

# History

## FAN HISTORY: 25 YEARS (1981-2006)

### In the Beginning – The Early Years

FAN's capacity to respond with initiative and innovation did not happen overnight, nor has it necessarily been a recent phenomenon. It is born from the history and culture of the agency, which is embedded in the philosophy and the practice. A client focussed and driven, rights-based approach is a fundamental Core Philosophy demonstrated since the commencement of the organisation.

Family Access Network formally emerged as an organisation in April 1981. Its development evolved from the efforts of the Box Hill City Council (now City of Whitehorse) youth worker, Steve McLoughlin, in drawing together a committee of people from within the local community to foster an accommodation response for the growing numbers of homeless and at risk young people. The development however emerged some years earlier from the late 70's through a series of public meetings, and community awareness activities led to the emergence of a steering committee. The community development model, so richly embedded in the formation of the agency, has continued and contributes much to the community participation, strong volunteer and donation base that enables FAN to continue to value add to services provided.

The City of Box Hill allocated worker time and resources to the development of the model, guided by the steering committee and subsequently from 1981 the Management Committee. Initially the service response was focussed around a community placement model and private rental shared houses – both of which made possible by the active involvement of volunteers as community placement caregivers and volunteer mentors supporting the shared houses. St Paul's Lutheran Church Box Hill, under the direct support of Bett Beaton and the Christian Brothers Novitiate, through the efforts of Br Paul Noonan, each provided onsite housing for young people to supplement the private rental and community placement options.

The then Ministry of Housing allocated a youth transitional property to FAN in 1982, which was used almost exclusively for young people for a period of more than 20 years and despite some ups and downs along the way was embraced by the local community, including the Neighbourhood House Coordinator. This supplemented the private rental stock managed by FAN. In recognition that independent housing was not suitable for all young people, the shared housing model was enhanced by the strong pool of Community Placement Caregivers providing respite and ongoing housing options within a family environment. Many of the young people placed in the community placement program returned to their family homes, which enabled an excellent diversionary model for its 20 years of operation. FAN's first externally appointed worker in 1985, Coordinator of Volunteers, developed and managed the extensive numbers of volunteers, while the council youth worker provided the case management response. The model was very successful and laid the foundation for many of the values and practice principles still held strongly at FAN around building sustainable community connections for young people and fostering the involvement of the community.

In 1985 the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, a Federal and State response, governed by the SAAP Act, emerged providing FAN with the capacity to employ workers to offer a case managed response, as well as an overarching framework, which remains an impressive document to this day.

In the mid 80's the issue of youth homelessness emerged as a major community issue, inspired to a large degree by the Equal Opportunity Commissioners Enquiry – "Our Homeless Children" – which for many years was the cornerstone around which youth service models developed. It is also notable that FAN staff, including the current Manager, gave evidence at the original and reconvened Burdekin Enquiries – "Our Homeless Children" in 1985 and 1987. FAN's evidence was based on appropriate ways of engaging and responding to the needs of vulnerable young people.

1987 was the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. FAN was actively engaged at Regional and Statewide level in the campaigns to create increased community awareness, public advocacy and building pathways for acceptance. This was a very active time for social justice advocacy and led to significant service delivery policies and standards in the homelessness sector.

For the next ten years FAN offered a range of housing responses, which included a community placement program for younger people in the 15 – 20 year range, with the emphasis on family reconnection made possible by the dedication of a pool of 25 caregiver households. For young people out of home for a period of time or where a "family" type housing response was less suitable, FAN also managed a number of shared house properties, by this stage all made available by the Office of Housing directly to FAN to manage. The involvement of a volunteer support team of up to three volunteers per household provided a strong positive role model to the young people, enhancing the case managed response of the team of professional staff. Members of FAN's committee undertook landlord roles and property management and rental collection was managed separately from the role and function of caseworkers. Community Placement and Mentoring Volunteers were drawn from within the community, many of whom also benefited from the training and support offered by FAN, which contributed to many entering the sector in a professional role.

It is interesting to note that many years later Adolescent Community Placement (ACP) emerged as a model, developed by the Department of Human Services (DHS) in response to de-institutionalisation. A FAN worker, Helen Ryan, was seconded to DHS to assist with the original development of the ACP model. The impact on the lives of young people of

the volunteer effort of the Community Placement Caregivers and the Mentors is one that for many young people has allowed a reconnection with a sense of community. Due to changing needs and presentation of clients the Community Placement concluded in 2001 after a strong and illustrious twenty years. During this period FAN also had a feature article presented in the Youth Studies professional journal.

The Middle Years - 1997 - Onwards

In the mid 90s FAN's client group started to change slightly at first, to reflect the growing numbers of pregnant, parenting young women, young families and accompanying children. FAN's service responses shifted to meet the emerging trends and associated needs.

In 1997 FAN grew and changed quite significantly. The introduction of the Transitional Housing Managers "an initiative of the Victorian Government to separate the provision of housing from support (something which FAN had achieved already quite successfully with the tenancy administration worker)" led to some significant changes.

When the Transitional Housing Managers were introduced FAN developed an immediate response, sponsored by the Box Hill Rotary Club to provide personal kits to all young people when it was learned that many were going into properties that did not have necessary items. The kits include doonas, covers, pillows, sheets, and personal toiletries. These are provided to the young person directly and theirs to keep. This project has been running consistently ever since, jointly funded with Rotary, and has become an initiative replicated by other services.

In 1997 FAN was successful in the tender for the auspice of the Tenancy Support Program, funded through Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV). The Tenancy Support Program offered tenancy support, advocacy and community education services centrally from the Box Hill office and also across five outreach locations, Chadstone, Oakleigh (Migrant Resource Centre), Ashwood, Boroondara (Camcare), Doncaster (Doncare), covering the four inner local government areas of Whitehorse, Boroondara, Manningham and Monash. The service in its seven years of operation (the statewide funding model was reviewed and centralised by CAV in 2004, which led to the closure of all 24 community based programs) averaged 1600 clients presenting for assistance each year. The Tenancy Support Program offered a vital role in supporting households to retain their tenancies, advocate and support tenants through VCAT hearings and offer a resource to landlords and real estate agents to facilitate positive housing outcomes. The program ran a number of community-development/education activities, contributed to literature on young people's tenancy rights, it also formed the basis of FAN's recognition that successful outcomes for tenants often rely on successful communication and linkages with the real estate industry.

In 1997 FAN expanded further with funding from the City of Whitehorse to develop Life Skills Program, tailored for homeless and at risk young people. The Young Mum's Group, a key Life Skills initiative, started in 1997 is still running and expanding today. The program is in its ninth year and is now a partnership-funded project of City of Whitehorse and Rotary Club of Box Hill. A range of personal development and creative workshops, which are frequently conducted in partnership with other community agencies and an ongoing Young Mum's Group are a feature of the Life Skills Program. The Life Skills Program was one of the first in the region and has contributed a great deal to a diverse range of projects, workshops, support groups and social activities for isolated and at risk young people.

In the mid 90s in response to a changing community climate, FAN was a key participant in an initiative developed in the Eastern Metropolitan Region "United Support Services. FAN as an Executive member undertook, in partnership with City of Whitehorse and Reach Out For Kids, the development of a set of comprehensive sector-wide policies, which were available on disk to enable member agencies to tailor them accordingly. This was valuable learning about how in a climate of competition great outcomes could be achieved through collaboration. USS was an incorporated body, set up to provide an umbrella group for smaller agencies, there were at least 18 member agencies. The group was very successful, and facilitated a Statewide Conference, opened by the Minister and by invitation gave presentations at a number of Regional DHS offices across the state, including the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR). The USS model was written up by the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria (their name at the time), as an innovative service response in a time of competition. To this day requests are still made for the material developed by the group.

Since the late 90s FAN was instrumental in the development of a mentoring group for senior managers/CEOs. This has contributed to excellent outcomes, partnership approaches and productive professional relationships.

FAN was a very active participant in the Victorian Homelessness Strategy Statewide and Regional Consultations, including participation on working groups, consultation, peak body collaborations and contribution to discussion papers. The EMR response was one that FAN participated in and took copies, with DHS permission, to a series of sector presentations in Florida USA in 2003.

In 2001 FAN successfully participated in a DHS/EMR funded three-month project for the Enhanced Case Managed Crisis Response for young families and singles in the City of Whitehorse.

Department of Human Services in its agency review of 2001 noted that FAN is "a highly efficient organisation, providing an exemplary service to its clients. The Committee of Management and staff are to be congratulated on this high level of service delivery".

FAN was a significant contributor in the development of two key Eastern Metropolitan initiatives in 2001. The local government forum on the development of social housing policies and partnership projects was targeted to the seven local governments in the EMR. In addition FAN had a key role in the first region wide Forum "Anyone HOMEless" A Community Epidemic, which was held over two and a half days and featured historic artworks from Council to Homeless Persons, keynote speakers/panels, playback theatre, and an industry expo.

The Forum attracted over 300 participants including statewide peak bodies, ministers, central DHS representatives, as well as a strong representation from the EMR broader service system.

In 2002 FAN was invited to present an article to Parity, a professional journal of the Council to Homeless Persons, on our

unique role in supporting homeless young families, the article was published in the February edition.

In 2003 FAN completed major renovations to the existing office site, providing new and enhanced meeting, interview, and a warm and inviting office space for clients, volunteers and workers alike. The office is well located, easily found (next door to the Town Hall) and within walking distance to all forms of public transport, with free onsite parking also available. FAN also has access to the St Peter's undercroft and hall for a range of Life Skills Program activities. It is hoped that in future FAN may gain access to space in the Box Hill Town Hall, which will enable access to meeting and interview space and provide access to a range of ancillary services for FAN's clients. In 2003 a FAN Life Skills Program photographic project "A Week In The Life Of" provided young people with the opportunity to document key events/people and themes in their lives. This project was exhibited at the Council to Homeless Persons Symposium on Youth Homelessness "Out of The Blue".

From 2004 until 2005, UnitingCare Harrison Community Services co-located two programs at FAN, Job Placement Employment and Training (JPET) and Wesley Harrison Information Support Housing (WHISH). This proved to be a very successful arrangement and the shared project activities fostered with the JPET co-location was highly regarded in a survey of young people's needs, identifying new projects in addition to the number of jointly run projects and workshops. This enhanced the outcomes for clients and facilitated their access to other services.

In 2004 FAN was invited to participate in the final Project i/Council To Homeless Persons report "Making A Place to Belong" by Dr Shelley Mallet and Dr Deb Keys, as one of only six services across the state. FAN was identified due to the reputation for innovative service responses to young families. It is notable that the Youth Homelessness Action Plan launched in May 2004 identified that 20% of all homeless young people are pregnant and parenting, with specific service responses requiring review and attention. The "Making a Place To Belong", Shelley and Keys, report was launched at the Council to Homeless Persons Statewide Forum on "Exclusion/Inclusion" in March 2005, where FAN was invited as a speaker and panel representative.

EMR Initiative. FAN was invited by DHS to facilitate Youth Specific Practice workshops in the Advanced Training Modules for Front Door Intake Workers.

2005 was a busy year with FAN contributing to the combined submission between Council to Homeless Persons, the Homeless Advocacy Service and FAN on the "Charter of Rights For Children and Young People". FAN actively participated in a number of regional and statewide consultations on the development of the Family Reconciliation and Mediation Program (FRMP) and the Youth Employment Education and Training Initiative (YEETI), both outcomes from the Youth Homelessness Action Plan. FAN has been noted as a leading agency across the state in accessing brokerage resources from YEETI and the success lies in facilitating positive outcomes for young people. FAN to date has accessed more than \$95,000 in brokerage funds to facilitate a young person's access to education and employment options. FAN will be working closely with YEETI to provide a thorough evaluation of this YHAP initiative and FAN has specifically modified SMART Data to include YEETI Data.

Similarly, FAN is working closely with the FRMP team in order to improve the relationships between homeless and at risk young people and their families in the areas of reconciliation, mediation and other interventions. Both the SAAP and Life Skills programs of FAN meet with the Coordinator of FRMP regularly to strengthen this partnership and FAN SAAP staff attend the bi-monthly EMR Family Reconciliation Peer Support Group.

The FAN Breaking the Cycle Over Breakfast was so successful and led to several presentations to Real Estate Agents, the Eastern Homeless Network and contributed to a young mother in FAN becoming a "youth ambassador". The young person concerned spoke at a number of public events including the Homeless Expo and FAN's AGM. In 2005 City of Whitehorse introduced a Young Person of the Month Award. In the course of the year five young people linked with FAN's homeless and Life Skills Programs, were awarded Young Person of the Month and one of them then went on to become the first City of Whitehorse Young Person of the Year, which was presented at the Australia Day Ceremonies in January 2006.

In September 2005, the ALSO Foundation approached FAN to become partners in their same sex attracted transgender intersex youth transitional housing project. The year following was a particularly active one with the development of interagency agreements, awareness training for all staff, Board and volunteers, organisation audit of resources, language and assessment processes supported through consultation with Twenty10 in Sydney and Daniel Whithaus of "pride and prejudice". The project "alsorts" was launched in June 2006 and is seen as a necessary direction in addressing sector wide gaps in the provision of safe and suitable housing responses for SSATI young people. It is also notable that YHAP (May 2004) noted this as a sector wide gap. In 2006 Dr Lynne Hillier, Researcher and Lecturer at Latrobe University and author of "Writing Themselves In" and "Writing Themselves In Again" which are both seminal works in identifying presenting needs for SSATI young people, joined the FAN Board.

In 2005 Council to Homeless Persons invited FAN to participate in the development of a Statewide Youth Practitioner's Network. FAN is an active member with the peak and has contributed over the years to a number of initiatives both at Regional and Statewide level.

In 2006 FAN was successful in a submission for three years funding from the Alfred Felton Bequest to develop a Children's Program "Early Years". This has enabled FAN to undertake the necessary organisational, office space and program audits, and led to the introduction of more appropriately tailored responses for accompanying children, most of whom are aged 0 - 5 years.

FAN was a presenter at the March 2006 National Homeless Conference in Sydney and the July 2006 Victorian Homelessness Network Agency Practice Statewide Forum. A comprehensive paper from the Conference is available on the AFHO website [www.afho.org.au](http://www.afho.org.au) and has been circulated amongst the broader service system.

During this period, an update sent to the EMR through the Eastern Homelessness Network (EHN) and the Whitehorse Youth Issues Working Party noted the number of direct contacts made with FAN congratulating the innovations and

initiatives and seeking advice and support in establishing similar. This led to FAN approaching the EHN Network Coordinator to set up what has now become regular private rental working party to consider housing options by working more closely with the real estate industry. This has proved to be a very successful direction for FAN in the "Breaking The Cycle Over Breakfast" and led to FAN being invited to speak at the Real Estate Institute of Victoria Board. Earlier this year FAN was also invited to participate in the Tenants Union of Victoria/Council To Single Mothers State wide Working party on private rental barriers experienced by women who are parenting, with particular reference to what interventions can be introduced to address these barriers. FAN continues to be an active participant in this group.

The FAN courtyard project was made possible through the direct assistance and resources of Levi Strauss, which also enabled two mosaic projects to be completed involving young people. The two mosaic projects allowed young people access to creative skill development and the legacy of mosaic artworks, tables, and totem poles now on permanent display in the FAN courtyard. The completed courtyard and mosaic totem poles were launched at the FAN 2005 AGM. During 2006, FAN was very encouraged that the focus on Youth Homelessness Action Plan 2, was on practice enhancements and the importance of practice reflection in the context of youth work, addressing responses to young families and same sex attracted young people and recognition of the importance of Life Skills development in the context of interdependence. FAN continues to be particularly well placed in regard to all of these priorities, having identified and developed appropriate and enhanced program responses.

### Practice Reflection, the present and the future

In the past decade, FAN has undergone considerable changes in the nature of the client-group and as a result the tailored responses offered. A key feature is the consistent growth of young parents, young families and accompanying children. In 2004 FAN undertook a ten year trends analysis which formed the basis of a report presented at the Annual General Meeting and led to the establishment of new initiatives, driven by a staff led portfolio system. This has proved to be a highly successful development and has contributed to some excellent FAN initiatives and interventions, and a diverse flexible range of programs and workshops offered through the homeless services response (SAAP) and the collaborative activities of the Life Skills Program and the significant contributions of volunteers across all aspects of FAN's services.

The Portfolio system enables staff to identify key areas of interest and for FAN to look at how to enhance service delivery in response to the emerging needs of clients. The direction was well supported by the already existing FAN model of practice reflection, trends and data analysis resulting in service enhancements for clients. A number of initiatives have resulted, many of which led to successful submissions and partnerships: Private Rental Assistance Scheme; Breaking the Cycle Over Breakfast; Get Smart Education Program for Young Mum's; Youth Health Day, Young People As Ambassadors, Children's Program "Early Years, Peer Leadership Program, Project i/Melbourne University Research projects; ALSO " FAN also sorts same sex attracted, transgender, intersex youth transitional project, to name but a few. In recent years FAN has presented on its innovative practice at Regional Networks, working groups, community and service groups, as well as the July Statewide Practice Forum and at the National Homelessness Conference in Sydney in March 2006. However a commitment to public awareness has been evident throughout the life of FAN and reflected in numerous radio appearances, newspaper articles, speaking engagements, school presentations and others as requested.

FAN maintains a commitment to reflective practice embedded across all aspects of client service provision as demonstrated in formalised supervision strategies, debriefing, peer practice reflection, weekly staff meetings, sector participation and comprehensive professional development. FAN is fortunate to attract staff who are committed to the best practice model of service delivery and embracing of continually refining and enhancing services for homeless and at risk, young people, young parents and accompanying children.

The management committee model has evolved into a governance structure with the CEO responsible for operational matters, and the FAN Board of Governance, setting policy frameworks and strategic direction. In the thirty plus years of operation, FAN has been enormously assisted by the dedication, goodwill and guidance of many members of the community. The FAN Board are currently finalising the Strategic Framework for the 2011 - 2014 years, underpinned by the commitment to offering flexible and responsive services to an evolving client group and their presenting needs. The 2011 Portfolio system continues to evolve with some exciting projects highlighted for the coming year. This year we also undergo accreditation under the new QIC 6th Edition standards.

Key sponsors and funding bodies:

The City of Whitehorse, as noted earlier, through the efforts of the youth development worker fostered the development of FAN in the early years from 1981 to the introduction of SAAP in 1985. SAAP is administered by Department of Human Services (DHS) and funds the provision of case managed responses for homeless and at risk young people, which is the core funding and therefore a significant partner in FAN's delivery of services. The City of Whitehorse funded the Life Skills Program since 1997 and in 2002 Rotary Club of Box Hill joining in partnership with City of Whitehorse, has enabled the Life Skills Program to continue to grow and develop. In March 2006 The Alfred Felton Bequest, administered by the ANZ Trustees, allocated three years funding to FAN's Children's Program "Early Years. This exciting development resulted from the Data and Trends analysis, which occurred at FAN in 2004 and the subsequent Portfolio developments and submission applications. It was encouraging to be in a position to act on the needs of accompanying children into the homelessness and Life Skills Programs at FAN. The

positive interventions made possible through the Alfred Felton Bequest ensured that children's needs were recognised and provided for in a way which is appropriately tailored and cognisant of their vulnerability.

Funding and resources at FAN:

FAN is currently a committed staff team of 11 with a total income of not much more than \$600,000 per annum. FAN's experience has shown that the capacity to be responsive and creative has contributed to timely and innovative practice, services fostered through alternative funding streams. This in no way reduces the impetus for appropriate government funded interventions or diminishes the commitment to the fundamental philosophies of social justice and human rights. It does however, in the interim enable FAN to offer a range of tailored and appropriate services here and now, while at the same time maintaining a commitment to keeping the issues of homeless and at risk young people, young parents and accompanying children on the agenda.

Donors and supporters:

Olive Clark (Honorary Life Member) has been a continuous donor to FAN's programs since the inception – this is an extraordinary commitment of an individual and one which makes a significant contribution in addition to inspiring us all in our efforts, with her notes of warmth and encouragement. FAN's enhanced services and programs have been made possible by the consistent and ongoing support of: Lord Mayors Charitable Fund for many years, which has enabled the provision of equity support services to young people, young families and children in regard to their immediate and basic needs. The Lord Mayor's Fund has also facilitated FAN's application to other trusts for specific projects and activities – these have included Percy Baxter Fund, Levi Strauss, Youth In Philanthropy to name a few. In addition regular supporters have included: Canterbury Council of Churches, Highfield Road Uniting Tennis Club, St Dominic's East Camberwell Parish, Nance Morsby, Fred Faher, Robert Leydon, Jan Lawson, E McRae, Andrew & Glenda Simpson, Dawn Bladin, Caroline and Derek Young, Box Hill Lions Club, the Rotary Club of Box Hill.

For a number of years staff at Countrywide Tostrup has donated Christmas presents that clients and their accompanying children receive at FAN's annual Christmas Party. CCI Insurances provided start up kits of toasters, kettles, crockery and other household items for clients, in addition to an espresso machine, sewing machines and craft items for the young mum's group.

Margaret Ogilvie (previous community placement caregiver) – Disadvantaged Youth Fund provides regular financial support to FAN through the sale of recycled gift cards. These funds have assisted in education costs, prior to the implementation of YEETI and a range of specific supports to young people.

Caroline (Honorary Life Member and previous volunteer mentor) & Derek Young through the Orcadia Foundation in 2004 purchased, furnished and continue to maintain a property for FAN for the provision of longer term housing options for homeless and at risk young families. The Orcadia property has enabled the capacity for FAN to offer a response to vulnerable families and support them in stabilising and working towards longer term housing options. The Orcadia Foundation through Caroline and Derek Young, also provided seeding funding for the Children's Program – Early Years, as well as ongoing and long term support of FAN's programs for many years.

A number of one off and ongoing projects have been supported as a result of successful submissions to The Youth Issues Working Party, The Inger Rice Foundation, The Whitehorse School Focussed Youth Service and the Department for Victorian Communities – Community Strengthening and Volunteering. The Foundation of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies also provided funding for Kindergarten Start Up Packs that includes access to child care fees to enable parents to engage in further education, attend counseling and other significant appointments.

Further donor and sponsor information will be updated shortly.

Partnerships and co-located services:

UnitingCare Harrisons Community Services Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) program was co-located at FAN for two successful years until recently. The JPET program targets young people aged 15 – 21 years of age who had school-learning difficulties and/or are at risk of homelessness with the purpose of assisting these young people to return to school-based learning or prepare for employment. The co-location of the JPET service at FAN provided a vital source of support for existing FAN clients in addressing their education, employment and training needs, in collaboration with both their FAN Support Worker and JPET Worker. The co-location fostered a strong partnership between JPET and FAN's Life Skills Program in the delivery of projects and workshops, an association that will continue. FAN acknowledges the successful working relationship with the JPET team, Dale Carrol, Venus Quinlavin, Carrolyn Agius and Gab Killeen. UnitingCare Harrison Community Services WHISH Program co-located at FAN two days a week for a three month period to September 2006. The WHISH Program assists tenants of public and social housing in respect to issues surrounding their tenancies which impact on maintaining their tenancies.

The partnership development with Alternative Lifestyle Organisation (ALSO) to set up a same sex attracted transgender (SSAT) young people housing response resulted in the alsorts youth transitional housing project launch in June 2006, and the house opening in October. FAN is excited about this initiative and the partnership with ALSO. Same Sex Attracted Transgender responses were highlighted as a key priority in the Youth Homelessness Action Plan, 2004, which was a report outcome from the Victorian Homelessness Strategy.

A number of very successful partnerships enable a diverse range of workshops and project for the Life Skills Program,

notable but not necessarily exclusive partners, in recent years include: Youth ConneXions; Young People's Resource Centre; Whitehorse Community Health Service; Whitehorse Maternal Health Service; REFS; ROK; Harrison JPET; Starting Out; Resilient Kids; Juvenile Justice; Manningham YMCA; Springboard; Box Hill AMES; Wesley 121; EastCare Casey Program – Gateways; Consumer Affairs Victoria; Eastern Community Legal Centre; Wattlebridge; Box Hill TAFE; Whitehorse Community Arts Centre; Mitcham Baptist Church; Box Hill Library; Whitehorse School Focused Youth Service; Whitehorse Youth Issues Working Party; EDVOS; Anglicare Springboard Jenny and Dave's places.

The SAAP response has been enhanced by the capacity to provide value added services for clients. A recent important initiative the Breaking the Cycle Over Breakfast has facilitated the development of positive outcomes for clients entering private rental through the fostering of awareness amongst Real Estate Agents and has now grown to include a recent presentation at the Eastern Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV). Real Estate Agencies which have shown a particular interest and support to this project are: Philip Webb Box Hill and Treeby Real Estate Ringwood; Appleby Blackburn; Stockdale and Leggo Blackburn; The Professionals Mooroolbark.

St Peter's Anglican Church entered into partnership with FAN to complete the major office refurbishment. While the bulk of the funding was made by a low rate loan to FAN, St Peter's did make a significant cash donation to the project and continue to support FAN's activities in a range of ways including access to the undercroft and the Hall for FAN's Life Skills Young Mum's Group and other programs in addition to a long term lease to ensure that FAN can continue to provide services from this site for many years to come.

Young people as ambassadors and participants:

Young people supported at FAN over these 30 years would add up literally to thousands. Many of them at various stages return or re-contact to advise of new developments and positive outcomes in their lives. For many of us choosing a career in the profession this is one of many rewards that inspire and nourish us through the sometimes more difficult or less positive times. FAN's model is built around a client-focussed rights based approach. It underpins all aspects of service delivery. As a result young people are encouraged to participate in fostering awareness within the broader community of the positive contribution that young people can make. Over recent years, a number of young people directly involved with FAN have been acknowledged for City of Whitehorse Young Person of the Month and Young Person of the Year Awards. FAN is particularly proud of their achievements and congratulates them for their community spirit: Kathryn Lea – Young Person of the Month in May 2005 and Young Person of the Year and FAN's Rhys Fox Award Recipient 2004; Jaycie Duncan – Young Person of the month in November 2005 and also FAN's Rhys Fox Award Recipient for 2005 and speaker at Breaking The Cycle Over Breakfast, The Eastern Homelessness Network Homeless Expo 2005 and guest speaker at FAN's 2005 AGM; John Newton Young Person of the month August 2005 and young committee representative for FAN's Youth Health Day December 2005; Nathan Carlyon Young Person for the Month December 2005 for his contribution to the Box Hill Miniature Railway. Gypsy Bates was Young Person of the Month October 2006 and speaker at Mitcham Winter Sleepout August 2006; Bronwyn Smith was also a recipient of the award in 2006 and she was a regular attendee at the Young Mum's Group, while linked with a volunteer Mentor and attached to the Peer Leadership Program

Soon to be updated

Since 1994 FAN has acknowledged the particular efforts of selected young people at the Annual General Meeting as recipients of the Rhys Fox Encouragement Award. The Award was made possible through the bequest from the estate of Rhys Fox who was active in the development of housing responses for homeless and at risk young people in the eastern suburbs, during the 1980's and 1990's. Recipients of the Rhys Fox Award are: Katrina White, Emma Morecroft, Amanda Dwyer, Kareem Hamid, Annerliegh Parkinson, Melissa Plain, Angela Boyd, Paul Waterworth, Matt Jones, Kerry Warren, Kylie Ives, Andrea Fox, Cherie Davis, Mellisa Clemans, Lauren Jones, Lani Elkin, Tessa Daniels, Katrina Vanderwief, Kathryn Lea, Matthew Richardson, Jaycie Duncan, Elise Ramage and Gypsy Bates and Bronwyn Smith. Further names to be added soon.

During the many years of FAN's service a number of projects have been enhanced and in some cases facilitated by the involvement of young people. FAN is encouraged and proud of their efforts and sees enormous potential in fostering further opportunities for young people to contribute. Projects in the last year enhanced by young people's participation include:

In 2005 a very successful Youth Health Promotion Day, funded through the Lord Mayors Youth in Philanthropy Program, was held at FAN. The success of the event was made possible through the active involvement of a youth committee made up of interested and committed young people from or linked with FAN's services. The youth steering committee met weekly, involved at all levels of the development and on the day facilitation. More than 100 young people attended and demonstrated a hugely successful outcome as well as giving the youth committee an opportunity to developing organisational and networking skills.

FAN's Youth Ambassadors who are young clients have contributed to Breaking the Cycle over Breakfast presentations through sharing their stories of homelessness and how obtaining private rental changed their lives in positive ways. It takes courage to do any form of public presentation and particularly in an arena where young people have previously been stigmatised and disadvantaged. These young people's presentations did much to breaking down the negative stigma real estate agents held about them as well as showing the reality of youth homelessness. In addition young people have contributed as Ambassadors of FAN and the wider community by presenting at the Homelessness, Housing and Domestic Violence Expo in 2005, and the Winter Sleepouts in 2005 and 2006.

The Peer Leadership Program introduced in July 2006 FAN following extensive development of a model, and in response to the successful engagement of young people in various activities, in particular their involvement on the steering group of the Youth Health Day. Considering the gains already achieved by young people through the City of Whitehorse Young

People of the month/year, the activities of key youth ambassadors, the energy and enthusiasm of the Peer Leadership Program participants is encouraging. A core group of Peer Leaders developed a video in response to a youth participation project funded model.

FAN clients have always been willing to assist in the development and evaluation of various projects and programs. In the last year FAN's clients have contributed to two key research projects – "Making a Place To Belong" and "Young Motherhood and Positive Interventions". The latter is currently being conducted in partnership between FAN and Melbourne University Dr Deb keys, and involves young mums sharing their experiences. FAN clients have also participated in a Life Skills survey designed to offer feedback and ideas regarding workshops young people would like to see in the community. These contributions have assisted FAN, Harrison's JPET, and Young People's Resource Centre (YPRC) to develop a new range of programs and workshops for the next six months.

In a survey conducted by FAN in 2005, the growing numbers of young women wanting to complete their education was demonstrated. Client participation in this survey was vital in FAN recognising some areas that young parents saw as barriers in returning to school such as: accessing affordable childcare; lack of confidence in approaching education providers; lack of financial resources to sustain full-time study; and for many it was identified that studying in isolation prevents this goal from being achieved. These client responses led to the concept for the "Get Smart" enhanced education project. FAN is seeking funding and tailored packages to support parenting female clients in successfully completing their education by assisting with addressing barriers and creating opportunities for a combination of sessional, group and self-directed learning. Assisting parenting young women to complete their education will contribute to reducing inter-generational homelessness by giving parents a greater chance of employment and in turn their children a better quality of life.

Over the past 30 years of service delivery to homeless or at risk young people, FAN has actively encouraged client participation in our delivery of services and contributions within the broader community. It has been FAN's experience that fostering a young person's contribution and participation is an empowering involvement for them and an enriching one for FAN.

#### Honorary Life Members:

Many volunteers, committee/board and staff members have contributed their time, efforts and energy to the vision and development of FAN, some however have gone the extra mile in fostering the culture of FAN. Their hard work and conviction have enabled FAN's services to develop and flourish. FAN has acknowledged key people for their individual effort with the presentation of Honorary Life Membership at the Annual General Meeting. Recipients to date include: Olive Clark, Wendy Brooksbank (dec), Caroline Young, Tony Sell (dec), Rex and Sue Filson, Shirley Ingram (Baird) (dec), Leo Clarebrough, Rae Cook, Ted Long, Steve McLoughlin (dec), Debbie Brown, Robert Joynt, Allan Rogerson, David Webster and Sue Carlile. To be updated

#### Acknowledgements:

It is said that we are measured by the company we keep the successes at FAN are measured therefore by the people who have made up the company. In considering those to acknowledge a yardstick on founding status or longstanding contribution, in excess of three years, is the basis. For those whose contribution to FAN has been unacknowledged in this report, please be assured that your input is appreciated and lives on in the legacy of programs and services provided and the difference you have made. To those who played key roles as staff and Board members again your contribution nourished and enhanced the vision of FAN.

#### Committee/Board:

Notable founding and/or long serving members include: Steve McLoughlin, Allan Rogerson, Tony Silke (dec), Tony Sell (dec), Fr Peter Clifford, Br Paul Noonan, Tony Wood, Myrine Long, Ted Long, Phil Gruchy, Bernie Oke, Shirley Baird (dec), Rae Cook, Chris Grace, Paul Linossier, Debbie Brown, Robert Joynt, David, Tolstrup, David Webster, Leo Clarebrough, Gerry Thurlings, Ted Russell, Lynne Hahn. Those who served one term (2 years or less) and provided great assistance to FAN include: Judy Davidson, Tara Frichittavong, Warren Anderson, Chris Menneilly, Kate Coleman. Current Board to be updated

Staff: (Post 2006 staff and volunteers are to be added shortly-apologies if your name is currently missing)

SAAP: As the longest running funded program at FAN the SAAP response has benefited from a diverse, committed and hardworking team who keep on keeping on, including and in order of appointment: Sue Carlile, Helen Ryan, Julie Fisher, Wendy Brooksbank (dec), Faye Reeves, Peter Turley, Brigitte Hammer, Marc Billing, Neil Morrison, Peter Stephenson, Melissa Beers, Lyn Thomas, Vanessa Walker, Anne Tuke, Donna Boon, Steve Hewitt, Kelle Castellano, Yasmin Thomas, Katy Grimes, Carla Di Stefano, Jemmah Drew Victoria Sobh, and Rebecca Granata. Along the way many students on placement and locum workers have contributed to the capacity of both the SAAP and Life Skills Programs, they offered scope for FAN to learn as well as mentor, which has continued to nourish the spirit of reflection. In the last few years two students, Lauren Davidson and Rebecca Granata, have taken on an extended role at FAN with several months of locum work following their placement and in the process contributed much to the work of FAN.

Life Skills: The Life Skills Program has been greatly enhanced by the enthusiasm of its Program Coordinators, Melissa

Urquart, Chrissy Singh, Kelle Castellano, Polly Williams, and Carol Martyn.

Volunteer Program: Sue Carlile, Carol Martyn

Tenancy Support Program: The program was particularly well supported by the dedicated staff team of Cathryn Taylor, Jill Campbell, Christina Andrews and Lynne Hahn.

Finance, Administration and Reception: Lynne Hahn, Cathy Oliver, Kellie Robinson.

Children's Program "Early Years": - Kristie Lennon.

Volunteers: Notable longstanding Volunteers, who offered in excess of five years service to FAN across a broad range of areas including community placement caregivers, mentors and other supports, include: Angela Aaltink, Shirley Baird(dec) and Glen Ingram (dec) Jeannie Baker, Graeme Barnett, Joanne Bevilacqua, Debbie Brown, Natalee Cairns, Tracy Carter, Joanne Close, Rae and Rick Cook (dec), Carmelita Davies, Rex and Sue Filson, Rosemarie Harrison, Dimity and Ian Fifer, Debbie Golding, Maureen Glover, Terry Grayson, Brad Harris, Joanne Hofner, David Holden, Penny Hughes, David Hutchinson, Sue Jackson, Robyn Keleher, Shane Kelleher, Liz Kelly, Kerry Letson, James Leviston, Arlene Lambie, Tim Lockwood, Chris McAleer, Claire and Richard Mataska, Glenda Maxwell and Roy Padmore, Daniel Mellman, Oliver Mellman, Gerri O'Connor, Margaret Ogilvie, Beth Oswald, Jonathon Paschke, Carolyn Pearson, Kerryn Pryde, Tania Reid, Peter Robertson, Sue Rochford, Fiore Rosenberg, Gerard Sharkey, Sharryn Sloper and Joseph Stanley, Michael Sheahan, Andrea Snoxell, Kate Stack, Doug Smith, Cheryl Teng, Ruth and Peter Tesdorpf, Melissa Urquart, Candy Vulling, David Webster, Caroline Young,. If you have been a volunteer of five years standing or longer and have been omitted from this list, please accept my sincere apology.

To everyone else who played a part in the past twenty-five years, thank you for your contribution, encouragement, commitment and support in translating a vision into the reality that is Family Access Network.

Maintaining the vision:

There is a synergy in reflecting on the quarter century of FAN at a point of changing systems, operations, programs, and staffing at FAN. It confirms and affirms that FAN is ever flexible and constantly evolving. It is timely therefore to be in a position of capturing this "snapshot" for the 25th birthday, acknowledging those who have paved the way, reflecting on trends, FAN's current programs and future priorities. The growth and development at FAN, have also contributed to changes within my role and capacity.

In 2004 I relinquished the management of the Volunteer Program, I returned from Long Service Leave in January 2006 to the decision that case managing clients was unsustainable and in May FAN introduced a team leader role to the SAAP service. For someone who is nourished by the mentoring and fostering of volunteers, staff and in particular clients this is a significant direction and challenge. More recently, a Client Services Manager role has been developed which provides further opportunities to delegate some tasks which I have performed for many years. The portfolio system, under regular review, has been inspiring with the depth and range of ideas and enhanced services identified by the staff team. More than one staff member over the years have observed that they were very proud to be a part of FAN "I can only concur. It is pleasing that for a relatively small organisation FAN has contributed to Regional, State and National sector development in its long history. This continues with presentations at National and Statewide conferences, forums and seminars. This snapshot view of FAN demonstrates that offering appropriate, responsive, client focussed and driven services tailored to the needs of homeless and at risk young people, young parents, and accompanying children is embedded in FAN's practice and embraced across all aspects of the organisation.

Sue Carlile

CEO

Homeless young families and accompanying children:  
Background

In the 2004 Annual Report FAN took the unusual step of introducing a trends and issues paper, which summarised the remarkable shift in demographics of the presenting client group. This provided a platform for further investigation at FAN in considering the emerging trends and needs of the current clients and in particular the accompanying children. In summary the compelling data of 6.3% young families of all clients in 1995, to 59.1% in 2004 provided the framework for the paper. Data to June 2007 reflected that 48% of all homeless young people presenting to FAN are pregnant and or parenting, with a total of 62 accompanying children (56 in 2006, 65 in 2005, 54 in 2004). This trend continues, leading to an organisational priority of further developing support to both the young parents and children alike. Of the accompanying children to June 2007, 98.1% were in the 0 " 5 age group, which clearly indicates that addressing issues around attachment and bonding, safety and security are critical to this impressionable age group in fostering their ongoing well-being and development. This requires a commitment to flexible service delivery in consideration of the particular needs of both parents and children.

The Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations in their report, "The Health of Our Homeless Children" 15 years on (2005) identifies that children are the largest sub group of Australia's homeless population with one in every 3



homeless Australian, a child. In a statewide context the Youth Homelessness Action Plan (2004), an outcome of the Victorian Homelessness Strategy, identified that 20% of all homeless young people in the 15 to 25 age group are pregnant or parenting. In 2002 – 2003 data collected by the National Data Collection Agency, 19,850 children in Victoria and 53,700 children across Australia, accompanied their parents into a homeless service.

The high numbers of accompanying children in Victoria indicates a substantial level of demand on SAAP services by families with children. Homelessness services are governed by the SAAP Act, which defines clients as 15 years or over. Community awareness and research

FAN has been active in a considered campaign to maintain the momentum, both within and beyond the homelessness sector, to address the specific needs of young parents. To this end a number of strategies have been employed to build on community and sector awareness, together with efforts to expand FAN's service delivery into identified program growth areas.

FAN is an active participant in the Children in Homelessness Best Practice Group, Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR). This was instrumental in the development of two sector wide snapshots of children accompanying their parents into a homeless service in the EMR. On 1 December 2004 of the 15 services responding, 836 children accompanied their parents into a homeless service on just that one day. The Best Practice Group sought an excellence grant from DHS to further explore this data and is currently surveying services for the development of a best practice discussion paper to be presented at the Homelessness and Family Violence Expo in October 2005.

Project i in partnership with Council to Homeless Persons, undertook research into homeless young people in Victoria with particular emphasis regarding Exclusion/Inclusion. Project i commenced as a five-year comparative study between Los Angeles and Melbourne, tracking the experiences and the outcomes for a particular group of young people. Project i developed a range of broadsheets and reports comparing the experiences and offering data on the scope of interventions and how young people viewed the services offered. The joint research in late 2004 with CHP, represented the final report for Project i, and was undertaken through partnership funding. The research involved interviews with agency managers, staff and young people about their experiences including support needs, accommodation, intervention styles and exclusion. The Report, "Making a Place to Belong", was launched in March 2005 at the State Homelessness forum "Exclusion/Inclusion" facilitated by Council to Homeless Persons, in which FAN participated as a presenter and panel representative. FAN was asked as one of six agencies across Victoria to participate in this project and the statewide forum, as a result of FAN's increasing role and recognition in working with homeless young families.

As a result of the successful contribution to the "Making a Place to Belong" project, FAN was invited to participate in a research proposal with Melbourne University Key Centre for Women's Health. Telstra Foundation has approved the research which will commence in January 2006, with a brief to "inform agencies and policy advisors of effective interventions and provide a resource for homeless young mothers and children." FAN is delighted to work in partnership with the Key Centre for Women's Health and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important research. FAN, together with the Council to Homeless Persons and the Homelessness Advocacy Service, collaborated in a joint submission to the development of a "Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care" (July 2005). Council to Homeless Persons report on the "Policy and Practice Context for Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness" (2005) clearly states that there is a need for prevention of inter-generational homelessness through the recognition of the specialised needs of children.

Program initiatives and funding

Core funding for assistance to homeless young people does not provide resources to accompanying children, although the delivery of case-managed response is seen as implicit to a best practice approach. As a result it has been necessary for FAN and consistent with organisational Strategic Plan priorities to seek alternative funding for an integrated service delivery response to young parents and accompanying children.

In recent years the FAN team has continued to develop project ideas and funding proposals. The portfolio system has enabled a comprehensive overview of the needs of young parents and children, supported by client feedback mechanisms and surveys. In considering the particular needs of pregnant and parenting young women the survey revealed that 40% of FAN's client group expressed an interest in completing their secondary education. However, issues such as: accessing affordable childcare; lack of confidence in approaching education providers; lack of financial resources to sustain full time study; and studying in isolation prevents this goal from being achieved. This led to the proposal for "Get Smart" – an enhanced education program. FAN developed several approaches for funding to support parenting young women in successfully completing their education by assisting in addressing the barriers.

Many homeless people miss out on key information regarding their health and wellbeing through the disruption experienced in their families and also in their access to, or lack of, education. Feedback from young people was sought and the "Youth Health Promotion Day" was developed, which is supported by the Youth In Philanthropy Program, sponsored through the Lord Mayor's Fund. Support workers in conjunction with a Youth Health Steering Committee will facilitate young people's access to education and information in relation to physical, sexual, spiritual and emotional health and wellbeing.

The Life Skills Program, Young Mum's Group continues to be offered to young parenting women, in recognition that many of the clients express a sense of isolation and disconnectedness from the wider community. While this is a targeted response to parenting young women many of the Life Skills Program activities are available to young parents. FAN recognises that participation is often impeded by lack of access to child care. The Volunteer Program offers mentoring to young people, including young parents, and a link into the broader community. Recent enhancements in the Volunteer Program include child play supervisors for onsite appointments at FAN.

A key priority area for FAN which has been realised in recent years has been the employment of an Early Childhood Development Worker, to assist with the developmental, emotional and behavioral needs of the accompanying children. The project seeks to offer timely interventions for children and young people as well as improved capacity for case workers to focus specifically on ensuring that the most appropriate outcomes are achieved for the family without compromising the child's specific needs. The worker would also undertake an integrated role with the Life Skills and the Homeless Support Services young pregnant and parenting clients, who may have their own developmental needs and not necessarily have the skill level or life experience that would best equip them to manage, not only their experience of homelessness, but the particular needs of their children. In the context of early and timely intervention and making a difference, FAN believes offering a tailored service to the accompanying children is critical. Caroline and Derek Young of the Orcadia Foundation and the Box Hill Lions Club have provided seeding funding for this project and FAN has been supported by the encouragement of services and individuals within the Eastern Metropolitan Region and the broader service system within Victoria in the development of the funding proposals toward funding the program, together with personal recommendations and endorsements.