



Family Reconciliation Mediation Program

Six Month Report

Year 4: July – December 2008

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5.0 Summary

1.0 Introduction

The Family Reconciliation Mediation Program (FRMP) continues to support family inclusive practice within the Youth Homelessness Service Sector through its brokerage component and capacity building initiatives across Victoria.

This report documents the period of July – December 2008 and includes information that highlights:

- ⇒ Brokerage interventions,
- ⇒ Capacity building initiatives, and
- ⇒ Future directions for the program.

1.1 Key Points

During the reporting period, 112 young people accessed brokerage funds and three group work initiatives were funded. Of the 112 young people who accessed brokerage, 5.3% identified as Indigenous which is on par with the Victorian SAAP Data 2005/2006 being 5.4% of SAAP clients identifying as Indigenous. To ensure the continuity of access to brokerage, FRMP continues to be involved with the Victorian Indigenous Statewide Homelessness Network and regularly attends the quarterly meetings.

FRMP has also continued to deliver professional development forums across Victoria which have been tailored to the needs of the region. During the reporting period professional development forums have been held in Hume, Barwon South West, Gippsland and Melbourne regions.

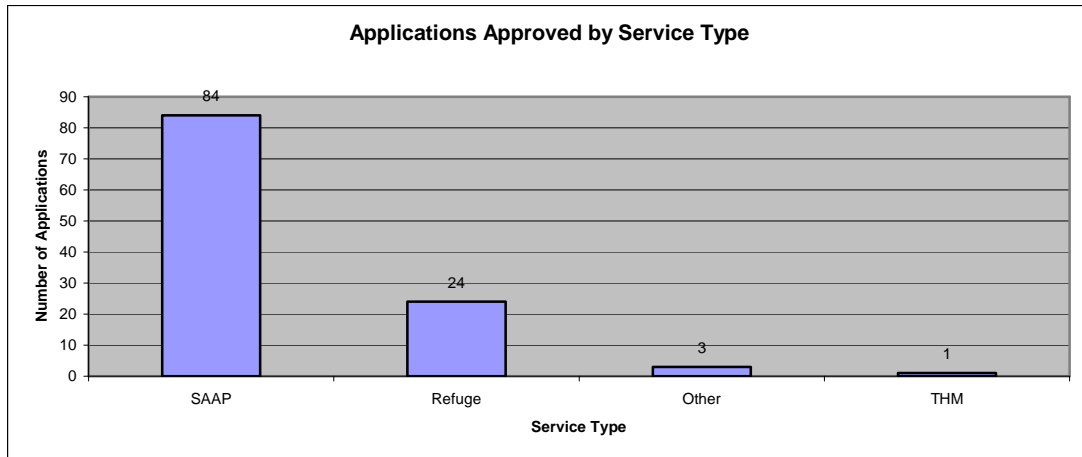
In addition, Family Reconciliation Peer Support Groups in the Eastern Metropolitan Region have continued to be facilitated and two new groups in the Southern and North West Region have been established.

The SAAP Family Reconciliation workers continued to be an important focus for the FRMP program. During this report period FRMP hosted a number of network meetings that included professional development specifically for these workers. FRMP has also supported the mapping project of these roles which was completed by Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) and there have been regular updates provided at these network meetings.

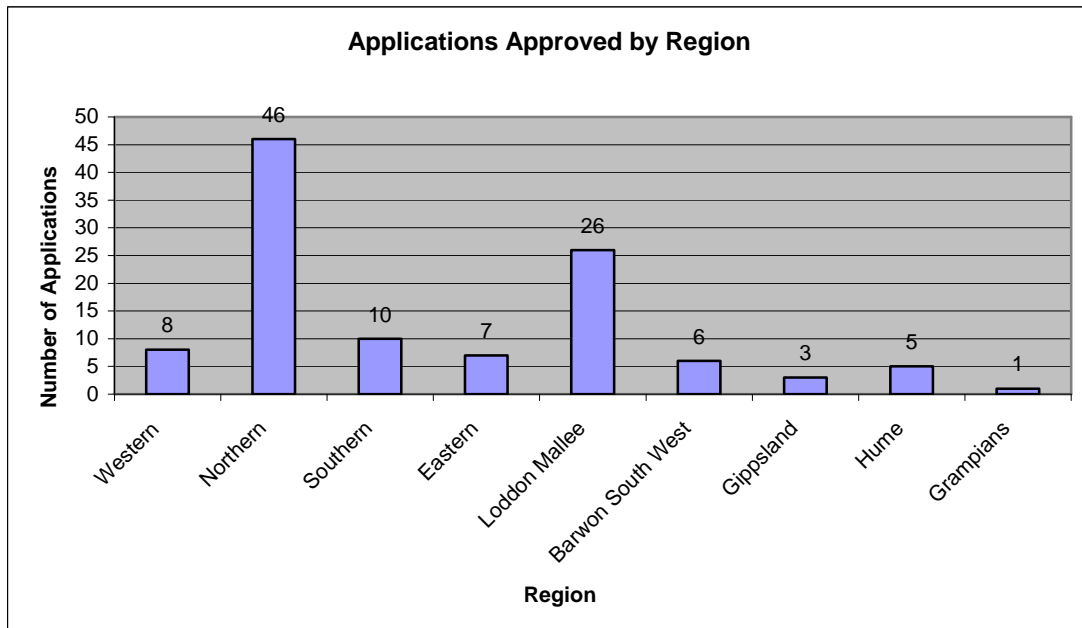
During the reporting period, Thomson Goodall Associates' evaluation of the YHAP1 initiatives was released which included FRMP. The evaluation highlighted many of the positive aspects of FRMP and the success in providing an effective statewide model. There were also recommendations for FRMP which included obtaining concrete data on the link between FRMP and housing stability for young people accessing SAAP services. Given this recommendation, FRMP has updated feedback forms to include a specific question about housing stability as well as designing a project to 'track' young people following a FRMP funded intervention.

2.0 Brokerage Interventions

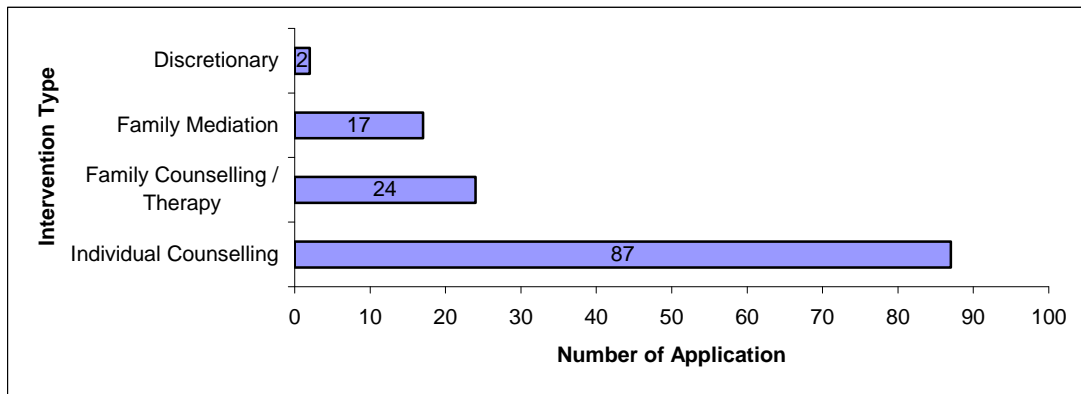
2.1 FRMP Statistics for Reporting Period (July – December 2008)



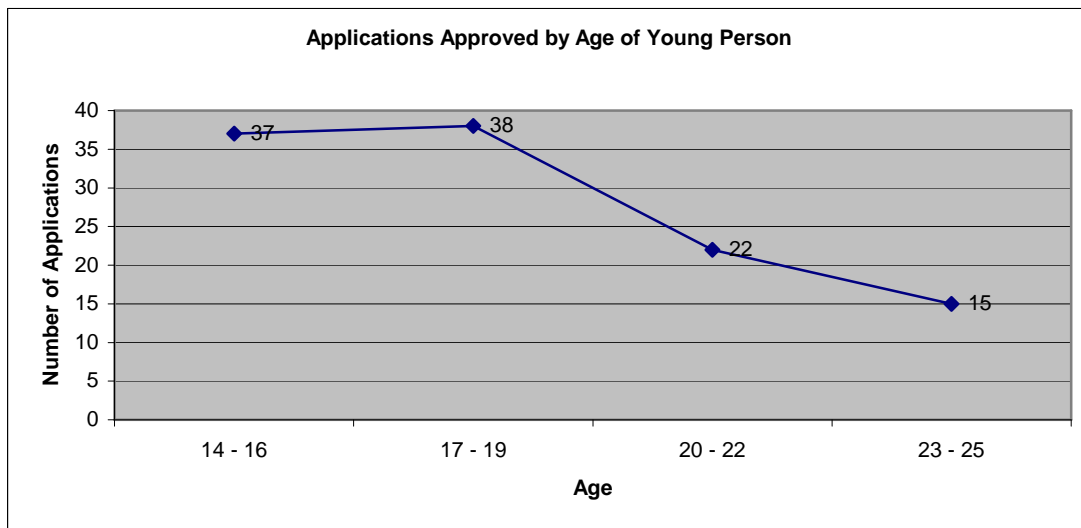
The above chart illustrates that most applications (75%) came from SAAP services. 24 applications were made by refuges. The rest were from THM (1 out of 112) and other services (3 out of 112)



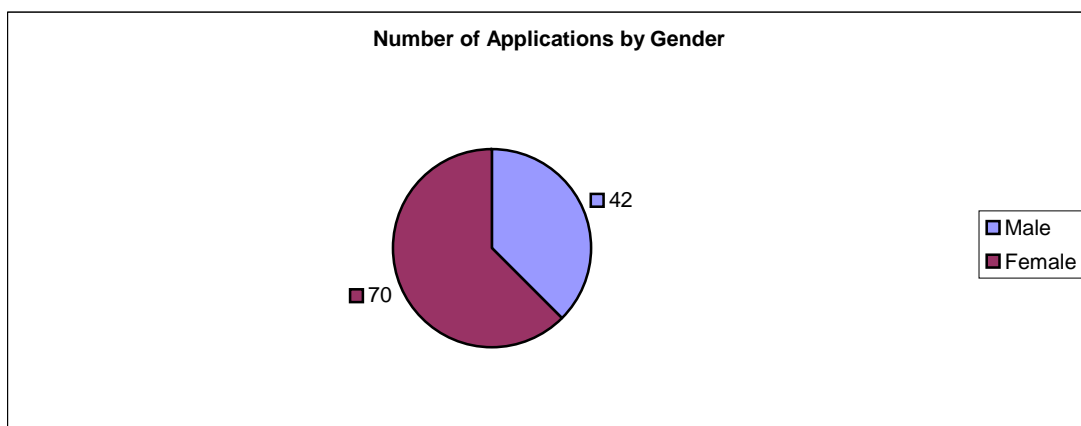
The table shows that the metropolitan northern region ranks the top in terms of assessing brokerage fund within the Greater Melbourne area (46 out of 112). In rural Victoria, Loddon Mallee has made more applications (26) than any other region. It is worthwhile to point out that Hume had 5 applications and Grampians had 1 in the past six months, compared to 0 during January to June.



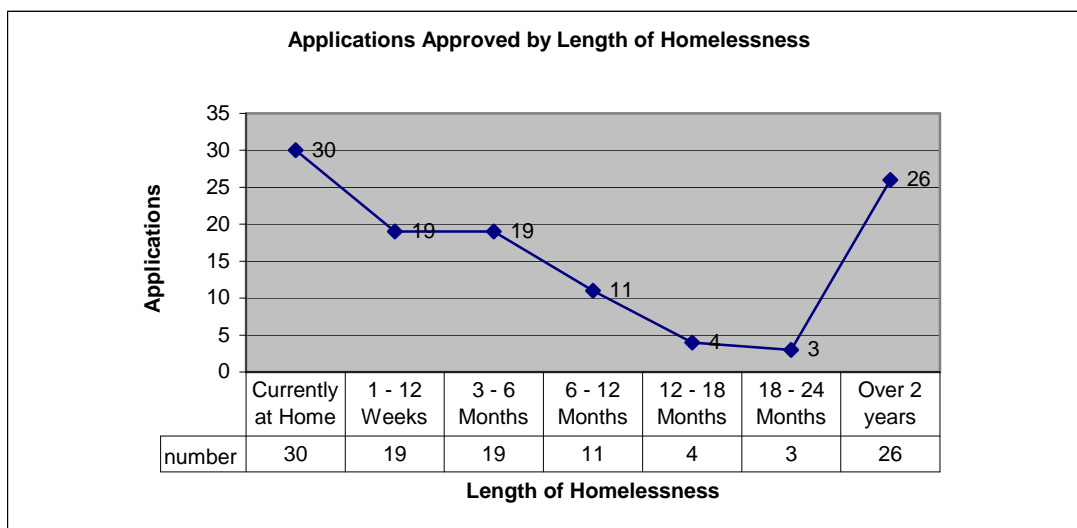
The above table shows the breakdown of funded interventions. Individual counselling continues to be the most common type of intervention as an initial step to family reconciliation. There was an increase in the number of applications for family mediation over the past 6 months (14 to 17) and a slight drop in the number of applications for family counselling (26 to 24).



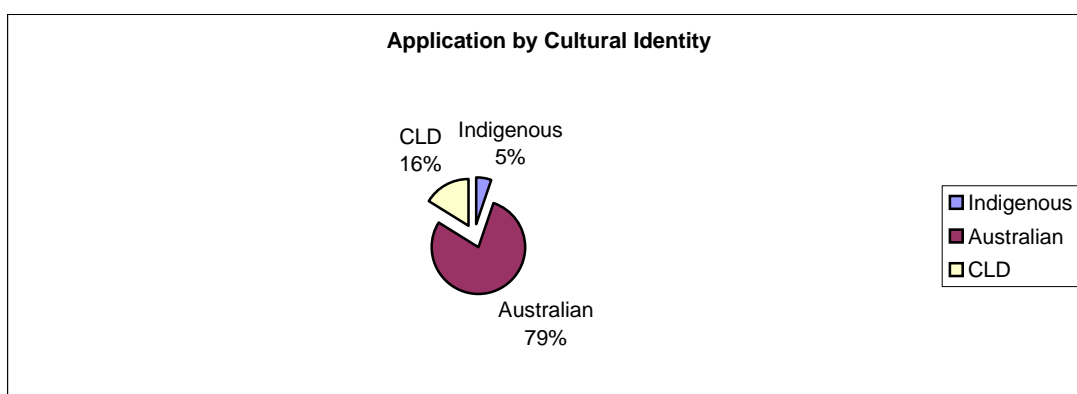
The above graph continues to show that young people below 20 years old are the majority (75%) to assess brokerage funding for family reconciliation.



In the report period, 70 female (63%) and 42 male (37%) were supported by FRMP brokerage, as shown in the above chart.



The above chart reveals the length of time young people have been experiencing homelessness by applications approved. Similar trends have been noted in the past reports that suggest young people are most likely to access FRMP funded interventions when at-risk (still at home) or newly homeless (up to 6 months), or after two or more years of experiencing homelessness.



The above diagram shows the proportion of young people by cultural identity supported by FRMP funded interventions. 88 out of 112 (79%) identified themselves as Australian, with 6 and 18 applications for young people with indigenous and CLD background respectively.

2.2 Feedback from Interventions

The goal of FRMP interventions is not simply about young people returning home, which sometimes is not an ideal option for young people; it includes a focus about re-establishing the link and connection between young people and their families. The feedback FRMP receives after the completion of intervention continue to show that the communication between young people and their families has improved after their engagement in a funded intervention, as shown in the table below which provides a selected list of feedback received from support workers.

FRMP Reference #	Reported Communication Pre Intervention	Reported Communication Post Intervention
1017	3	5
1060	1	5
1076	2	4
1082	3	6
1084	3	6
1107	2	5
1109	2	4

1117	2	5
1130	3	5
1140	3	5
1176	2	4

The improvement of communication between young people and their families after a FRMP-funded intervention can also be seen in the feedback received below:

“...at times it was very helpful, enabling her to explore some of her family history and past and recent trauma... young person attended some sessions with her mother and aunt. These sessions enabled them to talk more openly as a family about the wellbeing of the baby and young person hopes to stop taking drugs”

“The young person and her mum said they now understand each other’s needs more and they said it was a useful experience to come and make plans for how they can get along better in the future”

“Counsellor assisted both mum and the young person to have some honest communication and learn new ways of resolving conflict. 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 family have all identified that they feel their communication has greatly improved. They all identified understanding each other more and enjoy learning about each other...”

FRMP brokerage also intends to support the overall assessment and casework of young people. Other feedback further shows the positive impact of the brokered intervention on the overall case plan with a young person. The following comments were received during the report period:

“The client has expressed that the intervention has assisted her to develop some insight into family conflict and how this has contributed to periods of homelessness...the client has been attending counselling, that she has presented far less in ‘crisis’ and she has maintained stable accommodation with her family for longer than she has in a while”

“(Counselling)...benefited young person by giving her a professional to talk with and gain some perspective on her family issues. This also helped young person to work issues out with her mum and return home again”

“Art therapy has helped the young person to be calm and therefore reduces stress levels and anxiety.....The young person states she feels both emotionally and physically better after each session”

“Young person has recently returned home to live and the mediation gave both the opportunity to hear one another and make some positive plans for future to help get along better at home.”

“the young person now has a strong bond with her sister and they keep in contact weekly which has assisted the young person gain confidence and become part of family again”

FRMP also received some feedback from young people and families who were engaged in various interventions, a lot of them rated that the communication between them and their parent had been increased significantly (#942, #1016, #1034, #1060, #1107, to name a few). The following are some feedback received from them:

"It helped, thanks"

"We enjoyed it. We had a really good time. It helped my son a lot."

"The young person said the intervention was really good and that it had helped her a lot. She said she is now able to talk more with her family and she trusts them more."

2.3 Feedback from Groupwork

FRMP funds a range of interventions to assist young people with families work towards reconciliation. Apart from individual application, from July to December 2008, FRMP funded another two group work projects.

Types of Groups Funded

Organisation	Type of Group	Number of Young People Involved
Kardinia Women's Service	Taking Charge	8
Harrison Community Services	Fresh Attitude	10

The feedback FRMP received from the group work "Fresh Attitude" shows that most young people "really enjoyed it" and learned "how to control stress and to see things from other people's perspective", which helped with "relationships and other stuff".

Young people participating in "Taking Charge" also provided feedback that the group work has been beneficial for them and the worker concluded that the program has "given strategies to cope with real life situations, whether this is a partner, parent or another person in authority or friend".

2.4 Family Mediation

Another 17 family mediation applications were approved during the reporting period. The number seems increase steadily during the past two years (10 during January-June 2007, 12 between July-December and 14 for first six months in 2008). FRMP aims to encourage workers to work with young people in a family-inclusive approach and consider family mediation wherever it is possible.

2.5 DHS involvement

During the past six months, 34 young people accessing FRMP brokerage have had past or current DHS involvement, making up nearly one third of the young people accessing a FRMP funded intervention during the reporting period. The current data on DHS involvement, past or current includes Child Protection, Youth Justice and Disability Client Services.

FRMP will be updating Brokerage Application Forms to distinguish between the types of DHS involvement. This will allow for a greater understanding of the impact of young people who may be exiting Child Protection on the youth homelessness system.

3.0 Sector Capacity Building

3.1 Capacity Building Initiatives

FRMP continues to use community development principles to increase the capacity of the Youth Homelessness Sector to respond to young people using a family inclusive approach.

New capacity building initiatives that were implemented during this report period include:

- ⇒ North West Region Family Reconciliation Peer Support Group; FRMP consulted with key players in the region about the viability of such a network and following the response has initiated this peer support group. FRMP facilitates and maintains this network – meetings were held September and December.
- ⇒ FRMP's involvement in the development and pilot phase of the Youth Homelessness Alliance Northern (YHAN). FRMP is able to provide secondary consultation to this network and family reconciliation options.
- ⇒ FRMP contributed to CHP's July Edition of *Parity* "Young People at Risk" with an article "Keeping Relation Centred Practice on the Youth Homelessness Agenda". The article highlighted the importance of relation centred casework in youth homelessness.

The program has continued to consolidate key initiatives as listed below:

- ⇒ Eastern Region Family Reconciliation Peer Support Group; FRMP continues to facilitate and maintain this peer support group – meetings were held in August and November.
- ⇒ Southern Region Family Reconciliation Peer Support Group; FRMP continues to facilitate and maintain this peer support group – meetings were held in September and December.
- ⇒ SAAP Family Reconciliation Worker Network; FRMP continues to facilitate and maintain this network of Victorian SAAP Family Reconciliation Workers; a meeting was held in October.
- ⇒ Professional Development Forums were held in Hume, Gippsland, Barwon South West and Melbourne during the reporting period.
- ⇒ FRMP distributed the FRMP Quarterly Newsletter in August and November which provided the sector with useful and relevant information and updates.
- ⇒ FRMP continued to update and develop the website with a range of resources and information for the sector www.frmp.org.au
- ⇒ FRMP continued to provide support for agencies for Individual and Groupwork brokerage applications with a range of attendances at housing network meetings, youth service network meetings and Agency visits across Victoria.
- ⇒ FRMP continued to have active involvement with the Statewide Indigenous Homelessness Network and presented at the network meeting during the August meeting and provided an update on FRMP initiatives and details of the Indigenous Family Reconnection Response Project in conjunction with Deb Chaplin, Swan Hill Aboriginal Health Service.

3.2 Networking and Partnerships

A key component of capacity building within FRMP is continued networking and relationship building. This is achieved by ongoing participation in homelessness network meetings, council youth services network meetings and allied health networks. FRMP continues to build working relationships with a variety of service providers to share knowledge about family inclusive practice across Victoria.

3.3 Indigenous Family Reconnection Response Project

Following a request by the Office of Housing, FRMP has been involved in the Indigenous Family Reconnection Response Project. The key partners for this project are the Office of Housing, Bendigo and Swan Hill Aboriginal Health Service.

FRMP assisted the project in providing written documentation to support the project that included;

- Information Sheet,
- Confirmation of Approval Form, and
- Expenditure Form.

FRMP will continue to support the project in providing secondary consultation and support to access FRMP brokerage. FRMP will also assist in the final report for the project.

3.4 SAAP Family Reconciliation Worker Network

FRMP continues to host the SAAP Family Reconciliation Worker Network that provides a forum for workers across Victoria to network, share learning and engage in professional development through guest speakers and workshops.

During the reporting period, FRMP facilitated one SAAP Family Reconciliation Worker Network meeting in October that attracted 15 workers across Victoria.

The main theme for the day was exploring Adolescent Violence Towards Parents and guest speakers included Eddie Gallagher, Psychologist, Social Worker and Family Therapist as well as Jo Howard, Inner South Community Health Service.

In addition, Marilyn Lanigan, Hope Street Youth Refuge shared information about the effects of food on mood and Jane Lazzari; CHP provided an update on the SAAP Family Reconciliation Worker Mapping Project and distributed the findings.

3.5 Family Reconciliation Peer Support Groups

FRMP has now established Family Reconciliation Peer Support Groups in all the metro areas of Melbourne; North West, Southern and Eastern Region. These groups provide an opportunity for sector enhancement of family inclusive practice and include guest speakers, information sharing and peer reflection.

3.5 Training

FRMP has continued to host a range of training opportunities for workers in the Youth Homelessness Sector during the reporting period.

- ⇒ SAAP Training Calendar
- ✓ "Youth Centred Family Focused Interventions – What Does it Take?" Level 1 July 2008; one-day workshop facilitated by Sarah Marrinan, White Cat Psychology
 - ✓ "Youth Centred Family Focused Interventions – What Does it Take?" Level 2 October 2008; one-day workshop which built on the themes covered in

Level 1 and was facilitated by Sarah Marrinan, White Cat Psychology.

- ⇒ Tertiary Training
 - ✓ Melbourne University – training for third year Social Work Students; “Young People, Homelessness and Family Inclusive Practice” November 2008.

3.6 Professional Development Forums

FRMP continued to organise Professional Development Forums across Victoria to provide opportunities for sector enhancement of family inclusive practice, as well as bringing together the homelessness sector, family centred programs and counsellors/psychologists.

During the reporting period; Professional Development Forums were held in the following regions;

- ⇒ Hume Region; “Worker Self Care and Reflection; a strengths based perspective”; facilitated by Steve Phillis, St Lukes (August 2008),
- ⇒ Barwon South West Region; “Worker Self Care and Reflection; a strengths based perspective”, facilitated by Steve Phillis, St Lukes (November 2008),
- ⇒ Gippsland Region; “Self Care in the Workplace”, facilitated by Shirley Millard, Latrobe Regional Health Service (November 2008), and
- ⇒ Melbourne; “Understanding and Supporting Young People who Have Experienced Violence in their Families”, facilitated by Marcus Andrews, Life Supports (December 2008).

The Professional Development Forums attracted a number of attendees with over 135 workers from the homelessness sector attending the four forums. The Grampians region will be a priority for the next Professional Development Forum in 2009.

4.0 Future Directions

4.1 Private Practitioner Database Development Project

FRMP has been actively targeting private practitioners to add to our database with a focus on regional areas to generate a more comprehensive list of counsellors and psychologists throughout Victoria. This has resulted in an additional 17 counsellors and psychologists being added to our database, with 8 of these being in regional areas.

The Brokerage Liaison Worker in FRMP will continue with this targeted Private Practitioner approach in 2009 to ensure a range of practitioners are available for workers to access in all regions.

4.2 Mediation Project

FRMP aims to develop a Mediation Project in 2009 which will result in a greater focus on mediation and how this intervention type can be utilised to assist in family reconciliation. Key elements of this project will involve developing mediation information in an accessible format for the youth homelessness sector and building greater awareness of this type of intervention.

The Mediation Project will also involve further internal training of workers within FRMP so this intervention can increasingly be offered 'in-house' rather than brokering to external services.

4.3 FRMP Statewide Forum 2009

FRMP is planning its fourth annual Statewide Forum for September 2009. The aims of the forum are to continue the development of family inclusive practice within our sector as well as highlight innovation and best practice in work with young people and their families. These forums also provide the opportunity for workers from youth homelessness and allied services to come together and share practice wisdom. As in the past forums, FRMP will aim to provide a contemporary perspective on family inclusive practice within youth homelessness.

4.4 Young People and FRMP – Tracking Project

FRMP has continued in its development of tools for the Tracking Project and is engaged in consultation with Melbourne Citymission's Social Policy Research Unit. In addition to exploring if "young people are 'better off' after accessing a FRMP-funded intervention"; FRMP aims to provide quantitative data on young people's housing stability following a FRMP funded intervention.

FRMP aims to explore the impact of funded interventions on young people accessing the homeless service system in relation to wellbeing, communication with family and housing stability.

5.0 Summary

The reporting period covered in this report has shown a consolidation of many of FRMP's key capacity building initiatives. In the area of professional development; FRMP has held professional development forums in the Hume, Barwon South West, Gippsland and Melbourne regions. In addition, FRMP has continued to build the capacity of the youth homelessness sector to provide a family inclusive response by facilitating two training sessions in the past six months.

FRMP also supports regional family reconciliation peer support groups and facilitates three in the metropolitan area of Melbourne; North West, Southern and Eastern that continue to meet on a quarterly basis. Initiatives such as these continue to support family inclusive practice and networking within regions.

In relation to brokerage, FRMP continues to exceed its targets in providing interventions to young people accessing the homelessness service system. Similar trends in the length of homelessness of young people accessing FRMP have continued; with the majority of young people accessing FRMP being at risk of homelessness, newly homeless or experiencing homelessness for over two years.

FRMP aims to continue working on key capacity building initiatives in 2009 as well as delivering an effective brokerage component. The future directions include the commencement of the Tracking Project, the Mediation Project as well as FRMP's 4th Annual Statewide Forum. FRMP looks forward to 2009 and continuing to support family inclusive practice within youth homelessness across Victoria.