

F R M P
 FAMILY RECONCILIATION
 MEDIATION PROGRAM



**Family
 Reconciliation
 Mediation
 Program**

Report

**January –
 December
 2009**

Prepared by the
 Family Reconciliation
 Mediation Program
 team, February 2010

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
1.0 Sector Capacity Building	3
1.1 Professional Development Forum	3
1.2 Peer Support Group Network Meetings.....	3
1.3 SAAP Family Reconciliation Worker Network Meeting.....	4
1.4 Agency visit and sector network involvement	4
2.0 Brokerage Interventions	5
2.1 FRMP Statistics for Reporting Period (Jan – Dec 2009)	5
2.2 Feedback from Interventions	7
2.3 Groupwork	8
3.0 Other News.....	9
4.0 Summary	9

Introduction

The Family Reconciliation Mediation Program (FRMP) was developed to strengthen the capacity of the Homelessness Services Sector (HSS) to:

1. Assist newly homeless (up to six months) young people to resolve conflicts and re-establish relationships with family and significant others.
2. Assist young people who have been out of home for longer periods of time to re-establish family connections.
3. Develop and integrate new practice models and tools into the broader HSS which lead to improved relationships of young people with their families and where possible facilitate a return home or to extended family.

Five years on, FRMP's achievements have exceeded expectations. The program continues to provide substantial brokerage resources for Family Mediation and Reconciliation as well as continuing to deliver a range of community capacity building initiatives and sector development to support youth focused, family inclusive practice within the youth homelessness sector.

This report outlines the key achievements of FRMP over 2009, with the highlights given to sector capacity building and brokerage intervention.

1.0 Sector Capacity Building

Community development has been an integral component of FRMP's work. FRMP is continuously building on its partnerships with agencies in the Youth Homelessness Sector to increase the capacity to respond to young people using a youth focused and family inclusive practice.

1.1 Professional Development Forum

FRMP organises Professional Development Forums across Victoria to provide opportunities for sector enhancement of practice, as well as bringing together the homelessness sector, family inclusive programs and counsellors/ psychologists. "An Afternoon with FRMP - Family Mediation" was organised in September 2009.

1.2 Peer Support Group Network Meetings

The Family Reconciliation Peer Support Meetings have been continued to be facilitated through capacity building. FRMP consulted with workers about the value of network meetings and feedback has shown that the Peer Support Group Meetings are valued highly. These groups provides an opportunities for sector enhancement of family inclusive practice, information sharing and peer reflection.

1.3 SAAP Family Reconciliation Worker Network Meeting

During the reporting period, FRMP has hosted four forums for the SAAP Family Reconciliation workers to provide them with the opportunity to share learnings, network and engage in professional development through guest speakers and workshops that included grief and loss, step families and working with young people and families from CALD communities.

1.4 Agency visit and sector network involvement

A key component of capacity building within FRMP is its commitment to networking and relationship building. FRMP continues to build working relationships with a variety of service providers to help build the profile of youth focused family inclusive practice into agencies' culture and case work practice. This is achieved by ongoing participation in homelessness network meetings, council youth services network meetings and allied health networks.

FRMP presented at the state-wide Indigenous Homelessness Network meeting in December 2009 and provided an update on FRMP's initiatives.

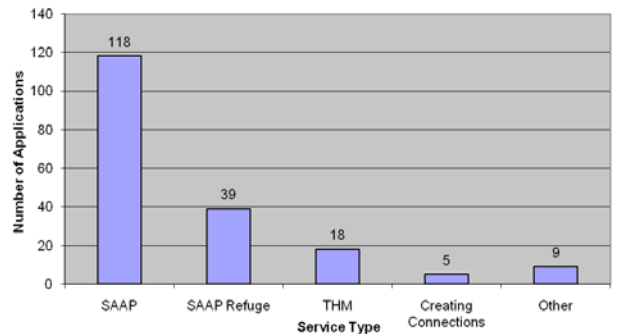
2.0 Brokerage Interventions

During the reporting period, 189 young people accessed brokerage funds and 6 group work initiatives were funded.

2.1 FRMP Statistics for Reporting Period (Jan – Dec 2009)

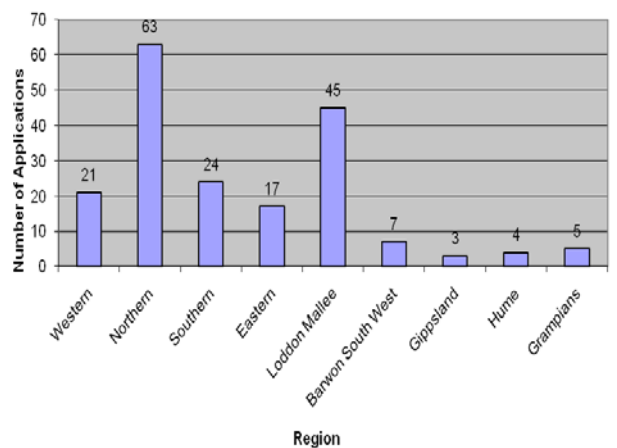
Graph 1: FRMP applications approved by service type.

As illustrated here, most brokerage applications (62%) came from SAAP services. 39 applications were made by refuges and 18 from THM. The rest were from Creating Connections and other services.



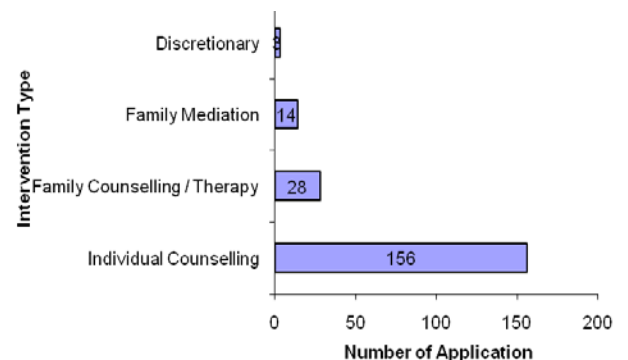
Graph 2: FRMP applications approved by region.

Graph 2 shows that within metropolitan Melbourne, most applications (63) were from the northern area. The Loddon Mallee region, by far, has more application approved (45) than any other regional area.



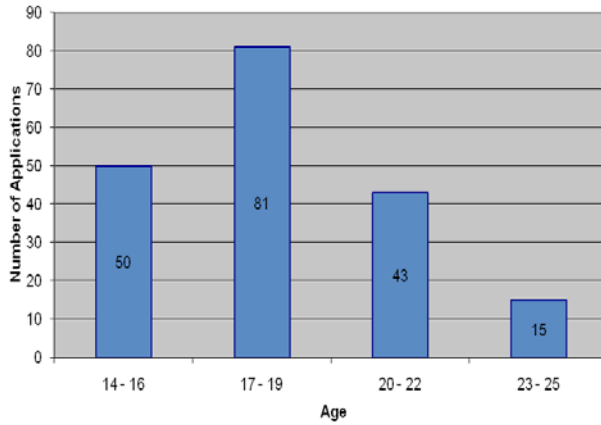
Graph 3: FRMP applications approved by intervention type.

From the breakdown of funded intervention types, individual counselling (156 out of 187) is clearly the most common. Most young people accessing FRMP brokerage choose individual counselling as the initial step for family reconciliation process.



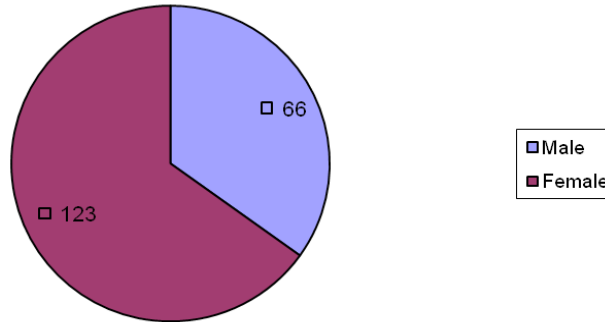
Graph 4: FRMP applications approved by age of young people

Graph 4 shows that young people aged below 20 years are the main group accessing FRMP brokerage for family reconciliation.



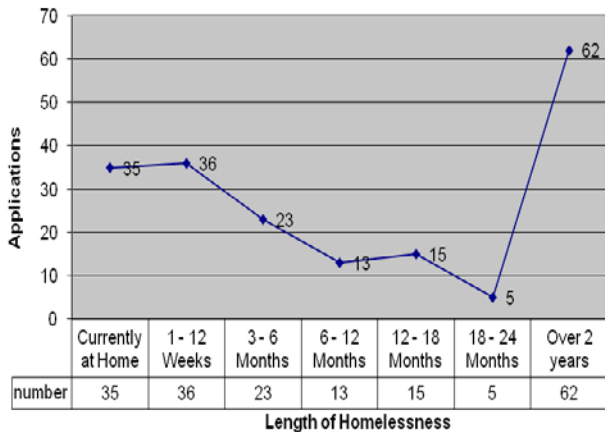
Graph 5: FRMP applications approved by gender

Among the young people who requested brokerage for family reconciliation, the number of females still outweighed males; 123 females, in contrast to 66 males, as shown in Graph 5.



Graph 6: FRMP applications approved by length of homelessness

It has been reported previously that young people are most likely to access interventions when they are either (a) homeless for less than 6 months, including those who are still at home but at-risk, or (b) if their homelessness experience is longer than two years. The statistics collected in this report period reveals a similar trend.



Graph 7: FRMP applications approved by cultural identity

Graph 7 shows the cultural identity of young people who accessed FRMP brokerage within the report time. 85% (151 out of 189) of young people are Australian while 12% (31 out of 189) are from CLD and 3% (7 out of 189) indigenous backgrounds.



2.2 Feedback from Interventions

FRMP recognises the importance of family to everyone, especially disadvantaged young people. By providing brokerage funds for young people to engage in professional interventions, FRMP endeavours to establish or rebuild their connection with their families, which ultimately is expected to lead to an improvement in their well being, living situation stabilisation, and if appropriate, returning home.

The “connection” with families appears in various ways. It can result in young people eventually returning home or it can simply be the improvement of the communication between young people and their families. In some cases, returning home is not the best option for young people. Even if there is no possibility for a young person to reconcile with his or her family of origin, he or she can still be assisted to deal with the impact of family-related issues and put their life back on track.

Regular meetings with families and increased honesty with families are among the many positive outcomes reflected from FRMP’s feedback:

“They now get along much better, young person has remained living at home and they have a positive relationship and understand one another’s needs now.”

“The intervention has benefited the young person immensely. The intervention has given the young person a chance to reconnect with his family and meet with his family on a weekly basis.”

It is also evident that FRMP-funded interventions have made an important contribution to the overall case management of young people, as shown the feedback below:

“The young person has returned to live at the family home with her parents. ... The young person stated it gave her the confidence & strategies to discuss difficult topics with her parents in a positive manner. The young person stated their relationship is ‘the best since I can remember’ ”

“The young person has now moved in with his maternal grandmother and is attending school quite regularly”

Feedback from young people and their families who were assisted by FRMP brokerage, has shown they have been “better off” after engagement in interventions.

“Thank you to everyone for helping me. It has been great”

“I am able to talk about things with my family better and there are a lot less fights”

2.3 Groupwork

In addition to individual interventions, FRMP funds Group Work which utilises therapeutic approaches in a less formal form. Six Group Work projects have been run in this report period, shown in the table below:

Organisation	Type of Group
Youth for Christ	Sailing on – Bush Therapy Program
Baywest Youth Housing	Girl Stars
Salvation Army Crisis Services The Young Women's Outreach Program	Relationship, sexual health and family planning workshop
Catchment Youth Services	Copping it Sweet
St Luke's	Mad Monday's
Salvation Army Crisis Services The Young Women's Outreach Program	Relationship, sexual health and family planning workshop

Based on the feedback collected from previous Group Work projects, it was observed that young people with similar experiences benefit from participating together in specially designed group interventions. In a group context they have opportunities to share their experiences, to explore issues, to be encouraged by peers and get professional guidance and assistance in dealing with these issues. Some young people attending Group Work sessions followed this up with individual interventions.

3.0 Other News

In July 2009, Dr Phil Crane, a senior lecturer at the University of Queensland, visited Melbourne Citymission. Dr.Phil has interests in human services policy and practice and his major interests include early intervention, youth homelessness. An afternoon with Phil and the FRMP team made a great discussion on early intervention, homelessness and family inclusive practices.

FRMP contributed three articles to CHP's Parity journal:

March edition: Mandy Baxter, "It's time for early intervention to take centre stage" and Amy Carson, "Family reconciliation: early intervention or a timely response?"

September edition: Mandy Baxter: Parenting young - homelessness and 'babes in arms': The young pregnant and parenting program (YAPP)."

In September 2009 the final report of "Does Camping Count?" Children's experiences of homelessness, was launched by Dr Deb Keys, Senior Housing and Homelessness Research Officer in the Research and Social Policy Unit at Melbourne Citymission. The research was in partnership with the Salvation Army Melbourne Central Division Research and Advocacy Fund, the Council to Homeless Persons, Melbourne Citymission, and the Family Access Network. The research is the first of its kind in its focus on the experiences of children, through their own words.

In October 2009 Council to Homeless Persons hosted the "Making it Home" Homelessness Conference. Early Intervention was the foremost theme of the conference as well as in the workshops. Dr Phil Crane was a keynote speaker focusing on Early Intervention in homelessness and Mandy Baxter delivered a workshop on engaging with family along with Tim More, Les Earnshaw and Jenny Tomlin who did a fantastic job in facilitating the workshop.

4.0 Summary

FRMP aims to continue working on key capacity building initiatives in 2010 as well as delivering an effective brokerage component. FRMP looks forward to 2010 and continuing to support family inclusive practice within youth homelessness across Victoria. Please continue to refer to our website: www.frmp.org.au for current information about our program.

