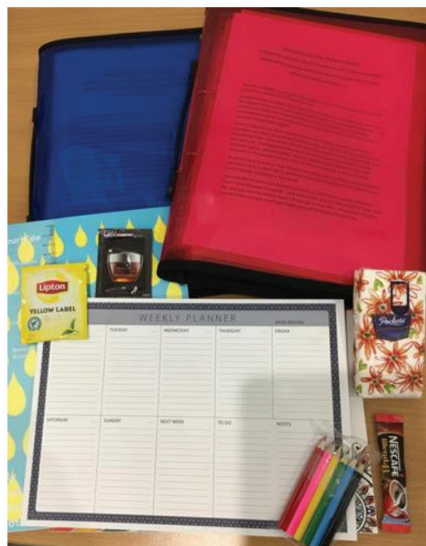
developed by Family Partners

We have been working on a Guide for Parents for when they are just starting to connect with child protection. The suggestion for this Guide came from one of our Family Partners - Renna- and it contains information and tools that families wish they knew about when they were newly involved with the system.

The Pack includes tip sheets, a diary, notebook and the Finding Your Way document. There are also self-care elements that encourage parents to look after themselves and get support while navigating the process, such as mindful colouring-in, a tea bag, and hand cream.

One of our other wonderful Family Partners - Sharlene - managed to source donations of hand cream, moisturiser and other samples that remind people to take care of themselves during this very stressful time. **Thank you to Rebecca Cook for her generous donation of hundreds of samples to the Fin WA Guide for Parents.**

Thank you to Renna, Sharlene and Rebecca for your work on these Packs. We are excited about having this resource available for families so they can understand and participate more fully in this complex system.



A Poem to Ponder

When I am Among the Trees

When I am among the trees, especially the willows and the honey locust, equally the beech, the oaks and the pines, they give off such hints of gladness. I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am never so distant from the hope of myself, in which I have goodness, and discernment, and never hurry through the world but walk slowly, and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves and call out, "stay awhile". The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, "It's simple", they say, "and you too have come into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine."

By Mary Oliver

Partnering for training.

Fin WA staff and Family Partners will be participating in some introductory training provided by Yorganop and Zonta House at different times in the coming months. We are very appreciative of the opportunity to work with other services for reciprocal learning. It is also a great team building exercise, where we can all gain common understanding about issues such as Family Domestic Violence, and think about the issues from a variety of perspectives. We are looking forward to including Family Partners in this training as part of our organisational development.

Have you heard....?

Emerging Minds

For over 20 years Emerging Minds (previously the Australian Infant Child Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association) has been dedicated to advancing the mental health and emotional well being of Australian infants,, children, adolescents and their families. Check out their website for a great range of resources, training, and research.

National Child Protection Week

1-7 September.

Key messages for this year:

- Kids do well when parents are supported.
- To raise thriving kids, parents need support to navigate life's choppy waters.

this joke:

A mum texts: Hi son, what does IDK, LY & TTYL mean?

Son texts back: I don't know, love you, talk to you later.

Mum: It's ok, don't worry, I'll ask your sister, love you too.

10 Things to Say instead of Stop Crying



1. It's ok to be sad

2. This is really hard for you

3. I'm here with you

4. Tell me about it

5. I hear you

6. That was really scary, sad, etc.

7. I will help you work it out

8. I'm listening

9. I hear that you need space.

I want to be here for you.

I'll stay close so you can find me when you're ready.

10. It doesn't feel fair

Would you like to Volunteer with us?

There are a number of ways to be involved with FIn WA, and to participate in our mission of having "a child protection system that is respectful and inclusive of parents, families and communities as stakeholders."

Volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds with varied skills and experience, and we particularly value the participation of people who have lived experience of the child protection system. The voice and input of people with lived experience is very powerful as it provides hope and dignity to families who are currently navigating the system. We call people with lived experience Family Partners as they can walk alongside families to support and guide them on their journey.

Volunteers and Family Partners roles may include:

- admin tasks, eg answering phones
- support and information to parents in a group setting or individually
- accompanying a parent to appointments such as Court
- providing input into training, resource development and consultations.

There is a process of training and assessment, and ongoing support and supervision for all volunteers within Fin WA. Please contact Jacquie for more information.

AIFS Stakeholder Survey

Please provide your feedback as an Australian Institute of Family Studies stakeholder. This short survey will help ensure information provided by the AIFS is relevant and accessible.

<https://mailchi.mp/aifs/help-us-share-the-evidence?e=0c3629432a>

Rise Magazine: risemagazine.org

This is a wonderful resource you may like to have a look at, based in New York. It is written by parents who have faced the child welfare system in their own lives.

Rise's mission is to train parents to write and speak about their experiences in order to support parents and parent advocates, and to guide child welfare professionals in becoming more responsive to the families and communities they serve.

Rise changes the story of who these parents are - and who they can become.

Parents have also written some excellent resources for both families and professionals.

Drop-in to speak with an Advocate. On Friday mornings you can make a time to meet with an Advocate. You may want to stay for a cuppa with a Family Partner, or relax in the art space.

Ph: 9328 6434

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

What's been happening in raising awareness of child sexual abuse (CSA) prevention?

A few years ago a number of community members attended a workshop on CSA prevention but when they arrived for the workshop there were only a handful of people there; they were mostly known to each other, and they were all already working in some way in the CSA prevention space. After the workshop, everyone who attended gathered around, shared how they had come to be there, and wondered how they could share their knowledge, support families and practitioners, and raise awareness about this very challenging work.

From this small beginning, this group developed a Committee and has organised a series of Symposiums over the past three years:

- The first was in March 2017, at St Catherine's College UWA, and the speakers presented on the different entry points to the cycle of sexual abuse. The Committee were pleasantly surprised to see over one hundred attendees.
- The second Symposium ran over two days at The Rise in Maylands, and focused on research and programs from overseas, within Australia and locally.
- The third Symposium took place at the Telethon Speech and Hearing Centre, and the focus was on the growing issue of children being exposed to pornography.
- The most recent Symposium took place in July 2019 and shared the impact of CSA on families, featured case studies, voices from families, visual presentation of children sharing protective education messages and a number of presentations from the legal perspective. The room was filled with over 100 attendees, and they provided feedback and ideas through group discussion about how to move forward to reduce the impact of CSA on families and the community.

The next Symposium is in the planning stages for April 2020 with the focus being on treatment, programs and support. If you are interested, keep an eye out for further details.

To date, the symposiums have brought together community members, and professionals from diverse areas of practice, and are continuing to raise awareness. Conversations are being generated which we are hopeful will lead to changes in the way we currently respond to and support children, families, offenders and could provide new ways which will prevent CSA and reduce the additional harm which can occur for those exposed to CSA through our current responses.