



FAN

Family Access Network Summer Newsletter 2021 - Volume 116

CEO UPDATE

Newsletter – CEO update – December

Welcome to the FAN Summer newsletter – we are a few weeks away from Christmas and for me and no doubt many others, this will be the first time for two years to spend it with all of my family. The impact on all of us over the last two years has been huge and heightens our awareness of what it is like to be disconnected from important people in our lives. For many of the people who are supported in homelessness, family violence, mental health and other allied services the disconnection is something they experience already, navigating access to services during a pandemic where in person contact was not always possible, compounded the isolation. I know for FAN and many of the organisations we work with, every effort was put into maintaining meaningful engagement, however we recognise that the last two years has taken a toll. We hope 2022 will be a better year for everyone.

It's been a huge year on so many levels, we developed a new Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024, we found ways to acknowledge the 40th Anniversary of FAN and I personally found this to be a very moving experience as I connected with former clients, staff, board and volunteers from the last 40 years, many of whom prepared testimonials which are available to read in the Annual Report. Across all of our programs we supported substantially more clients, and in some programs double and close to triple the funded targets. We maintained all of our client services, life skills programs and groups, case management, homelessness, family violence therapeutic and other responses throughout, I am very proud of the team for their ongoing commitment and flexibility in navigating between in person and online, preparing and delivering care packs for clients, and all the additional covid safety requirements, including 100% of all staff double vaccinated well established prior to the mandating.

Although we were unable to hold the AGM in October in person, we held it via zoom and as we do each year, acknowledged the achievements of clients – Daniel Cutts, Patricia Fuge, Alex Mitchell & Sophie Howard. We were delighted to have a FAN 40th BBQ with staff, clients and board representatives on 1 December.

The newsletter contains lots of important updates on what has been happening at FAN, please do take the time to read.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following for their support to FAN in recent months, thank you, your support goes directly to our clients and assists them to achieve their goals:

- All those who contributed on GiveOUT Day a national day of giving to LGBTIQ+ projects, community groups, and not-for-profit organisations.
- Paul Linossier
- Annerleigh Pappos

I would like to conclude the newsletter by acknowledging International Volunteer Day on 5 December
Regards

Sue Carlile



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Board update

Summer is just around the corner and my afternoon reflections drift toward the upcoming bushfire season and what it may have in store for us. I wonder if we have learnt from what science has told us. Why did one house burn while an apparently similar one, perhaps on an adjacent block, survive?

My thoughts take me back 12 years, to 7 February 2009. My day had started early with the opening of Sportlink in Vermont South. I remember, a group of us were discussing how uncomfortable the weather was, blissfully unaware of what was to come.

In the days that followed, 173 people tragically lost their lives, 414 were injured, 3,500 buildings including 2,029 houses were destroyed, more than a million native and domesticated animals were lost, and 450,000 hectares of land was burned. Black Saturday was to go down as the worst natural disaster in Australian history.

26 years earlier, on Wednesday 16 February 1983, my husband and I were sitting at a table in our local restaurant waiting for my sister-in-law and her husband to join us for dinner. As the night wore on, people were arriving with stories of chaos and road closures, so we just assumed they had been held up. The atmosphere was oppressive, the air stifling and the overhead fans were struggling, so the door was propped open in the hope it would provide some relief. The restaurant, normally full of chatter on a weeknight was eerily quiet.

Through the open door, in came a dog and quick as a flash pinched a bread roll from a basket on the edge of the table. This eased the tension somewhat and chatter started to resume. A short while later, a couple arrived telling us of the devastation. The room once again fell into a sombre silence. We ate and went home, still not hearing from my husband's sister and her husband.

We heard the following day, their house had been one of the casualties, The Belgrave Heights/Upper Beaconsfield fire had started around 3.30 the previous afternoon and ended up with the tragic loss of 21 lives, 9,200 hectares and 238 houses and outbuildings. Thankfully, they were unharmed.

Many friends and relations were quick to step in and help. My husband was a keen photographer, so he was able to replace many precious photos, but all this turned out not to be enough. They rebuilt their home and moved back in.

They endured several smaller bushfires between Ash Wednesday in 1983 and Black Saturday in 2009. I only found out recently that every day for years after Ash Wednesday, before my sister-in-law left for work, she would place all her valuables in the dishwasher as that was the only place not affected by the 1983 fire that had destroyed her home. During these years, there were many occasions where they were prevented from or could not bring themselves to return home.

Then, 26 years later, on Black Saturday, 7 February 2009, they had attended a play in the city, stayed for lunch and were driving home along Burwood Highway, when suddenly my brother-in-law stopped the car, hung his head, and said what they had both been thinking. They couldn't go home! They had reached Upper Ferntree Gully and could smell the smoke. The memories and trauma came flooding back. They turned the car around, drove away from the smoke and spent the next couple of nights with friends.

They did finally return, to find their house untouched, but the psychological damage was entrenched. They were never to live in their beautiful house in Belgrave again. They purchased elsewhere and moved out as soon as they could.

Sadly, due to our climate and dry terrain, we will continue to be susceptible to bush fires, however, we should never under-estimate the long-term and deep-rooted impact these events have on people, never take for granted that because their lives have been spared and their possessions replaced, everything is OK. Certainly, the fact they are alive is a blessing however, the intense heat and strong north winds will forever bring back the memories.

Scientific research has taught us a lot since then. Researchers have found that most houses were likely to have caught fire under ember attack and sometimes ignited an hour or more after the flame front had passed.

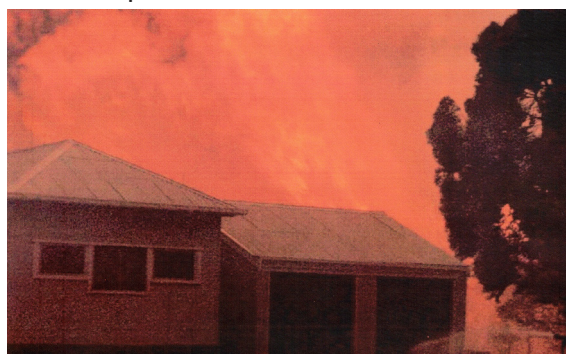
Subsequent research has shown the materials used in house construction, the design of homes to prevent embers getting into unseen areas, garden layout and design and indeed the type of plants we use in our gardens – even how and where we place a home on a building block; are all factors that can affect house 'survivability' in a bushfire.

In 1983, the principle that "houses save people and people save houses" was not well understood. Today, it is the guiding principle for bushfire survival that continues to be reinforced each spring and summer.

As a result of considerable research, backed by anecdotal evidence, we know that most people killed in bushfires are those who flee at the last moment. Australia has become the first country in the world to actively promote the 'Stay and Defend Your Property or Go Early' approach by residents in fire-prone areas.

The current climate change debate is clearly a complex one and, in the context of bushfires, must also be viewed in conjunction with the nature of much of Australia's native vegetation. This vegetation has a complex evolutionary, and dependent relationship with fire. Fire has been part of these environments for tens of thousands of years and much native flora and fauna remains dependent on it in various ways. Science must continue to assess the implications of a hotter world and an increase in fire.

Raylene Carr



Homeless Support Services

Self-care summer

Let's face it, the world has been a strange place to live over the past couple of years and as things are finally returning to "normal" we need to remember that just as it took time to adjust to life in lockdown, it is going to take us time to readjust to life around people again. Throughout this period, it is important to take some time out for yourself to practice self-care. Self-care is about knowing when you need a break and taking the time to do things you enjoy look after yourself emotionally and physically. FAN has put together a some of our favorite self-care strategies to help you have a self-care summer.

Create your own playlist

There are not many things in the world that can make us feel as happy as listening to our favorite songs. Create a playlist of all the tunes that put a pep in your step. If you are not sure what songs to put on your playlist you can get ideas for songs by searching already made playlists or googling song ideas. Search ideas include "feel good music" "music that makes you smile" "happy music" "music that make you want to dance", "best songs to sing along to".

Get some sun

Finally! We can go outside for more than two hours just as the sun is coming out (well, sort of) and there are so many benefits to being in the sun than getting a great tan (remember to slip, slop, slap!). Sunlight produces a bunch of great hormones the which can make us feel happier, help lower stress levels, and help with sleep. Studies show that you can start feeling positive effects from the sun from just 15 minutes. Try to work going outside into your day. Go for a walk, have your breakfast outside or even go sit in the sun while you scroll through social media.

Screen time

Yes. We are giving you permission to spend time watching your favorite show, movie, streamer or youtuber, we are also giving you permission to play your favorite video game. When done in moderation, screen time can be a way to escape a rough day, relieve stress and hit the reset button.

Animals

Puppies and kittens are the absolute cutest, but they are also super good at making us feel better. Whether you have your own pet to cuddle and pat while you listen to your new playlist, take them for a walk in the sun or lay next to while you play a video game or watch your favorite show. If you don't have a pet, that's ok! Cute animal Tiktok or Youtube is another way to get those sweet animal feels flowing.



Creating Connections - Private Rental Brokerage Program

It has been another disruptive year as COVID-19 and the lockdowns continue to challenge and create additional hurdles to help our clients obtain long-term stable housing, this has been particularly challenging for young people who are hoping to crack into the private rental market for the first time.

There have been limited opportunities for open inspections and there have been further difficulties with booking private inspection at an appropriate time. Despite the challenges, the last 3 months we have assisted several young people with acquiring their first private rental. They were supported through their application process with cover letters, references and though advocacy with the real estates and landlords. Additionally, they were financially supported with those shock cost that come with moving into your first home.

As we come out of lockdown the private rental tends to become even more competitive, if you're ready to start looking and applying and would like an edge to help you obtain your private rental t 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 there accompanying children, providing them with appropriate services and therapeutic interventions. The Children's Program -Early Years 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.

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 group for LGBTIQ+ young people (ages 15-25) who have experienced family violence. Experiences of family violence includes 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 4pm during school terms. The program center around healing and recovery and topics include self-care, character strengths, mindfulness, healthy relationships, helpful people, and positive emotions.

The group is currently conducting intake so if you or someone you know would be interested in participating, please contact, Jess, on 9890 2673 or jinnes-irons@fan.org.au

Austbrokers Countrywide Insurance Brokers

Over 20 years ago a member of the FAN board David Tolstrup owned an Insurance Brokers business and the staff there would purchase individual gifts for the children of clients at FAN each year. Even many years after David sold the business the staff at Austbrokers Countrywide continued with great generosity to purchase the children Christmas presents. The last two years has seen Christmas parties change at FAN with COVID 19. In 2020 staff delivered contactless hampers and presents to clients with no party.

This year in 2021 we were able to have a bbq in a park so we could all social distance and be outside remaining covid safe. FAN made a decision not to seek presents this year to be covid safe. When advised of this Paul from Austbrokers Countrywide said they would still like to contribute and donated a generous donation towards the bbq. FAN would like to thank Paul and the team for their ongoing support. We hope in 2022 we can have a more normal Christmas party which includes presents for children.



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 3:30- 5 during the school term and is a safe and inclusive space for LGBTIQ+ young folk to catch-up and participate in fun activities.

After a long period of enduring weekly catchups over Zoom thanks to COVID-19, We can now happily announce that EDG has finally returned to face to face!

Currently, participants are required to be fully vaccinated to attend any activities that are not exclusively outdoors.

Call us on 9890 2673 or send an email to HEcho@fan.org.au if you're interested in joining the

Young Mum's Group

The Young Mum's Group had slowed down due to lockdown mid-year and going back to Zoom. FAN was extremely adaptable and created new fun things to do online. In Term 4 we have held online games, send lunches out to the mum's, sent activities, baked, and gained a few new mums during Term 3/4.

We are extremely excited to welcome everyone back to group in person! Since opening we have been going to local parks, Café's, and plan to go to playcentre's as soon as they open. We are still waiting for Family Burgess Family Centre to open, and then we will resume having mum's group there. YMG is running every Wednesday from 12-2pm. If you are interested in joining or would like more information you can contact Vanita on 9890 2673 or email her on vharris@fan.org.au



Volunteers

In October FAN delivered LGBTIQ+ 101 Training for our volunteers and mentors at our office in Box Hill. This provided a great opportunity for all our volunteers to come together for the first time. The training was well received which generated some thought provoking and informative discussions

There are currently no volunteer vacancies, if you have any enquiries about our volunteer programs please contact Michelle on 9890 2673 or mthompson@fan.org.au

FAN 40th AGM

In October FAN held our 40th AGM online via Zoom, congratulations to all members who were re-elected to the board. We would like to once again acknowledge the achievements of our clients and thank those who were present to celebrate the occasion. It was the second consecutive year that the AGM was held online, for most of the part it was smoothly run but it wouldn't be an online event without the odd technology glitch. In 2022, we are very much looking forward to returning to an in-person event for the 41st AGM.



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 Michelle and Lyn for their amazing help during the year and a half of me working with them and even up until now the family access network has supported me moving into my first private rental and I couldn't of done it without them. Also for Kate from salvos for recommending me to family access and having a first safe and comfortable home to live in"

"You guys are amazing you might not know or hear it a lot but you're helping me to change my life a lot by doing this I can't thank you enough. Thank you so much Miles"

"Empathetic staff who listened to my unique concerns and tailored support to best meet my needs"

"They (FAN) were very helpful with assisting us financially to move into our new house."

Thank you for your support!

Austbrokers Countrysde (Staff)
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
All donations for GiveOUT day

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 Substance Abuse Services – 24hrs 1800 458 685
Eastern Drug & Alcohol Services 1300 650 705

Sexuality & Gender Identity

Gay and Lesbian Switchboard 9663 2939
Transgender Victoria 9517 6613