



Family Access Network Autumn Newsletter 2022 - Volume 117 CEO UPDATE

Newsletter – CEO update – March 2022

Welcome to the FAN Autumn Newsletter. Sue Carlile the CEO who usually writes the editorial for the newsletter has just returned from her well-deserved annual leave and long service leave this week, so this newsletter sees you getting the report from me whilst Sue settles back in. For those who haven't met me I am Michelle Thompson, and I am the Manager of the Client Services Team at FAN.

As we continue to operate in covid normal times FAN is continuing to run all of our groups face to face. Descriptions of the groups we run are detailed in the newsletter. Young Mums Group (YMG), Eastern Diversity Group (EDG) and Talking with Pride (TWP). Group participants need to be fully vaxxed to attend the groups. All the staff at FAN have received their booster shots as per the mandate.

2021 COVID-19 had huge impact on our client's overall wellbeing, included severe mental health distress, financial hardship, and social isolation. What was also noticeable was the affect that it had on our client's engagement in education. Long periods of remote learning negatively impacted their academic performance which in turn dented their confidence and thirst for learning. In addition, our clients have expressed their anxieties about returning to study this year.

A grant from Streetsmart provided us with the opportunity to run an informal group session and reflect on how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on their learning in 2021 and have an open conversation about young people's concerns with returning to face-to-face learning in 2022. The grant was also able to cover additional cost with returning to study, this includes laptops, software, and books.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank Melbourne Inclusive Church for kindly donating Christmas hampers for clients in our LGBTIQ Housing properties. We also thank Paul Wendt for providing FAN with a collection of LGBTIQ books which will provide our clients with greater access to queer literature

Regards

Michelle Thompson

Manager – Client Services



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Board update

COVID-19 A personal and professional reflection

Many people have said that the COVID-19 pandemic changed life as we know it—and it may have changed us individually as well, from our morning routines to our life goals and priorities. Others say the world has changed forever.

It is hard to believe that just 2 years ago hardly anyone had heard of COVID-19. If we were to ask now, it would be nearly impossible for anyone not to know about this disease. Many people have either been personally touched by this health issue or know of a friend or family member who has been affected by this disease. Our three year old granddaughter has had this disease twice in the last 6 months. A number of work colleagues have also been affected by COVID-19.

Individuals, work settings, agencies and communities have learned how to both deal and adapt as we move along the timeframe since this disease reached our shores.

So what are some of these learnings?

1- Masks are very useful.

When the pandemic began, it necessitated a global effort to ensure that everyone practiced behaviours to keep themselves healthy and safe—and keep others healthy as well. This included the widespread wearing of masks indoors and outside. By and large Australians have done a great job in this area.

2- Telehealth is here to stay

While there are still problems for which you need to see a doctor in person, the pandemic introduced a new urgency to what had been a gradual switchover to platforms like Zoom for remote patient visits.

3- Vaccines are another good tool to manage health outcomes

COVID-19 vaccines are proving to be powerful for preventing and managing this disease. In spite of the significant failings and issues experienced by our country in relation to the supply and policy framework in this health area, once again Australians have embraced this health programme and have got vaccinated.

4- This pandemic has not affected everyone in the same manner

Research from around the country has indicated that COVID-19 has increased already present inequalities. We know that many people who have insecure work suffered more than those who had stable jobs and were also able to work from. Women and sole parents in particular were also groups for whom COVID-19 had much more significant negative impact than other groups in society.

5- Mental health support services needs to be overhauled

Once again research from around Australia indicates that mental health services have been overwhelmed. The number of people reporting mental health issues has significantly increased over the last 18 months, and this has been described as the “second pandemic”. There is a clear need to review the way mental health services are both accessed by clients as well as how we deliver these services to a wide range of communities around this vast country of ours.

6- The importance of resilience

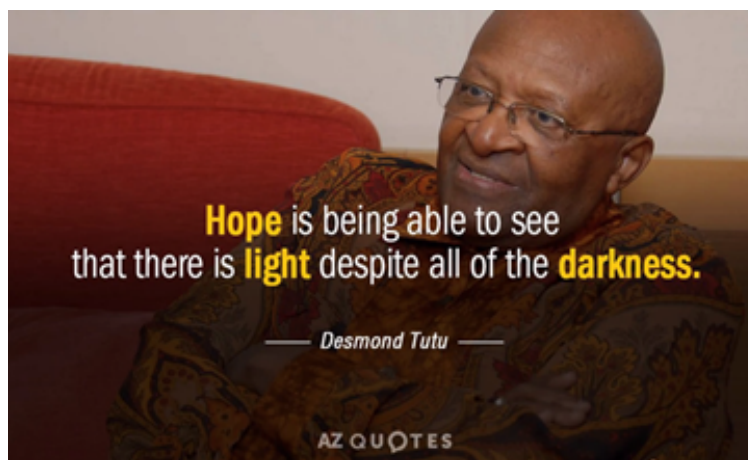
Acknowledging that every person experiences this pandemic in a particular manner, many have also been surprised with their own resilience in this time of crisis. Agencies, such as FAN have also demonstrated their resilience and ability to respond to a variety of clients and funding bodies’ demands, during this time of crisis. From having to wear masks, working partly from home and also in the office, using phone and video facilities to engage with both clients and members of the Board.

A focus for managers, staff and customer on the importance of self-care has been another area of major focus during the COVID-19 time.

7- The significance and importance of belonging

One of the significance issues that COVID-19 has highlighted is the need for people to be part of a community, and the pivotal need to experience human connections. Once again, as a Board member, as well as a senior professional in the human services field, I have become much more aware of how much we need other people – that sense of belonging. As a result of COVID-19, FAN have also needed to adapt to utilise technology to facilitate these connections. Using a blended mode of communicating and engaging with our clients, colleagues and Board members. I have seen firsthand the way FAN staff engage with clients using a trauma informed care model, one that is relationship based, where openness and empathy principles are embedded in their day to day work practices.

Finally as the virus has changed and adapted over time, we have also followed this process and in a fluid way have also changed the way we do things. We have also learnt the power of having a Growth Mindset as well as rediscovering the importance of being humble. Finally I also know that FAN engages with clients using a strengths based practice framework, and now more than ever having a focus on HOPE is so important for all of us. I would like to conclude with a quote from the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu:



Jose Abalo

FAN Deputy Chair

Homeless Support Services

Getting organised for the year!

As we start the year 2022, we want to make sure we are planning the year ahead to feel that we have everything under control. We want to feel like we can manage, with a clear vision, the goals that we want to achieve. FAN have thought of some ideas that you can do at home to create an organised lifestyle.

Decluttering your household

Decluttering your house is so beneficial for an organised home life, I know that we all have things that we just CAN'T get rid of! A way to combat this is making a rule of only keeping things that you have used in the last year, if you haven't used it in the last year, let's be honest, you probably don't need it.... You can apply this to clothes/ ornaments/ toys etc. There are many organisations that would benefit from your kind donations.

Decluttering your house can seem daunting, especially if you have little ones! The trick is to start by sectioning your house into categories. For example, if you know you there's so many things to de-clutter in the Kitchen, section the cupboards, and then the fridge, and then the food pantry. Doing one section per week, or per day (whatever you prefer), can help that overwhelming feeling of not knowing where to start – the answer is start small!

Making schedules for the house

Schedules are an awesome way to visualise how your week is going to look! It helps to prepare your mental state so you can anticipate how energised you need to be for the week. It makes me aware that "I need to get sleep and prepare" otherwise there's a risk of burning out before the week ends, it is also equally beneficial to use this method of visualisation for relaxing weeks that aren't so busy.

We can almost literally create a schedule for anything and everything! When starting my year off, have at least a month in advance planned out, and when appointments are added make sure you check your capacity before agreeing to something, balancing your schedule is crucial.

Schedule for bills, work rosters, house cleaning rosters, (if you have kids) kids rosters, month-month dinner prep plans and catch ups with friends/weddings/events. Knowing all of this and sticking to a schedule will help you be accountable and to adjust where it's needed.

Getting a diary

Your diary should be your best friend, this is like a mini schedule that you can carry around. It will help you remember things and write down appointments that you find out while at work/out/uni. It helps you by freeing your mind of things to remember throughout your day.

We can also get Journals that we can write our feelings and thoughts out, this can help with expressing emotions that you have built up throughout the day.

Being consistent

Being consistent is the key to staying organised but, being consistent doesn't mean that everything must be perfect! It means that we keep trying and getting back up. We follow through with what we had planned, even if it takes an extra year to achieve!

Creating Connections - Private Rental Brokerage Program

The current state of the private rental market is highly competitive which makes it even more difficult for young people to enter into their first private rental lease agreement. Below are some tips to give yourself the edge over other applicants

Cover Letter - Writing an introduction letter to add to your rental application, this is a great way of introducing yourself to a landlord/real estate and provides the opportunity of why you are the right person to rent the house too!

[1Form](#) – Save time with your housing applications and apply for properties online using 1Form. The site allows you to manage all the photocopying, scanning and walks to the post box mailing individual applications. Once you have entered your details you can use the same application to apply for as many properties as you like!

Attending inspections - Arrive on time or preferably early, agents can have busy days and are often rushing from property to property. Be presentable, show that you are serious about the inspection!

Follow up - If you've submitted an application and haven't heard anything for 48 hours, call or send a follow up email. Let them know you're still interested in the property and that you're happy to provide any additional documentation.

If you're ready to start looking and applying and would like with your private rental search then contact a Youth Support worker at FAN on 9890 2673 or by email fan@fan.org.au

Children's Program

The Children's Program - Early Years provides timely support to young pregnant / parenting families and their accompanying children, providing them with appropriate services and therapeutic interventions. The program provides the framework to ensure FAN's physical space, resources, work practice and policies are consistent with and operating at best practice to support a child safe environment.

The Children and Young Families Support Worker is committed to providing a range of early interventions for children and to act as a resource for parent's staff and volunteers by conducting educational workshops and information sessions on current underlying issues regarding children.

Recently the program was able to fund an infant's cot and mattress. This timely purchase was able to provide relief for one of our young mums who was experiencing financial difficulties.

For information on the current or future programs please contact FAN on 9890 2673

Pathways to Resilience - Talking With Pride

Talking with Pride is an arts-based therapeutic group for LGBTIQ+ young people (ages 15-25) who have experienced family violence. Experiences of family violence include having their identity and/or appearance being dismissed, controlled or put down by parents, siblings, and/or partners.

The group meets weekly on Tuesday afternoons at 3.30pm during school terms. The program centres around healing and recovery and topics include self-care, character strengths, mindfulness, healthy relationships and positive emotions. For Term 1 we are working on a pottery project that build awareness of the impacts of family violence on self and identity. If you or someone you know would be interested in participating, please contact Jess on 9890 2673 or jinnes-irons@fan.org.au

Life Skills

Eastern Diversity Group

Eastern Diversity Group (EDG) is an LGBTIQ+ social support group for young people aged 15-26 who are of diverse gender identities, expressions, sexualities, and/or sex characteristics. EDG runs every Thursday from 3-4.45pm during the school term and is a safe and inclusive space for LGBTIQ+ young folk to catch-up and participate in fun activities.

Activities for Term 1 include arts and crafts, rainbow bracelets, picnic, guest speakers, indoor plants, picnic, op shopping and more!

EDG is currently running face to face and participants are required to be fully vaccinated to attend activities.

Call us on 9890 2673 or send an email to fan@fan.org.au if you're interested in joining the group. EDG is a great place to meet some new people and have fun some fun!

Young Mum's Group

Young Mums group is a social support group for young mums aged 15-25. We facilitate activities through the school terms every year. We run YMG on a Monday from 12-2pm and Term 1 has officially started. We usually run our group at Burgess Family Centre, but Due to Covid-19, they are still not open for external organizations to reserve their rooms. We have been lucky enough to book Youth Connexions for the first couple of weeks.

This year FAN is extremely excited to start Term 1 in person!! We have come up with a lot of exciting activities including, sip n paint, belly dancing, macrame, and sewing.

If you are interested in joining the group, please contact Vanita on 9890 2673 or vharris@fan.org.

Eastern Diversity Group - Pride March

As part of the Midsumma Festival, EDG recently attended Pride March in St Kilda. It was an early start to a warm day but everyone managed to arrive on time and we started the day with coffees to celebrate. We then waited in the marshalling area where we had time to chat, check out the various costumes and rainbow outfits on display (including dressed up dogs!) and order some food from the food trucks. We were summoned to join the start of the parade by the thundering roar of the Dykes on Bikes who open the parade each year in honour of their work protecting LGBTIQ people in the 1980s. We then marched as a group down Fitzroy St as part of the youth contingent before looping back to watch the rest of the parade. After the parade ended, we went and checked out the new Pride Centre where we were also able to access the Fab Jab walk up clinic for COVID-19 booster shots. The day was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended, and we are looking forward to a bright and sparkly return in 2023!



Volunteers

In the first week of March FAN had Susie Lukis the State-wide Children's Resource Coordinator for the East do a training session on Children and Trauma and how being homeless contributes to this for our volunteers and mentors at our office in Box Hill. This provided a great opportunity for all our volunteers to come together again. The training was well received and generated some thought provoking and informative discussions.

There are currently vacancies for volunteer mentors. If you have any enquiries about our volunteer programs please contact Michelle on 9890 2673 or mthompson@fan.org.au

Client Feedback - Have your voice heard!

At Family Access Network, we strive to provide the best support and services to our clients. A big part of ensuring that FAN is delivering the best possible support is receiving and implementing the feedback received by our clients.

Listening and acknowledging the clients voice allows us to keep our services up to date as well as change aspects of our services if necessary. Feedback loops are critically important. As part of quality governance, continuous improvement, and good practice, it is essential that the client voice is not only sought and heard, but that it is genuinely used to influence change and the feedback loop is closed.

FAN clients in our HSS & PRBR programs have expressed how grateful they are for the support, not only financially but emotionally as well.

Below are some examples of the feedback FAN has received.

"I just want to say thank you to support you have shown me in your service"

"Thank you so much supporting me with moving into my first private rental, having the support really helped with the stress of moving"

"The staff were kind and were always willing to listen and provide me with help"

*"I have joined EDG the people....I love just talking and having fun together
Like just being friendly together"*

Thank you for your support!

City of Whitehorse
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Youth Week Grant)
Department of Premier & Cabinet (Home Affairs)
Eastern Emergency Relief
KevCom
Kogo
Linc
Lion's Club Box Hill
Melbourne Inclusive Church
Orcadia Foundation - Caroline & Derek Young
Pride Foundation
Ringwood Magistrates Court
Salvation Army Housing
Share the Dignity
St Kilda Mum's
Street Smart
Youth Connexions - Whitehorse City Council
Ange Morgan
Dr. Cal Andrews
Malcolm Romano of Designsense Web
Paul Linossier
Annerleigh Pappos
Paul Wendt

Useful Contacts

Housing Assistance

Eastern Region Opening Doors 1800 825 955
Melbourne City Mission Youth Support 9614 3688

Crisis Counselling

Lifeline – 24hrs 13 11 14
Suicide Helpline- 24hrs 1300 651 251
Kids Help Line – 24hrs 1800 551 800
Mens Line 1300 789 978
Parentline 13 22 89

Sexual Assault

Eastern CASA 9895 3281
Sexual Assault Crisis Line 1800 806 292

Health

Family Planning Victoria 9257 0100
Maternal & Child Health line 13 22 29
Nurse On Call – 24hrs 1300 60 60 24

Domestic Violence

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre 1800 015 188
The Orange Door - Inner Eastern Melbourne 1800 354 322
Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS) 9259 4200

Child Abuse

Child Protection Crisis Line 13 12 78
Child Abuse Prevention Services 1800 688 009

Legal Aid

Eastern Community Legal Centre Box Hill 9285 4822
Boronia 9762 6235

Alcohol & Drugs

Direct Line 24hrs 1800 888 236
Youth drug and alcohol advice (YoDDA) - 24hrs 1800 458 685
Eastern Consortium of Alcohol and Drug Services (ECADS) 1800 778 278

Sexuality & Gender Identity

Gay and Lesbian Switchboard 9663 2939
Transgender Victoria 9517 6613