



Six Month Report
Family Reconciliation Mediation Program
Year 3: January 2007 – June 2007

Prepared by:
The Family Reconciliation Mediation Program Team

Contents

1.0	Introduction	3
1.1	Key Points	
2.0	Brokerage Interventions	5
2.1	Statistics for Reporting Period	
2.2	Feedback from Interventions	
2.3	Reflections: "Is anyone better off after accessing FRMP?"	
2.4	Feedback from Groupwork	
2.5	Front End Family Mediation	
3.0	Community Capacity Building	13
3.1	Initiatives	
3.2	Networking/Partnerships	
3.3	Family Reconciliation Network	
3.4	Enhancement of Existing Service Collaboration	
3.5	Training	
3.6	Service Gaps	
4.0	Future Directions	16
4.1	Groupwork Project	
4.2	Forums/Community Capacity Building Initiatives	
5.0	Conclusion	17

1.0 Introduction

The FRMP is now in its third year of operation and continues to build on the strengths of the Youth Homelessness Service Sector (YHSS) to deliver its brokerage component and its community development initiatives across the State.

This report documents the period of January 2007 – June 2007 of the Family Reconciliation Mediation Program (FRMP) and includes information highlighting the following:

- ⇒ Brokerage uptake and feedback,
- ⇒ Community capacity building initiatives, and
- ⇒ Key learnings and future directions.

The primary objectives of FRMP are to:

1. Support wherever possible young people to remain/return home where appropriate,
2. Support young people to reconnect with family, and
3. Support young people to resolve within themselves issues relating to family conflict/breakdown.

In order to achieve these objectives, FRMP continues to work with the YHSS across Victoria. FRMP continues to advocate the importance of family centred practice when working with young people and has formed partnerships with many YHSS Agencies. FRMP brokerage for counselling and family mediation has become an integral part of the work with young homeless people.

1.1 Key points

Over the last six months FRMP has consolidated on its brokerage component with a total of 147 individual applications approved and a further 5 group work initiatives (an estimated 85 young people participated) approved during the report period. There has been a significant increase in the combination of interventions applied for in applications. Across the State, more services are accessing brokerage to support their clients to engage in family counselling, family mediation as well as individual counselling.

The FRMP Info Kit and DVD are significant achievements within the program. These two resources were produced as a result of learnings and consultation with a number of services across the State. The DVD, “Moving Towards Hope” is a joint initiative with St Lukes in Bendigo. The intention of these tools is to enhance our response to young people within a youth centred, family focussed framework. They can be used directly with clients as well as be used as a shared resource to prompt discussion with co-workers and clients.

The Info Kit specifically gives information on definitions of intervention types (eg family group conferencing, family mediation). The strength of the Info Kit/DVD supports the concept of this practice without implying that we, as a sector, need to achieve a particular outcome (e.g. a return home); rather it conceptualises the framework of family and suggests the healing and restoring of significant relationships either on an individual level or with others is equally as important as a physical return home. The Info Kit and DVD at the time of this report was being distributed sector wide.

The second FRMP Statewide Forum was hosted on the 18th May 2007. Over 100 workers across the YHSS sector attended. Highlights of the Forum included a presentation from a parent who had experienced the impact of youth homelessness and the performance from the 'Choir of Hard Knocks'. The papers and notes to this forum are now available via the FRMP website.

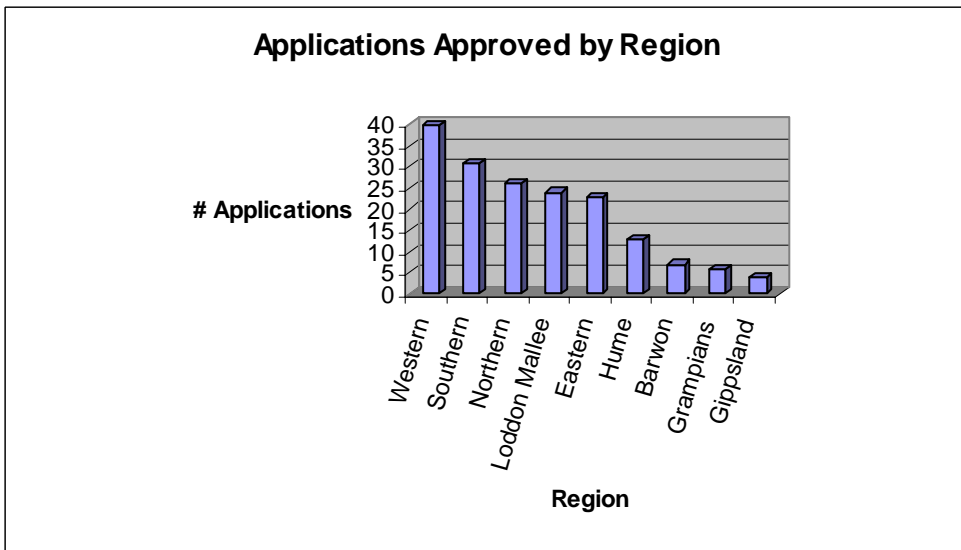
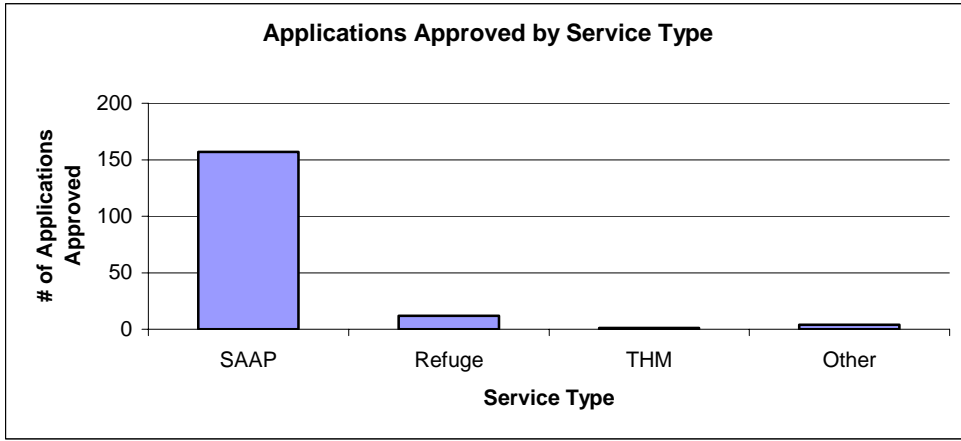
FRMP is operating on interim funding, this funding is until December 2007, with an expectation of continued funding beyond this date. Thomson and Goodall Associates implemented an extensive external evaluation, which involved a cross section of services within the YHSS system. The outcomes, learnings and recommendations have been collated and submitted to the Office of Housing. FRMP expects that a decision regarding future funding will be announced by the end of September.

2.0 Brokerage Interventions

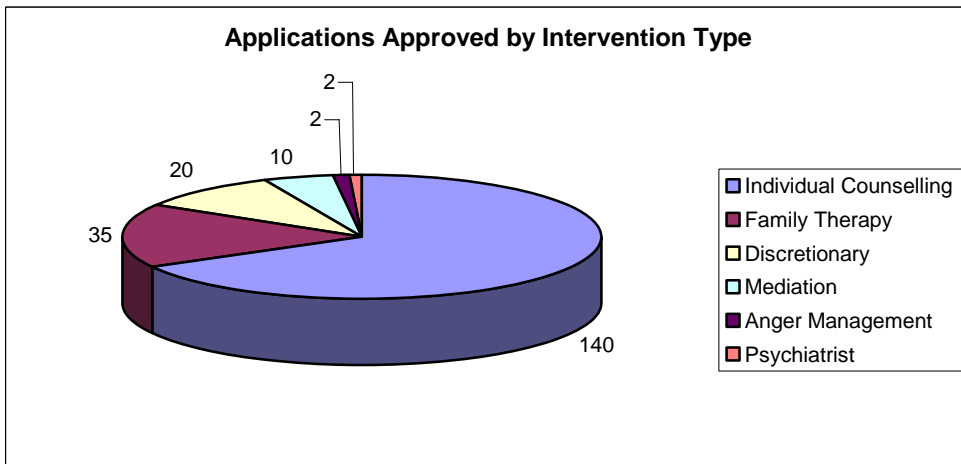
2.1 Statistics for Reporting Period

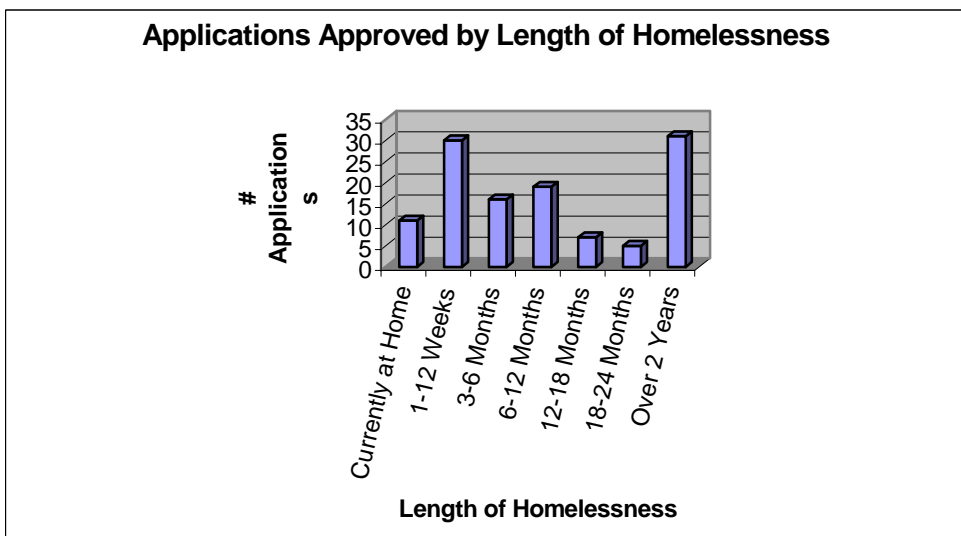
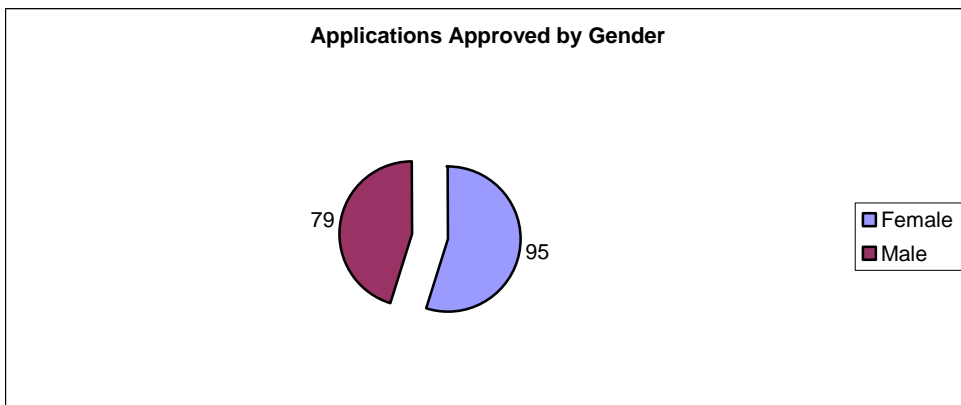
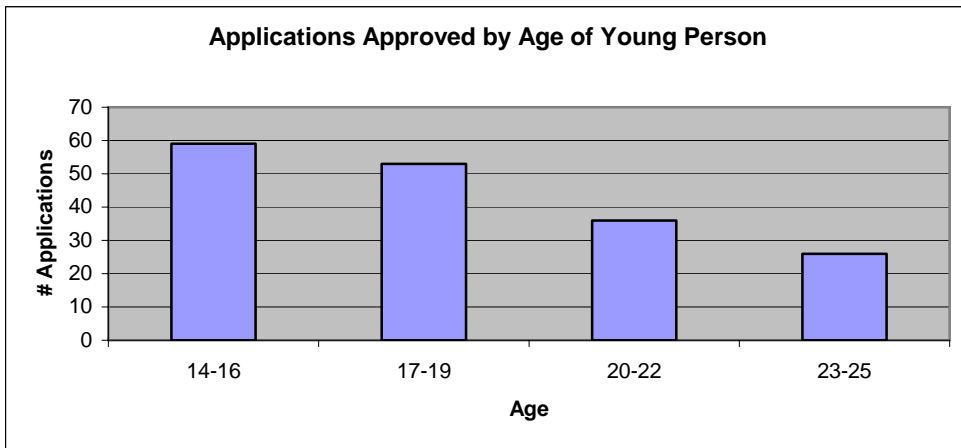
FRMP Statistics for Reporting Period (January 2007 – June 2007)

Applications approved	Individuals 174
Services accessing funds	SAAP 158 SAAP Refuge 12 THM 1 Other 3
Regional breakdown of services accessing funds	Northern 26 Eastern 23 Western 40 Southern 32 Loddon Mallee 24 Barwon 7 Hume 13 Grampians 5 Gippsland 4
Interventions funded	Individual Counselling 140 Discretionary 20 Family Therapy 35 Family Mediation 10 Anger Management 2 Psychiatrist 2
Age of young person	14-16: 59 17-19: 53 20-22: 36 23-25: 26
Gender of young person	Female: 95 Male: 79
Length of homelessness	At home 11 1-12 weeks 30 3-6 months 16 6-12 months 19 12-18 months 7 18-24 months 5 Over 2 years 31
Cultural identity	Australian 143 Indigenous 4 Other cultural identity 27



Metropolitan use: 69%
 Rural use: 31%





Significant factors: As illustrated in the above table and charts, we are as a sector supporting a considerable number of “early intervention” type young people (23.5% in total applications were either still at home and at-risk of homelessness, or are less than 12 weeks out of home), also notable; young people are seeking assistance through FRMP who have experienced longer periods (e.g., 2 plus years) of homelessness (17.8% in total applications experienced homelessness 2 years and over).

2.2 Feedback from Interventions

A sample of sixteen closed files were chosen to illustrate what effect brokered interventions were having on young people; the following offers a snapshot.

Once an intervention has been completed FRMP requests that the referring support worker completes a final feedback form. Below is a table of pre and post intervention feedback.

Question: On a scale of 1-6 (1 being 'poor', 6 being 'excellent') how would you rate the level of relationship/communication between the young person and their family prior to and after intervention?

FRMP Reference Number	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
601	1	4
607	2	5
611	2	5
612	2	2
614	2	4
619	1	2
623	2	5
627	2	6
641	1	4
659	1	4
676	2	4
679	3	4
715	2	5
720	3	5
729	1	3
755	1	5

The table shows that in the majority of the cases the level of relationship and communication between the young person and their family improved following an intervention. In only one of the cases illustrated, the level stayed the same with no change. The average increase in the level of improvement in relationship and communication between the young person and their family following an intervention is 2.43 (pre-intervention average 1.75, post-intervention average 4.18).

Further supporting this evidence of a positive result following an intervention, anecdotal responses from service providers working with young people who have accessed brokerage to fund an intervention include;

"Gave a greater understanding of client's capabilities and boundaries and gave client a clearer understanding of mothers concerns".

"The young person was able to express herself in a very open and honest way which she was able to explore some of the issues of her past pain".

"This 17 year old young person is currently living away from home, moving from friends houses to house...despite living away from home she has been prepared to meet for sessions with her mother to work on more effective strategies that will assist their communication and hopefully enable her to move back home".

"Perhaps the timing was just right. By the final session this young person had decided to move forward with his life. He had reconnected with his mother and is now enjoying more regular contact. He had stopped staying up all night and is now pursuing further education and the hope of becoming a graphic artist."

The flexibility that FRMP's private practitioners often demonstrate also has an impact on engagement with young people, especially in rural areas where travel can be a barrier to accessing services. One service provider stated that;

"Having access to FRMP funding makes a big difference to the lives of young people and families. The practitioner travelled to meet this family in Healesville and that made a difference".

Another element of the brokerage is the use of discretionary funds available to support family focussed interventions. In one case, a young person was provided brokerage fund an airfare to attend a funeral and this proved to be an opportunity to reconnect with family.

"Client is a young indigenous mum...received news her Aunty had died...client expressed that even though it was a difficult period, she was glad for the opportunity to reconnect with family".

At times, it can be difficult to reflect on the tangible outcomes of an intervention funded by FRMP due to the nature of counselling and family mediation so measuring the effectiveness of a response on actual events can be a way around this. A worker reflected on the outcomes of counselling;

"Difficult to say; young person living back with mum".

The feedback has also shown the value in a program such as FRMP where counselling can be accessed by young people and where a quick response is imperative to ensure engagement of the young person is continuous when counselling is agreed.

"The process is excellent and in this case provided an opportunity for counselling for a young person who would not have been able to access this elsewhere".

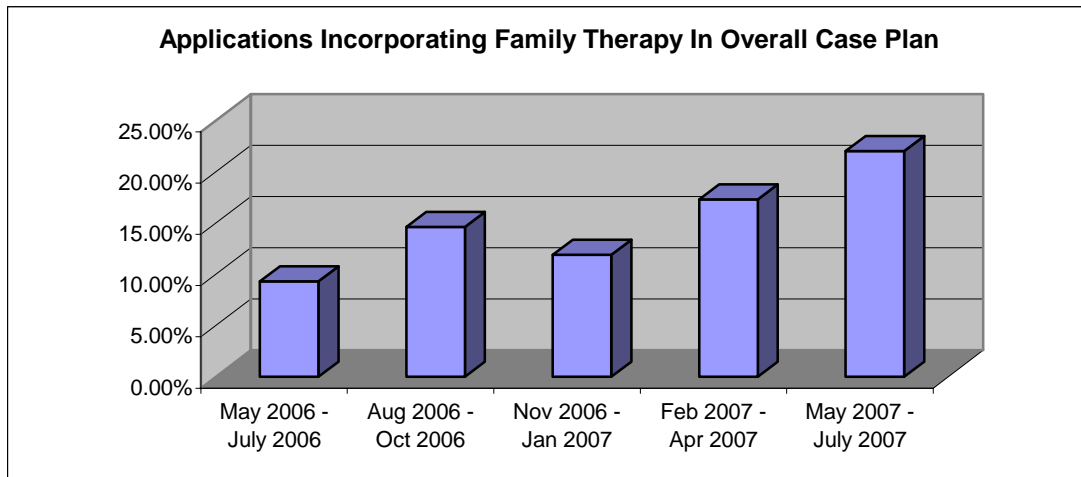
2.3 Reflections: “Is anyone better off after accessing FRMP brokerage?”

Over the past six months, FRMP has had the opportunity to reflect on the question: “Is anyone better off after accessing FRMP brokerage?” In order to evaluate this question, the following table was developed to illustrate not only how many young people and families have been supported, but also the quality and effects of the interventions funded.

	Quantity	Quality
Effort	FRMP approved 174 applications in total during the report period	All of the young people approved for individual counselling and/or family therapy were matched with a FRMP-approved private practitioner
Effect	35 of the 174 applications (20%) incorporated family therapy as a component of the overall case plan. Note: in a similar 6-month period in 2006, only 20 of the 164 (12%) applications included family therapy	From the feedback received, 93% report improved relationships or communication between the young person & his/her family

The table shows that 174 applications were approved during the report period, and that of these applications, all of the young people were matched with a FRMP-approved private practitioner. Interestingly, of the 174 approved applications, 35 incorporated family therapy as a component of the overall case plan. This is an increase from past report periods and as the example noted in the table indicates, only 20 of the 164 (12%) applications from a similar 6-month period in 2006 included family therapy.

The following table illustrates the number of approved applications incorporating family therapy as a component of the overall case plan since May 2006.



The chart illustrates an increase in the number of applications incorporating family therapy with the overall case plan from 9.3% in May-July 2006 to 20% in May-July 2007. It is possible to infer that this increase may reflect a shift in the youth homelessness sector towards a greater consideration of family inclusive practice.

Finally, as the final feedback received from workers during this report period reveals, 93% report an improved relationship/communication between the young person and their family. Please refer to section 2.2 Feedback from Interventions.

2.4 Feedback from Groupwork

In the six-month reporting period of this report, FRMP funded Groupwork initiatives with a diverse range of activities associated. While the range of Groupwork programs funded were diverse in content they all met the FRMP objectives which demonstrated the range of interventions that can be used to engage with and meet the needs of young people in the YHSS.

The Groupwork initiatives funded within this period included programs such as;

- ⇒ Independent Living Skills Program,
- ⇒ “Going Off Tap” Behaviour Change Program,
- ⇒ Personal Development Course,
- ⇒ Social Group – BBQ, and a
- ⇒ Creative Art Therapy Group.

An example of the feedback from a FRMP funded Groupwork initiative included;

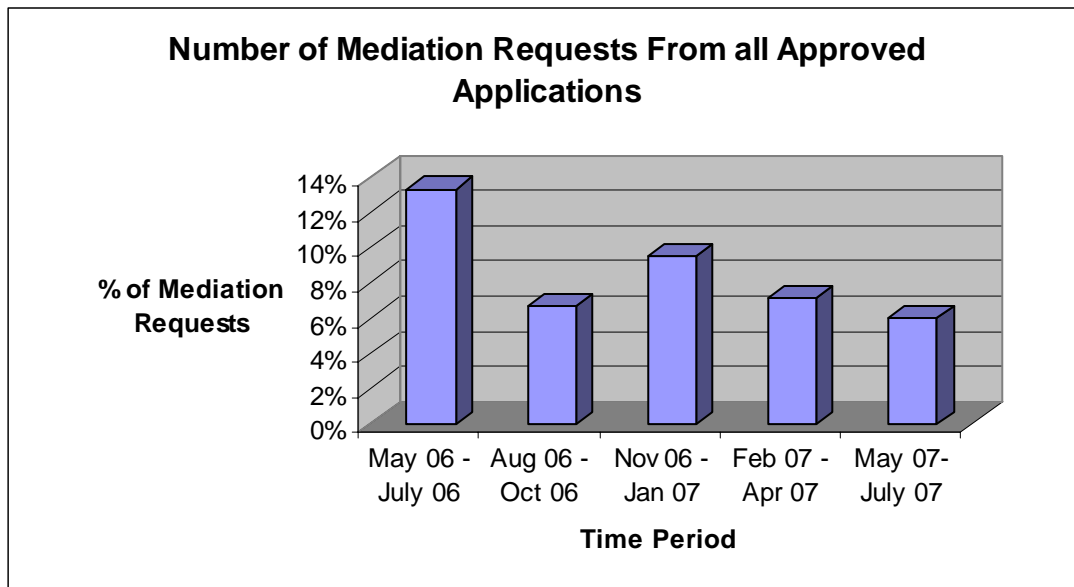
“(Young Persons) father came into the office to say thank you to the workers as he has seen a great deal of change in his son. And now looks forward to him returning home by the end of February.” Fusion Mornington

“The young people are showing signs of growth, some small steps others bigger, it has been great seeing their lives and their behaviour change just by doing this course.” Fusion Mornington

FRMP is currently building on the recognised strengths of the FRMP funded Groupwork initiatives and is working on a project to highlight best practice models within these groups. Refer to section 4.1 Groupwork Project for more information.

2.5 Front End Family Mediation

There continues to be a number of FRMP applications and/or requests for family mediation. The following table illustrates the number of mediation requests of the total number of applications approved by FRMP.



During this six-month report period (January 2007-June 2007), a total of 10 family mediations were funded.

Anecdotally;

- Applications for mediation have been initiated at the request of the young person to the case worker,
- Services in which significant numbers of mediations occur appear to have an integrated mediation program and youth centred family focused framework of operation. FRMP is looking to have meetings with these services to gain a greater understanding of their mediation service.

To widen the consideration of mediation by support workers;

- FRMP have included a question in the application form that asks case workers to comment if mediation (together with family counselling) has been discussed with the young person to compliment their application,
- FRMP is looking to develop promotional flyers that widen the consideration of mediation by workers and their clients. For example, by presenting mediation as a process that could “support the young person through a difficult conversation with family” rather than identifying it solely as a process to consider when there is family “conflict” for the purpose of reaching “agreements”. The Transformative Model of mediation, which is known to have demonstrated success in other areas including America, will support and inform this initiative.

Note: The widely used and understood Facilitative Mediation Model focuses on identifying, isolating and negotiating issues and takes participants through different stages of the model.

The Transformative Model does not provide a defined structure and process which participants are taken through, this approach follows the conversation as it occurs focusing on opportunities to support shifts in **empowerment** (strengthened awareness of self worth and ability to deal with the situation they are facing) and **recognition** (greater ability to acknowledge and respond to the other party).

3.0 Community Capacity Building

3.1 Initiatives

FRMP continues to model its capacity building activities within a community development framework. The program aims to strengthen the youth homelessness service sector's response to family inclusive practice.

A number of core initiatives have been implemented across the State during the six-month reporting period and many initiatives continue; these include:

- ⇒ Eastern Region Family Reconciliation Peer Network – February and May
- ⇒ Involvement in the Reference Group of the Melbourne University Research Project “Opportunity for Change: Young Motherhood & Homelessness” which resulted in the development of a resource kit that was launched on 10th July 2007 at the launch of June's Edition of Parity, *Supporting Homeless Families*
- ⇒ Hosted FRMP Statewide Forum “Wanna Talk About It Too? Further Integrating Family Centred Practice within the YSAAP Service System” 18th May 2007
- ⇒ Completed DVD in conjunction with St Luke's, Bendigo “Moving Towards Hope”. This resource has been screened at a number of Metro and Rural Youth SAAP Network Meetings and is being distributed across the sector
- ⇒ “An afternoon with FRMP” Professional Development Forum in Barwon South West Region (March); similar forums planned for second half of 2007 in both Gippsland and Grampians Regions
- ⇒ Completion of the FRMP Info Kit – to be distributed in the second half of 2007
- ⇒ Continuation of FRMP Quarterly Newsletters – February and May 2007
- ⇒ Continued development of FRMP website
- ⇒ Continued development of FRMP Database of Private Practitioners
- ⇒ Direct support for service with Individual and Groupwork applications

3.2 Networking/Partnerships

Integral to the role of capacity building within FRMP is an understanding and acknowledgement of the various contexts of youth homelessness across Victoria, and the dimensions of inter/intra agency collaboration that occurs. In general, the Youth SAAP sector is proficient at working together, in the interests of young people. In support of this, FRMP has been able to provide resources aimed at enhancing existing relationships between services, and creating linkages where gaps exist. By bringing together local and regional homelessness networks, local and regional family violence prevention

networks, early intervention services, local government youth networks, and various allied sector services accessed by young people; FRMP has been able to further consolidate healthy working relationships between services, promote shared family reconciliation practice, and allow smooth transitions for young people across services.

3.3 Family Reconciliation Network

FRMP has been pivotal in bringing together all 13 SAAP-funded Family Reconciliation Workers across Victoria. FRMP is supportive of nurturing the continuation of the important and diverse work these positions bring to SAAP.

During the report period, FRMP hosted a Statewide network on 2nd April 2007 for this group of workers and centred on professional development and peer support. The morning session was co-facilitated by Kathy Lacey, a Psychologist & Family Therapist, and Viv Ray, a Reconnect Caseworker both from Nillumbik Community Health Service. The topic: “Joint Family Meetings to Facilitate Sustainable Change”, presented the network with a collaborative service delivery model demonstrating how a case manager can work closely with a Private Practitioner in order to meet the needs of a client. Thomson & Goodall Associates, evaluators of all YHAP1 initiatives, consulted with the network in the afternoon as a component to their evaluation of FRMP.

The Community Development Team has been instrumental in the general promotion of these SAAP funded reconciliation workers available within regions across Victoria. FRMP has developed two ‘service locator’ maps for SAAP Family Reconciliation Workers. These maps have been distributed across the sector to be used as a resource tool for locating the SAAP-funded Family Reconciliation Workers in both Metro and Regional Victoria. Promotion has also included general advocacy regarding the existence of these roles. In one region, FRMP assisted the SAAP reconciliation worker prepare a presentation at a regional homelessness network meeting. As a result of this exposure, referrals from youth SAAP and THM services have steadily increased. FRMP will continue to support regional SAAP reconciliation workers in this way, and further enhance their strategic placement within the youth homelessness service sector, including the development of a ‘statement of purpose’ to assist with further consolidating this network.

3.4 Enhancement of Existing Service Collaboration

A key objective of FRMP includes strengthening the wider homelessness sector, and supporting linked-up service delivery. In all regions FRMP has been able to assist in various collaborative processes. The Community Development Team has focussed on bringing together workers from across agencies and discussing service system pathways for young people, interagency practices and potentials for joint brokerage applications. Such collaborative approaches continue to be successful in both metropolitan and rural regions.

3.5 Training

Training for the sector continued to be an important element for FRMP during this six-month report period. A number of diverse training opportunities provided for the youth homelessness sector included:

- “Youth Centred Family Focussed Interventions – What Does It Take?” 1-day workshop facilitated by Regional Extended Family Services,
- SAAP Family Reconciliation Statewide Network, 2nd April 2007,
- “Wanna Talk About it Too? Further Integrating Family Centred Practice within the YSAAP Service System” FRMP State-wide forum, 18th May 2007, and
- Metropolitan and Regional professional development forum.

3.6 Service Gaps

FRMP brokerage data tells us largely those young people who identify their cultural identity as being “Australian” made up 82.1% of individual applications, whilst 15.5% were identified as being from a cultural diverse background. 2.3% of applications were from young people who identified as being Indigenous. Whilst this data in some capacity reflects the population of people accessing the homelessness system as detailed in the “SAAP National Data Collection annual Report 2005 – 2006”, the FRMP team and its extended network are looking more closely at ensuring access and equity is maintained and increased for young people from Indigenous and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Through consultation with specific services and the YHSS as a whole, FRMP plans to enact some key actions and include:

- Representation on the FRMP Advisory Committee from an Indigenous Specific Service. (At the time of writing this report, Dan Laws, the Indigenous Homelessness Worker for Victoria has accepted to be a representative on the committee),
- Ensure FRMP is responding in an appropriate way to be inclusive of the diversity CALD and Indigenous young people and their families bring with them. This will mean applications from this group may not fit within the standard framework of a typical FRMP application for brokerage, and
- Communicate to the sector how brokerage can be applied to Indigenous and CALD specific young people and use examples of when this has worked (including group work interventions).

Whilst individual applications from Indigenous and CALD young people were lower than those from an Australian cultural identity, their representation within group work applications were higher. There has been a consistent number of applications for Groupwork type interventions from services that work closely with CALD and Indigenous young people and their families.

4.0 Future Directions

4.1 Groupwork Project

FRMP plans to work on a Groupwork Project as a capacity building initiative in the second half of 2007 focussing on the learnings from the funded projects to provide a resource for the YHSS. The purpose of the Groupwork project is to examine the various Groupwork initiatives funded and collate best practice models of working to provide a guide to FRMP funded Groupwork initiatives.

In completing the project, agencies that have accessed FRMP brokerage funding will be asked to engage in discussion around what worked for their service and clients. It is anticipated that this information will add to a best practice guide for the YHSS to utilise as a resource when thinking about or facilitating Groupwork. FRMP anticipates to host a forum in 2008 based on Groupwork initiatives.

4.2 Forums/Community Capacity Building Initiatives

During the second half of 2007, FRMP is planning to host a professional development workshop for YHSS workers in the Grampians & Gippsland Regional Areas. FRMP has been invited to organise a concurrent workshop at the Grampians Homelessness Network Regional Conference in September 2007. FRMP also aims to organise a professional development forum in the Gippsland Region in late November following consultation with the YHSS services within this region to ensure the forum is specific to their needs.

At the time of writing this report FRMP was about to host its second SAAP training calendar event; entitled "Youth Centred Family Focussed Interventions – What does it take?" with facilitator Sarah Marrinan, Psychologist - White Cat Psychology. The aim of the workshop is to explore the process of family inclusive work with young people in the homelessness sector and to learn strategies that support casework within a youth focussed, family centred context.

5.0 Conclusion

As FRMP evolves, it works in tandem with numerous support services to work towards the practice of acknowledging and embedding practice that validates the extended connections young people have. It at best continues to advocate for family and significant others to be a central theme of all assessment and casework within the broader YHSS. This we believe has been evident in the uptake of combined interventions, the number of workers attending professional development events hosted by FRMP and the general acknowledgement within several networks that the notion of family is an important feature in the work of the sector.

The unique framework FRMP “hangs” itself on continues to grow, and we must as a sector continue to ask the question, “What about family?” If the questions are not asked, often young people may not know how to tell us what is important to them. The right for young people to remain connected to family and significant others is equally as important as their right to safe, secure and affordable housing, after all; homelessness is not just about “rooflessness”.