

# FINAL REPORT

## **CARAVAN PARKS PILOT FAMILY CRISIS CHILD CARE PROGRAM**

Period March 2001-January 2003

for the

Commonwealth Department of  
Family and Community Services

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January 2003

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page No</b>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
DEFINITIONS	3
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
2. RECOMMENDATIONS	10
3. PURPOSE OF REPORT	13
4. SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON WHICH REPORT IS BASED	13
5. HOMELESSNESS AND CARAVAN PARK RESIDENCY	14
6. SCOPE OF PROJECT	15
7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	16
8. KEY FINDINGS AND LEARNINGS	17
8.1 HOUSING	17
8.2 INCOME SECURITY	22
8.3 EDUCATION	23
8.4 CHILD CARE	27
8.5 PARENTING	30
8.6 CHILDRENS DEVELOPMENT	31
8.7 COMMUNITY HEALTH AND AGENCY LINKAGES	32
8.8 STRENGTHS APPROACH	34
9. MODEL OF BEST PRACTICE FOR SERVICE DELIVERY	36
10. ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION RESEARCH APPROACH	40
11. TRAINING, SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES	41

## **APPENDICES**

A. CASE STUDIES ONE, TWO AND THREE

B. TRAINING PACKAGE OUTLINE

C. NATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

D. SUMMARY KEY STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

E. NATIONAL STATISTICS

F. PATHWAYS IN AND OUT OF CARAVAN PARKS (South Australia Data)

G. CHECK LIST - ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY TO WORK WITH PARK COMMUNITIES

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- The Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services for provision of funding support and on going encouragement of the Caravan Parks Pilot.
- Playgroup Associations of Northern Territory, South Australia and Queensland and Save the Children Queensland for their enthusiasm and dedication in implementing the Caravan Parks Pilot.
- Key Stakeholders participating in the Caravan Parks Pilot for providing important input into the way in which the services were developed and implemented. These stakeholders include the parents and children living in the parks, the caravan park operators, government and non government agencies and organisations.

## DEFINITIONS

### **Caravan Parks Pilot**

An initiative of the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) jointly funded by the National Homelessness Strategy and the Child Care Section (Family Crisis Child Care Program).

### **Pilot Projects**

Local projects delivered in South Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland (Brisbane and Gold Coast) and NSW (Tweed) by Playgroup Associations of South Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland and Save the Children Queensland.

### **Caravan Parks**

In this report the term *caravan parks* refers to parks in which the major dwelling type is a caravan (with/without annex) and where there is permanent accommodation available as opposed to tourist parks. In most cases caravan parks contain a mix of short term and long term accommodation catering for both tourists and permanent residents.

### **Key Stakeholders**

These are the groups most likely to be affected by changes brought about through the implementation of the Caravan Parks Pilot and include: families and other residents living on caravan parks, caravan park operators, government and non government agencies and organisations, local councils, schools, community Reflection Groups and Steering Committee members, Caravan Pilot Project staff and management, the Family Action Centre and the funding body, the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services.

### **National Dissemination Program (NDP)**

A program of the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle. This program has worked since 1992 to motivate and mobilise those in a position to bring about positive change for caravan park communities.

### **Playgroup Plus**

This is the working title used to describe the model of best practice for service delivery to marginalised and isolated families; who live in caravan parks, are more transient, and are at greater risk of homelessness. (Please see Section 9 at Page 36 for discussion of this model)

## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This significant national pilot program has provided the Commonwealth with important policy and project implementation information on issues impacting on disadvantaged families living in residential sites in caravan parks in which conditions may fall below accepted minimum standards.

Key areas of enquiry were around early childhood development, parent/child relationships, engaging mobile families, increasing housing options, facilitating awareness of and access to community and family oriented services and incorporating a strengths approach to underpin project development. These were framed as national action research questions.

The extent of homelessness for these families, ways in which homelessness could be prevented and effective strategies to reach families and build stronger communities within and outside the park environment, are some of the “learnings” from this Pilot.

The Caravan Parks Pilot was experimental in nature and aimed to reach vulnerable families in insecure housing by providing local, non-threatening and child focused support.

Intensive work was carried out in eight caravan parks and their local communities across three states and one territory, (Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales/Gold Coast and the Northern Territory) over a two-year period. Funds allocated for a national action research approach provided pilot projects with a framework to develop, trial and evaluate national and local strategies. Training, networking and communication activities were critical to the successful implementation of this action research approach.

The operational model (supported playgroups with extra capacity) was implemented by all four Pilot projects with different methods of service delivery investigated within the context of this model. The mechanism for entry into the lives of the families was through weekly playgroup sessions with extra capacity to engage and integrate other services and to facilitate early intervention strategies addressing a number of factors that contribute to homelessness.

Trialing and refining of this operational model has resulted in a model of best practice when working with families in crisis who live on caravan parks. This is reported under the title “Playgroup Plus”. This model has the potential to work with disadvantaged families living in other housing situations, for example boarding houses or public housing estates.

An important result of this Pilot has been the identification of key policy areas where urgent action is required to increase support for highly disadvantaged children and families, to prevent homelessness for these families. These areas include: housing, income security, education, child care, parenting, children’s development, community health and implementing a strengths approach to build stronger communities. Key findings and “learnings” relating to these policy areas are summarised in pages 4-9 of this Executive Summary.

Specific recommendations based on the “learnings” of the Caravan Parks Pilot are made to assist the Commonwealth to further identify parents and children who are disadvantaged, and to address obvious disparities in opportunities to ensure that each child, no matter where they live, has the best possible outcomes. In this way the Commonwealth will build on the substantial investment in this Pilot and on its significant achievements.

## **1. Housing**

### **Key Findings:**

- Families in crisis living in the targeted caravan parks experienced tertiary homelessness due to living in conditions which fall below minimum standards: These families had extremely limited housing options and were further disadvantaged by being placed on tenancy data bases with no monitoring or appeal processes. Tenancy legislation to protect caravan park residents is weak and difficult to enforce and families have limited understanding of their rights and felt inadequate in exercising their rights.
- In depth and longitudinal research is urgently required to provide accurate data on the extent and causes of poverty and homelessness for families in crisis living on caravan parks across Australia.
- Building a climate of trust with families was the cornerstone for all future work.

### **Key Learnings:**

- Educating other local services about housing issues for families in caravan parks and developing an integrated local response was essential given the limited resources of the pilot projects and the extent of crisis for some families.
- Equally important was to disseminate findings from the Pilot as these emerged and to advocate on these issues at state and national level in order to influence policy.

## **2. Income Security**

### **Key findings:**

- Families and other park residents experienced poverty caused by a number of factors. These include Centrelink breaching of unemployed family members due to failure to meet activity test requirements or other administrative requirements, public housing debts, limited access to emergency relief and multiple crises happening simultaneously.
- There were discrepancies across states and territories in how Centrelink defined and interpreted homelessness as it applied to people living in caravan parks and, despite the number of Centrelink services available to disadvantaged individuals and families, families of the caravan parks were not accessing these.

### **Key Learnings:**

- When pilot projects were proactive in establishing links with local Centrelink offices, Centrelink staff became more aware of families in caravan parks as clients at risk of homelessness and in some cases were able to change their practices and consider outreach strategies to assist families access the service.
- It was not realistic to expect workers and families to engage in prevention activities when the families were already in crisis, given that poverty is a huge societal issue.
- Family Support Workers are an essential element in work with families in crisis. Due to multi dimensional nature of this work these workers should be employed full time if they are to work effectively in more than one park and one local community.
- The Pilot had very limited ability to provide the amount of emergency relief required for the families presenting at playgroup who were in crisis.

### **3. Education**

#### **Key Findings:**

- The main focus of attention of the Pilots was on families with young children, however pilot projects have exposed serious issues relating to education and school attendance for children living on parks. Large numbers of school-aged children were not attending school, either because they were not enrolled or were not attending. In some cases older children were acting as primary carers to their younger siblings or being responsible for other children in the playgroup when a parent or carer was not present. Older children attended playgroup as there was no other recreational or social activities for them on the park and this caused difficulties for playgroup operation due to different age related needs.

#### **Key Learnings:**

- Schools and local service providers have to be engaged to draw attention to numbers of children not attending school and develop strategies to address this.
- Creative strategies are needed to meet the immediate needs of this neglected group by providing on park age appropriate activities and bring in other services to provide after school and vacation activities.

### **4. Child Care**

This section refers both to the care of children within the playgroup environment and to mainstream services funded by the Commonwealth.

#### **Key Findings:**

- Parents may either not attend playgroup or only attend sporadically due to complex needs of families. This means an ongoing tension between meeting organisational legal requirements for parental attendance and supervision at playgroups, and understanding parents need to have “time out”.
- Parents who have a more transient lifestyle have very limited access to mainstream child care services, family day care, long day care, occasional care or pre-schools for their young children and at times make poor choices about informal child care.

#### **Key Learnings:**

- Constant encouragement of parents is needed to attend with their children and participate in playgroup activities. Craft for parents has proved an effective strategy.
- Where services are limited to providing activities only when there is a parent or carer present, this impacts on ability to provide developmental opportunities for the children.
- Mainstream childcare services must be alerted to the special circumstances for these families who are unable to access childcare in the current system.

## **5. Parenting**

### **Key Findings:**

- Role modelling and increasing parental awareness of child development had a positive effect on the parent/child relationship. Parents showed an increased willingness to learn more about their children and to try new activities and more positive ways of interacting with their children.
- Where playgroups were run once or twice weekly with regularly attending families it was possible to note continuing improvement in parent child relationships. With sporadic attendance, small positive incremental changes can still be observed.
- However, the degree of crisis experienced by families, impacts significantly on their ability to focus on parenting and child focused issues. Observing the long-term outcomes of such early intervention strategies is problematic where services have limited contact over time with families.

### **Key Learnings:**

- The successful engagement of families over time was due to the welcoming and positive approach of pilot staff, the non-threatening nature of playgroup activities and the maintenance of a regular presence on the park. It takes time to develop trusting relationships and it is this trust that enables workers to exert influence and address issues with the families.
- Parents themselves need to learn about and experience the importance of play and creativity so that they can respond to and appreciate their children's needs.
- A designated family support worker role, in addition to an early childhood and early intervention focus is essential. This worker(s) can meet immediate crisis needs, work one to one with families to develop prevention strategies, and promote integration of other services to build on playgroup.
- Parents face difficulties in being accepted at unsupported playgroups in local community settings and a considerable amount of staff time is required to support these parents. It takes time to change the organisational culture of playgroup associations in a respectful way, so that these organisations are able to fully engage with families who experience a significant degree of disadvantage.

## **6. Childrens Development (Social ,emotional ,physical)**

### **Key Findings:**

- Pre school aged children have very limited opportunities for developmental activities outside the playgroup and playgroup was often the highlight of the week for them. Children living on caravan parks are very vulnerable as a consequence of poor living conditions. Risk factors include domestic violence, child abuse and/or neglect, lack of any safe play areas and increased difficulties for parents in maintaining normal routines of family life such as toileting, bathing or supervising their children.
- It was important to provide a predictable routine, both flexible and semi structured, in playgroup for children and parents who may otherwise have little structure or control in their lives.

### **Key Learnings:**

- Child focused playgroups were effective mechanisms for entry into the lives of the families living on parks. It was important that playgroup be a weekly or bi weekly event in spite of fluctuating numbers.
- Early intervention activities as offered in the playgroup setting must be offered within the context of a wider support structure for children and their families, given the crisis situations faced by families.
- To successfully conduct playgroup on parks and provide extended support requires the services of skilled staff with extensive experience in child development, family support and community development.
- The long-term outcomes of such early intervention strategies are difficult to measure when services have limited contact over time with families.

## **7. Community Health and Agency Linkages**

### **Key Findings:**

- Families were not accessing community and government services due to social and geographic isolation, lack of information and reluctance for some to approach agencies due to past histories of drug/alcohol abuse, violence, child abuse, mental illness, or financial difficulties.
- Agencies had limited knowledge of the unique circumstances facing park residents.
- Issues of privacy, safety, and park operator attitudes, impacted negatively on development of stronger communities within the parks.

### **Key Learnings:**

- Children were missing out on a range of health related services and agencies have to be actively educated, engaged, and encouraged to provide responsive services eg outreach services.
- Considerable time needed to be allocated to develop service networks to reduce isolation of families, and to build trust and rapport with families to facilitate their access to services.
- It was easier to raise awareness of issues and advocate for change when there was a well-established network of agencies interested in caravan park issues, for example the Onsite Network of South East Queensland.
- It was important to engage park operators in the project.

## **8. Strengths Approach**

The Pilot trialled the practical application of a strengths approach. This meant identification of, and building on, the strengths of families and their children. Pilot projects were aware that the many critical and serious issues impacting on the families can lead to the adoption of a ‘deficit’ approach where families are regarded as victims and unable to take responsibility for themselves.

### **Key Findings:**

- Parents and children often need help to be able to identify what they are doing well. Positive reinforcement resulted in improved self-esteem and subsequent decision making abilities.
- Using a strengths approach assisted workers to focus on the positives and this helped other stakeholders make positive changes in their attitudes towards families.

### **Key Learnings:**

- All families have strengths. A consistent focus on these strengths by workers enabled people to introduce positive changes albeit in small incremental steps.
- Smaller numbers at playgroup maximised one to one opportunities to recognise and focus on strengths of parents and children.
- To challenge a deficit approach and move to a strengths focus is a slow process due to systemic and cultural issues. Training for workers in applying a strengths approach was important and relevant.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **To The Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services**

#### **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION**

##### **HOUSING**

1. The Department of Family and Community Services should initiate strong partnerships within the Department (goals, resources and priorities) by requiring joint funding initiatives with certain percentages of allocated funds to ensure cross fertilisation of ideas and strategies to meet the needs of families at risk of homelessness and living in caravan parks. For example, closer links between Centrelink, Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), Emergency Relief, the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, National Homelessness Strategy and Child Care.

##### **INCOME SECURITY**

2. Urgent negotiations be undertaken with Centrelink to redefine and promote nationally a definition of homelessness which includes people living in caravan parks whose living standards fall below minimum standards. This is to improve access to income support through Centrelink and to provide a benchmark for use by Centrelink staff in assessing and meeting the needs of caravan park residents.

##### **MODEL OF BEST PRACTICE FOR SERVICE DELIVERY**

3. Key elements of the model of service delivery, Playgroup Plus developed by this national Caravan Parks Pilot, be included in future project implementation.  
(Please see Section 9 at Page 36 for discussion of this model.)

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONGER TERM ACTION**

##### **HOUSING**

1. Strong representation be made to the Federal Privacy Commissioner and to appropriate state government agencies responsible for consumer affairs and fair trading, for the purpose of regulating the collection and handling of personal information contained in tenancy data bases, to ensure information used to check the rental history of people who apply for rental properties is accurate, fair and contestable.
2. The Department of Family and Community Services should initiate strong partnerships within the Department (goals, resources and priorities) by requiring joint funding initiatives with certain percentages of allocated funds, to ensure cross fertilisation of ideas and strategies to meet the needs of families at risk of homelessness and living in caravan parks. For example, closer links between Centrelink, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), Emergency Relief, the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, the National Homelessness Strategy and Child Care.
3. Urgent reassessment of public housing resources in the Tweed area to be undertaken by state and federal governments for the purpose of addressing a critical housing shortage.

4. A future network funding model be developed by the Commonwealth to progress integration of services and agencies necessary to fully respond to crisis needs of park residents. This model would provide funding to develop and resource state/local networks of government and non government agencies with a main focus on caravan parks. Such networks would act as a forum for the exchange of information and co-ordinate community initiatives. This would include emergency relief, counselling, and support to service providers to improve access to and acceptance on parks. In addition the network would co-ordinate crisis responses such as responses to park closures and evictions.
5. Substantial project implementation funding be provided by the Department of Family and Community Services to capitalise on the investment in and substantial achievements of the Caravan Parks Pilot in the four sites.
6. Provide targeted funding to stimulate short and long term research to inform policy makers on the use of caravan parks as permanent accommodation and the implications for homelessness. This is essential due to the absence of consistent and comprehensive research data in this area.

## INCOME SECURITY

7. Urgent negotiations be undertaken with Centrelink to redefine and promote nationally a definition of homelessness which includes people living in caravan parks whose living standards fall below minimum standards. This is to improve access to income support through Centrelink and to provide a benchmark for use by Centrelink staff in assessing and meeting the needs of caravan park residents.
8. Strong partnerships be developed between community service providers, clients and Centrelink and protocols be established to stabilise caravan park families housing and financial circumstances.
9. Flexible, low key outreach services should be provided by Centrelink to meet demonstrated needs of caravan park residents.

## CHILD CARE

10. That the Minister focus funding for child care services on special programs for families and children living on caravan parks to address the obvious disparities in opportunities to access child care services.

## COMMUNITY HEALTH AND AGENCY LINKAGES

11. That the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy prioritise investigation into building healthy communities within the caravan park community itself, and include caravan park communities in the broader community.

## MODEL OF SERVICE DELIVERY

12. Provide future projects working intensively with caravan park communities and people suffering housing stress and degrees of homelessness with training, resources, time and

incentives to enable quality evaluation and research using a participatory action research process.

13. Work with Playgroup Associations nationally to critically examine core business, and achievements and challenges when delivering outreach services for families living in caravan parks, for the purpose of determining whether these associations are willing and able to take a lead role in service provision to families at risk of homelessness.
14. Up front capital funding is essential for projects engaged in park work for a fully equipped van to carry play equipment and shelter facilities.
15. Key elements of the model of service delivery, Playgroup Plus developed by this national Caravan Parks Pilot be included in future project implementation.  
(Please see Section 9 at Page 36 for the discussion of this model)

## TRAINING SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

16. As a minimum requirement to ensure success in maximising learning opportunities through action research implementation, the Department of Family and Community Services should bring key stakeholders together at the beginning, middle and end of every funded program or project. Stakeholders should include management of funded services, workers on the ground, people from FaCS National Office representing policy areas, and FACS State and Territory Officers.
17. At the meeting mid way through the program or project, the key stakeholders should assess the progress of the program or project, make adjustments and ensure necessary information is in place for the final evaluation.
18. Action research questions and performance indicators should be consistent across all funded programs and projects, and national policy areas.
19. Agreement should be negotiated for an ongoing networking and communication process between the funded services, those from FaCS National Office representing policy areas, and FACS State and Territory Officers. Funding resources should be made available by FACS to ensure the success of an ongoing communication and networking process.

### **3 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

Funding for the national action research component of the Caravan Parks Pilot is located under the National Homelessness Strategy within the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services.

The National Dissemination Program (NDP) of the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle, was engaged to provide national co-ordination and facilitation of the action research approach undertaken by the Pilot projects and to inform the Department, through the National Homelessness Strategy, on important emerging issues for families living on caravan parks whom are at risk of homelessness.

The purpose of this Final Report is to:

- 1) Highlight key issues impacting on families and children at risk of homelessness living in caravan parks.
- 2) Draw out key policy and project implementation information from the actions and “learnings” during the Pilot phase of the Family Caravan Park Pilots, and;
- 3) Make recommendations to the Department of Family and Community Services based on 1) and 2).

For more detailed information regarding the setting up and implementation of child and parent services the reader is directed to the following sources:

- The Progress Reports provided by the individual Pilot projects to the Department of Family and Community Services Child Care Section.
- The Training Package developed by the NDP in collaboration with the Pilot projects. This Package includes examples of practical tools to support community agencies wishing to work with families living in caravan parks.

### **4 SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON WHICH THIS REPORT IS BASED**

- Individual state Pilot project reports to the Department of Family and Community Services on Performance Indicators against agreed benchmarks.
- National Teleconference transcripts.
- Minutes from Community Reflection Groups, Community Forums and the National Planning and Review Days for Pilot participants (FACS, Pilot project staff and the NDP) held March 2001 and 2002.
- Reports from regular local Pilot project team action research reflection meetings from four sites using the framework of nationally agreed questions.
- Notes from discussions with stakeholders on regular site visits made by NDP.
- The National Key Stakeholders Survey carried out by the NDP in 2002
- Regular Interim Progress Reports provided by NDP to the Department of FACS

## 5 HOMELESSNESS AND CARAVAN PARK RESIDENCY

The Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness (appointed in October 2000) acknowledges that homelessness affects all kinds of people and encourages policy makers and practitioners to look beyond the various myths surrounding homelessness and to recognize the diversity of homeless people and their experience “*Working towards a Homelessness Strategy*” Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness 2001.

In recognition of this diversity, three distinct kinds of homelessness have been identified. These are:

**Primary homelessness** experienced by people without conventional accommodation (eg sleeping rough and in improvised dwellings).

**Secondary homelessness** experienced by people who frequently move from one temporary shelter to another (eg emergency accommodation, youth refuges, friends’ places).

**Tertiary homelessness** experienced by people staying in accommodation that falls below minimum community standards ( eg some boarding houses and caravan parks).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics in the 2001 Census of Australian populations used this definition in its collection of data.

**A significant number of caravan park residents should be considered as experiencing all three degrees of homelessness as they move between limited housing options.**

The extent of the risk of homelessness for caravan park residents is often hidden due to this transience. Such residents are unable to access public or private rental for reasons that are both personal and structural. Outstanding debts, rent arrears, and covert discrimination due to placement on a tenancy database are some of the contributing factors. Other families may not be “housing ready”, because they may lack the skills and knowledge to secure and maintain private rental. Lack of affordable and available housing stock is a huge barrier. Some agencies use caravan parks as a form of crisis housing.

As a consequence, these people are forced to stay in accommodation that falls below minimum community standards in terms of overcrowding, lack of privacy and limited access to essential facilities such as bathrooms, toilets and kitchens. In effect, experiencing tertiary homelessness.

In addition, park residents experience multiple social problems that are compounded by inadequate housing, a more transient lifestyle and exclusion from government initiated policies and practices.

## 6 SCOPE OF PILOT

Based on case studies of individual caravan parks in Queensland, Northern Territory, South Australia and New South Wales the Commonwealth identified families living in caravan parks as experiencing tertiary homelessness.

While poor standards of housing experienced in some caravan parks affect all groups of people, families with children are particularly vulnerable. Additional risk factors include domestic violence, child protection concerns, lack of safe play areas and increased difficulties for families in maintaining the normal routines of family life. Living in restricted physical communities which are not family friendly can lead to criminalisation of ordinary childhood activities by park operators and other residents. Free play, bike riding or ball games are limited or actively prevented, this in turn places more stress on the parents or care givers faced with potential eviction as a consequence.

The purpose of the Caravan Parks Pilot was to provide the Commonwealth with important information about such families who had previously been neglected in policy and practice. It was anticipated that this grounded, practice based learning would provide input into broad policy questions around the extent of homelessness of families in caravan parks, how tertiary homelessness could be prevented and what effective early intervention strategies were needed to reach, assist and build capabilities of these families.

The key strategy for the Caravan Parks Pilot was to provide local, non-threatening and child focused support to families with children living in residential caravan parks (as opposed to tourist parks), and who are identified as being at risk of housing stress and homelessness.

### **Operational Model**

The mechanism for entry into the lives of families was through weekly playgroups with extra capacity to engage other services and to facilitate early intervention strategies addressing a number of factors that contribute towards homelessness. Intensive work was carried out in eight parks across the four Pilot projects.

This operational model (supported playgroups with extra capacity) was implemented by all four Pilot projects. Different models of service delivery were investigated within the context of this operational model and the outcomes reported in Section 9 of this report at page 36.

In Pilot projects Queensland and Tweed/Gold Coast, Family Support Workers were employed who worked alongside playgroup staff. Two options were explored. In the Brisbane caravan park, a Family Support staff member worked twenty-one hours per week. Save the Children Queensland was already working in this park with their Mobile "PlayScheme". In the Tweed/Gold Coast parks, the part-time Family Support Worker position was spread across three sites. No established child and family services were currently working in these parks.

In addition, these Queensland and Tweed/Gold Coast Pilot projects trialled an innovative partnership of two agencies, Save the Children Q and Playgroup Queensland within its staffing arrangements.

In the Northern Territory, capital funds were allocated to provide an all weather onsite venue on one selected park in view of the extreme weather conditions in the Territory.

The Pilot project in South Australia trialed a team of two trained staff, one worker was a qualified social worker and the other a qualified teacher to jointly develop and implement the Pilot.

Experience in working with families in caravan parks varied between the organisations delivering the Pilot projects. Save the Children Queensland was very experienced in working with families on parks and advocating for these families over many years. Playgroup Associations of South Australia and Northern Territory had responsibility for implementing their Pilot projects as the lead agencies and piloted an outreach model to local caravan parks for the first time. Playgroup Queensland collaborated with Save the Children Q in the delivery of the service in Queensland and Tweed/Gold Coast).

## **7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The Commonwealth provided resources to implement a participatory action research approach. The NDP was engaged to provide national co-ordination and facilitation of this process. This approach meant that participants worked in regular cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting where each cycle can inform the next stage of the research. As a result, practitioners have the opportunity to continually learn, integrate change and improve the effectiveness of their actions.

Systematic documentation of “learnings” at local and national levels was undertaken by the local Pilot projects and the NDP. These “learnings” were underpinned by comprehensive quantitative data. (Please see Appendix E for a summary table of statistics compiled from the four sites). The NDP carried out a national Key Stakeholders Survey to develop a shared language across stakeholders in all Pilot projects with which participants could describe and evaluate their experiences.

(Please see Appendix D for the Summary of the Key Stakeholder Survey Report)

The purpose of this action research approach was threefold.

Firstly, to provide a framework in which to develop and trial national and local strategies, to extract key “learnings” and competencies and to ensure that on the ground research informed policy makers as the project evolved. Using action research strongly influenced the agenda of the Caravan Parks Pilot, the determination of the national and local action research questions and the extent of the partnerships developed.

Secondly, to create a research/evaluation culture where the practitioners and other key stakeholders felt closely engaged in the process, had access to resources and skills needed and saw the benefits of the process and the outcomes for the groups with which they were working and for their own practice. (Please see Section 10 at Page 40 for an analysis of this process)

Key areas of enquiry were around child development, parent /child relationships, engaging mobile families, increasing housing options, facilitation of awareness of and access to community and family oriented services, and incorporating a strengths approach to underpin project development. These were framed as seven national action research questions.

(Please see Appendix C for National Action Research Questions)

Thirdly, to use a research process responsive and flexible enough to encompass constantly changing family and caravan park community dynamics. These include high levels of mobility, insecurity of tenure, and complex needs resulting from disadvantage and dislocation in their lives.

## 8 KEY FINDINGS AND LEARNINGS

### 8.1 HOUSING

Pilot projects identified critical housing issues that impact on families in crisis on caravan parks. These include sub standard housing, lack of available public housing stock and other housing options, inadequate tenancy rights and homelessness caused by poverty. Two Pilot projects (Q and Tweed/Gold Coast), reported that the majority of their Family Support Workers' face to face counselling time was spent dealing with housing issues. It was noted that the complexity of these issues and subsequent dilemmas created continue to be the main challenge of any park work. The other Pilot projects (SA and NT) also reported that access to adequate housing was a major issue for the families with whom they came in contact.

#### Key Finding One

**Families in crisis living on targeted caravan parks in the four sites experienced tertiary homelessness with living conditions falling well below the accepted minimum community standards.**

*Pilot projects reported that families lived in sub standard conditions in caravans where they eat, sleep and socialise in one room with no privacy for parents and exposing children to unnecessary stress. Poor standards in shared amenities (toilets and showers, laundries), inadequate or non existent physical safety provisions were commonly observed. Caravans do not provide adequate protection from inclement weather, heat, humidity, rain and cold, nor were there community facilities such as community rooms or play areas for families to use.*

#### **Key Learnings**

- Educating community and other agencies about conditions on parks using local practice based information was essential in order to raise awareness of issues relating to homelessness, to encourage advocacy around these issues and to promote collaboration and provision of an integrated response to families' needs.

*Pilot projects took a lead role in this process of informing and alerting community services, government agencies and politicians. Mechanisms to achieve this were: building new networks or expanding established ones; organizing community forums and Reflection Groups where community agencies assisted staff with targeted questions arising from the action research process; lobbying politicians, providing information to the Department of Family and Community Service's National Homelessness Strategy and direct referrals of families to housing and helping agencies.*

*Successful outcomes were clearly linked to the energy and enthusiasm of the project staff, their capacity to network and their skills in being able to move between early intervention child and parent focused activities, crisis management and wider community development activities. In addition, the*

*resources and credibility of the organizations delivering the Pilot project were important factors.*

*One Pilot project (South Australia), reported that there was an initial lack of interest in the project due, the workers believed, to the fact that it was run by a playgroup association. It was evident that local agencies perceived that this organization played a more traditional role in delivering support services to families where parents were responsible for organizing and running the playgroup. Subsequently, once agencies were clear about the scope of the project and ability of the organization to deliver, the interest and subsequent support was considerable.*

### **Key Finding Two**

#### **Families living in target parks had extremely limited housing options.**

*Pilot projects reported that families were unable to access public or private rental stock due to existing rent arrears, other outstanding debts or lack of available public housing stock. Lack of access to housing was exacerbated for some families who were placed on tenancy data bases with no monitoring or appeal processes. Tenancy data bases are used to check the history of people who apply for rental properties, All Pilot projects reported a loss of accommodation through evictions as a consequence of change in park designation, for example changing from a permanent to tourist focus, or threatened park closures.*

### **Key Learnings**

- Developing an integrated service response to the needs of target parks was crucial given the limited resources of the Caravan Parks Pilot and the extent of crisis for some of the families.

*In the Tweed, the Pilot project reported that the needs of families on target parks far outstripped the capacity of staff to address these needs. One park was the only housing option for families with housing debts or histories of evictions. Development work undertaken by the Pilot project highlighted that the lack of housing stock in the Tweed is a huge issue with many years waiting list for public housing. SAAP agencies and others are forced to use caravan parks and motels in this area for crisis accommodation as there are no emergency housing or exit points. Working with other agencies was a key strategy to develop a more integrated approach for service provision and to mobilise government agencies to action.*

### **Key Finding Three**

**Building a climate of trust between families and Pilot project staff was the cornerstone for any future work around housing, income support and other issues.**

### **Key Learning**

- Many families are distrustful of agencies and some are in caravan parks because they wish to remain anonymous. Once trust was established, staff could assist with housing, income and personal support, through with face-to-face counselling, provision of emergency relief or assisting access to emergency relief, provision of information and direct referral to other helping agencies. Staff reported that it was important to build up confidence in the families' ability to deal with situations themselves, however this could take a long time.

### **Key Finding Four**

**Housing options for families living on caravan parks are further limited due to use of tenancy data bases.**

*Pilot projects in Q and NSW reported a number of instances where residents faced covert discrimination by their placement on tenancy data bases with no monitoring or appeal processes. In Pilot projects (SA and NT) there were less reported instances however workers became alert to the possible use of tenancy data bases when families could not obtain private rental.*

### **Key Learning**

- It was important to disseminate information and advocate on these issues.

*Pilots projects raised this issue nationally through the National Homelessness Strategy and lobbied key agencies to advocate for these residents. In one instance, Pilot project (Q) participated in a national survey to raise awareness of the prevalence and impact of housing discrimination through listing on tenancy data bases.*

### **Key Finding Five**

**Tenancy legislation to protect residents of caravan parks is weak and difficult to enforce. Families had very limited understanding of tenancy rights and felt inadequate in exercising these rights.**

### **Key learning**

- Collecting on the ground experiences of park residents can impact on wider understandings and leads to change.

*The Pilot project (NT) highlighted weak tenancy legislation in the Northern Territory. This followed a spate of evictions in their target park due to a change from a permanent to tourist focus. Seeking help for these residents revealed that the tenancy legislation in the Territory does not cover park residents nor is there a peak organisation such as Tenants Union or Park Residents Association to advocate for residents. The project workers found that park residents were unwilling to take up legitimate claims against the park operators. This was in part due to the transient nature of their stay, the*

*actual limitations around successfully negotiating a claim, and a real fear of reprisal leading to loss of the only available housing. Improvement in legislation is a long-term process, however, the Pilot project (NT) provided important practice based information to government agencies and community services to stimulate work in this area.*

*In SA, the Pilot project worked with a peak housing organisation, Shelter SA, to facilitate park residents' input into changes to that state's residential tenancy laws.*

Case study: SA state government called for a review of the Tenancy Act. Shelter SA, which takes an active role in advocating for tenancy rights of long term residents of caravan parks, put forward a response to the discussion paper. Project staff introduced the worker from Shelter SA to residents of one park. This led to a focus group and a petition signed by a large portion of the residents. The Pilot project workers reported some animosity by park management at the start of this process, park management subsequently improved interactions with residents.

### **Key Finding Six**

**In depth and longitudinal research at national and local levels is urgently required to find out more about families in crisis who live on parks as government agencies and services require reliable data on which to plan their services.**

### **Key Learnings**

- Community services and government agencies did not include caravan park residents in planning for and delivery of services.
- Statistics on numbers of families on parks were difficult to collect from park operators, either they did not know the exact numbers of children or they may not have wanted the service to come on to the parks. Regular monitoring of numbers of families and children at local level needs to be carried out by service agencies.

Case study: NT pilot project reported low numbers of families in the target NT park. Project officers began to ask questions about where families were located if not in the one specific park. Through a local community forum the workers initiated a discussion among key service providers about how to best research this question.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Strong representation be made to the Federal Privacy Commissioner and to appropriate state government agencies responsible for consumer affairs and fair trading, for the purpose of regulating the collection and handling of personal information contained in tenancy data bases, to ensure information used to check the rental history of people who apply for rental properties is accurate, fair and contestable.
2. The Department of Family and Community Services should initiate strong partnerships within the Department (goals, resources, priorities) by requiring joint funding initiatives with certain percentages of allocated funds, to ensure cross fertilisation of ideas and strategies to meet the needs of families at risk of homelessness. For example closer links between Centrelink, SAAP, Emergency Relief, the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, National Homelessness Strategy and Family Relationships and Child Care.
3. Urgent reassessment of public housing resources in the Tweed area of NSW to be undertaken by state and federal governments for the purpose of addressing a critical housing shortage.
4. A future network funding model be developed by the Commonwealth to progress integration of services and agencies necessary to fully respond to crisis needs of park residents. This model would provide funding to develop and resource state/local networks of government and non-government agencies with a main focus on caravan parks. Such networks would act as a forum for the exchange of information and co-ordinate community initiatives. This would include emergency relief, counselling, and support to service providers to improve access to and acceptance on parks. In addition the network would co-ordinate crisis responses such as responses to park closures and evictions.
5. Substantial project implementation funding be provided by the Department of Family and Community Services to capitalise on the investment in and substantial achievements of the Caravan Parks Pilot in the four sites.
6. Provide targeted funding to stimulate short and long term research to inform policy makers on the use of caravan parks as permanent accommodation and the implications for homelessness. This is essential due to the absence of consistent and comprehensive research data in this area.

## 8.2 INCOME SECURITY

### Key Findings

- 1. Families and other park residents experienced poverty caused by public housing debts, Centrelink breaching of unemployed members of families due to failure to meet activity test requirements or not meeting other administrative requirements, limited access to emergency relief and multiple crises happening simultaneously.**
- 2. There were discrepancies across states/territory in how Centrelink defined and interpreted homelessness as it applied to people living in caravan parks.**
- 3. While there are a number of Centrelink services available for disadvantaged individuals and families, families on caravan parks were not accessing these.**

### Key Learnings

- It was important to be proactive in establishing links with local Centrelink offices to provide case studies of clients who are at risk of homelessness and to illustrate that some of these clients are among the most disadvantaged of Centrelink clients.

*One positive response to this process was reported by Pilot project (NT) where the local Centrelink officers visited the targeted park and offered to provide an outreach service monthly. This was conditional on an onsite van to be sited on the park with facilities for an office. This has not occurred due to changes in NT staffing, management and scope of Pilot and qualified approval from park operator.*

- It was also important to raise these issues at a national level. This occurred through Caravan Parks Pilot findings to the Department of FACS and representations made to the Minister of Children and Youth, Larry Anthony, by Save the Children Q and Playgroup Q about issues for homeless families living in caravan parks.
- Poverty is a huge societal issue, it is therefore unrealistic to expect workers and the families to engage in prevention activities when the families are already in crisis.

*Across three Pilot projects the degree of crisis intervention and corresponding stress on workers was high. This was compounded in Tweed and Brisbane parks by the presence of a large number of families in crisis. South Australia reported a lower number of families this meant that staff could work more closely with families and draw on the support of other agencies. Pilot project NT reported a low number of families overall coupled with high mobility. The ability of the Pilot project NT to respond to and follow up families in crisis was limited by frequent turn over of staff and the experience and skills of staff in taking on crisis management work. Pilot projects reported that some workers who were new to the field, were initially shocked by the levels of poverty and crisis experienced by the families with whom they were interacting.*

- In order for a Family Support Worker to work effectively in more than one park and one local community, their hours of work must be full time. This is due to the multi-dimensional nature of crisis work, the need to build trust with families and the time required to network with local agencies to provide more integrated support for park communities.
- Provision of emergency relief was limited as was the capacity of staff to provide this. Strategies must be put in place to deal with these limitations. For example Pilot project Q developed a local resource directory incorporating the local emergency relief agencies so that people could contact the agencies themselves.

Case study: In Case Study Number One in Appendix A, the Family Support Worker outlines the process of assisting one family evicted from a caravan park for non payment of rent. This process included urgent negotiations with support agencies for crisis housing, transport and storage of the family's belongings and subsequent transport to more permanent housing. The worker helped the parents with strategies to better approach agencies, provided on going support while they re-established themselves and dealt with issues of attachment of the family to their worker.

*"We have a better appreciation of the issues faced by residents, the tenuous nature of tenancy and the issues involving homelessness".* Centrelink Noarlunga  
(Source: Pilot project SA Service Provider Survey)

*"The caravan park workers have been instrumental in raising awareness of the conditions, obstacles and challenges for families living in caravan parks. This information has been useful for Housing Advisors at South Australia Housing Trust as Advisors now have a better understanding of the likelihood of families in caravan parks fitting the SA Housing Trust's homelessness or at risk criteria for early housing, assessment and assistance."* SA Housing Trust  
(Source: Pilot project SA Service Provider Survey)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7. Urgent negotiations be undertaken with Centrelink redefine and promote nationally a definition of homelessness which includes people living on caravan parks whose living standards fall below minimum standards. This is to improve access to income support through Centrelink and provide a benchmark for use by Centrelink staff in meeting the needs of park residents.
8. Strong partnerships be developed between Centrelink, clients and community service providers and protocols established to stabilise caravan park families housing and financial circumstances.
9. Flexible low-key outreach services should be provided by Centrelink to meet demonstrated needs of park residents.

### 8.3 EDUCATION

The Caravan Parks Pilot's main focus of attention was on families with young children. However, the Pilot projects have exposed serious issues relating to education and school attendance for children living on caravan parks.

#### Key Findings

- 1. Large numbers of school-aged children were not attending school. These children were either not enrolled or were not attending.**
- 2. There were older children attending playgroups with younger children. This caused difficulties due to different age related needs.**
- 3. Older children were acting as primary carers for their younger siblings or other children.**

#### Key Learnings

- That creative strategies need to be put in place to meet the immediate needs of this neglected group by providing age specific activities while at the same time ensuring the safety of the younger children.
- That organisations need to check policies and procedures regarding extending playgroup to older children.
- That schools and local service providers should be engaged to draw attention to the numbers of children non enrolled or not attending school and to encourage closer links.

Case Studies: Q Pilot project facilitated a local committee with Save the Children Q and the local school which has facilitated enrolment and attendance of school aged children at the local school. Through the Family Support Worker, families have been helped with uniforms and other necessary items.

SA Pilot project worked with parents to encourage school participation and utilised their own organisation (Playgroup Association of SA) resources to provide an extra worker in holiday time to be responsible for activities and supervision. Circus activities were the theme. This allowed Pilot project workers to concentrate on the younger children and their parents.

Case Studies (con't):

Pilot project (Tweed/Gold Coast) linked with another agency to offer an art therapy workshop to meet some of the needs of older children. This was successful as there was good participation and children were able to express and deal with a number of issues around grief and loss.

Wendy presented from interstate with three children aged seven, six and two years. Her school aged children had only accessed school for less than one term. The children's behaviour was destructive and created animosity with other park residents and management. Workers encouraged the mother to enrol the children in school even though they planned to move. The workers noticed significant delays in the children, for example the seven year old could not write her name. The children started school within a week and their behaviour showed a steady improvement over the next four months.

## 8.4 CHILD CARE

In this section, Child Care refers to

- a) care given to the children in the playgroup environment and,
- b) to government funded Child Care services

In the traditional model of community playgroups, parents attend playgroup with their children and are responsible for supervision of their children while interacting with other children and parents.

### Key Findings

1. **Due to the complex needs of families, some parents either did not attend playgroup or attended only sporadically.**
2. **Organisations have had to re-examine their organizational, structural and legal status in response to children attending playgroup without their parents.**
3. **Parents who are more transient have no access to long day care, family day care, occasional care or pre-schools for their young children and, at times, make poor choices about child care.**

Case Studies: Having to go to an appointment, a single father leaves his two young children in the care of a newly met male acquaintance who had moved into the park two days previously.

Older siblings take care of younger children and bring them to playgroup.

### **Key Learnings**

- That constant encouragement of parents is required to attend with their children and participate in activities. Having adult activities, for example craft, is a great strategy.
- That services need to be flexible to meet the immediate needs of these families. Parents living in cramped vans with no play space and a constant need to supervise children outside the van need some form of respite care. Forms of organised child care are often not available to them due to length of waiting lists, transience and lack of suitable transport. There is an on going tension between meeting organisation legal requirements for parental attendance and supervision at playgroups and parental needs for time out, knowing that their children are safe, active and enjoying themselves.
- Other services have to be alerted to families needs and encouraged to provide access to child-care for families unable to access care in the current system.

**RECOMMENDATION**

10. That the Minister focus funding for child care services on special programs for families and children living on caravan parks to address the obvious disparities in opportunities to access child care services.

## 8.5 PARENTING

### Key Findings

- 1. Role modelling and increasing parents' awareness about child development has a positive effect on the parent child relationship. Parents showed an increased willingness to learn more about their children and to try new activities and ways of interacting with their children.**
- 2. Where playgroups are run once or twice weekly with regularly attending families it is possible to note continuing improvement in the parent child relationship. With sporadic attendance, small, positive incremental changes can be observed.**
- 3. The degree of crisis experienced by families impacts significantly on their ability to focus on parenting and child focused issues.**
- 4. Parents required intensive support when linked with external playgroups on leaving the park.**
- 5. Male carers were difficult to engage in playgroup activities.**

### Key Learnings

- Successful engagement of families over time was due to the welcoming and positive approach of Pilot project staff, the non-threatening nature of the playgroup activity and maintenance of a regular presence on the park.
- It takes time to build trusting relationships and it is this trust that enables the workers to exert influence and to address the issues with the families.

Case Study: Pilot project SA reported making two child protection notifications to relevant authorities. This was successful as the project workers were able to maintain contact with and support these two families due to the trust built up over time. Playgroup Association SA implemented strategies to train, mentor and support staff during this process.

- Parents need to learn about and experience the importance of play and creativity themselves so that they could appreciate their children's needs.

Case Study: Pilot project Tweed/Gold coast initiated parent craft activities which proved very popular.

- A designated Family Support Worker role in addition to early childhood and early intervention focus was essential. This worker could undertake crisis management in order to meet the immediate needs of families as well as developing prevention strategies such as helping families create positive relationships with other services. This was particularly important on parks where there are high numbers of children attending playgroup, and high numbers of parents in stressful situations.
- A considerable amount of staff resources are required to support parents access community based playgroups. For some families this requires a huge shift in self-esteem and the ability to negotiate relationships with other parents and their children. Playgroup Q reported that very limited numbers of families were successfully integrated in to community playgroups due to complex issues in supporting these families and the time needed to build family's strengths in a slow and respectful way. Changing the organisational culture of playgroup associations and their members also takes time.
- Men who were either sole parents or partners were slower to engage in playgroup activities and to seek support from the workers. In some instances the men were actively hostile. Building trust was a key element in dispelling real or potential hostility and Pilot project workers found ways to engage the men in areas where they felt they could contribute. For example organising a BBQ or bringing a guitar and singing at playgroup.

## 8.6 CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT (SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL)

### Key Findings

1. To successfully conduct playgroups on caravan parks and provide extended support for parents requires the services of skilled staff with extensive experience in child development, family support and community development.
2. Activities that worked best were those targeting children's development eg age appropriate, developmentally challenging, giving opportunities to interact with positive adults and building on children's strengths.
3. Small incremental improvements in children's development can be observed despite the limited time per week for playgroup
4. Providing a predictable routine, both flexible and semi structured in playgroup was beneficial in order to model consistency and to provide positive messages to children and parents about safety, hygiene, sharing, eating together and times for songs and story telling. This was important for children and their parents who may otherwise have little structure or control in their lives.
5. Early intervention activities must be offered in the context of wider support structures for children and their families given the crisis situation faced by these families.
6. Parental stress levels impacted negatively on group activities.
7. Pre-School aged children had very limited opportunities for development activities outside of the playgroup.

Quote from SA mother: " My child starts waiting at 7am for the playgroup to arrive on the park."

### Key Learnings

- Excluding school age children from playgroup activities allowed focus on developmental needs of pre-school aged children.
- Behaviour management strategies needed to be implemented in order to deal with aggressive and unruly behaviours of some children.
- It was important that playgroup be a regular weekly or bi weekly event on the park-in spite of fluctuating numbers attending.
- Child focused playgroups were an effective mechanism for entry into the lives of families living in caravan parks.

*Parents commented on their high regard for Pilot project staff and the individual benefits for themselves and their children through playgroup activities, receiving of information, support in crisis situations and advocacy and facilitated links with important agencies and services.(KSS Survey)*

## **8.7 COMMUNITY HEALTH AND AGENCY LINKAGES**

Promotion of successful early intervention and prevention strategies on parks to increase community health and develop effective linkages was contingent on a commitment to integrated service provision by agencies responsible for housing, social support, health education and child care. In addition, a commitment to building a climate of trust between families and the workers and agencies was crucial.

### **Key Findings**

- 1. Families had little knowledge of and were not accessing services, apart from meeting immediate needs, for example Centrelink.**
- 2. Parents reported feeling discriminated against by agencies and the general community. One parent commented that “people treating us like ‘trailer trash.’”**
- 3. Some family members were reluctant to draw attention to themselves due to drug and/or alcohol addictions, violent relationships, child abuse, mental health issues or financial difficulties.**
- 4. Where the target parks were geographically isolated from main centres and transport uncertain, families had greater difficulties in accessing services.**
- 5. Agencies often had very limited knowledge of issues facing this particular group and were inadequately resourced to provide outreach work. Hence a great deal of time and energy was required by project workers to build up supportive networks.**
- 6. Within the park environment, families were often reluctant to form close relationships and the playgroup environment was a positive communal experience for parents and their children.**
- 7. Park operators played a big role in the running of the park community and how people were treated. Where a park operator was supportive this facilitated families’ knowledge of and access to services, where negative, services may be actively discouraged from coming onto the park.**

### **Key Learnings**

- Pilot project workers required a wide range of knowledge about services in order to provide accurate information to the families.
- Children were missing out on child health services such as immunisations, hearing and eye tests, and individual remedial treatment for various health and development problems.

- Services need to be actively educated, engaged and encouraged to adapt approaches to engage with families living in caravan parks.
- Considerable time is required to develop and maintain service networks to reduce the isolation of families and encourage services to provide outreach activities.
- Where there was a well established, active network of agencies familiar with caravan park issues, for example the Onsite Network of South East Queensland, this facilitated raising awareness of issues impacting on families and advocating for long-term change.
- Spending time to build rapport and trust was crucial to be able to assist families develop and maintain links with services. Agencies were able to access parks successfully due to the quality of these relationships.
- Consistent and respectful interactions with park operators were important to maintain access to the park and to support the park operator if required.

Case Study: The Family Support Worker contacted Indigenous Health regarding a child who was attending playgroup. This service came onsite and identified a number of areas where it could provide assistance to park families. As a consequence, indigenous families on that park feel connected to that service and make contact directly. (Pilot project Queensland)

Quote: "The State Department of Family and Youth Services SA (FAYS) believes that the playgroup program is an effective way to link families into support services and minimise potential for abuse and/or neglect of children living in parks. The project has highlighted FAYS awareness of issues facing families living in caravan parks particularly safety issues for children".

*Source: Pilot project SA Feedback from SA agencies*

## **RECOMMENDATION**

11. That the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy prioritise investigation into building healthy communities within the caravan park environment while strengthening links between caravan parks and the broader local community.

## 8.8 STRENGTHS APPROACH

Identification of and building on the strengths of families and children living in caravan parks was an important area of research in the Caravan Parks Pilot. Pilot projects were aware that many critical and serious issues impacting on these families can lead to management and workers adopting a “deficit” approach to their work where families are viewed as victims with little or no capacity to assist themselves and where the workers take on most of the responsibility for guiding and providing services. This has obvious consequences on the way services are delivered and the outcomes for the families.

The Caravan Parks Pilot trialed the practical application of a strengths approach by consistently acknowledging that the parents and carers, and their children do have strengths, and by seeking out ways to identify and build on these strengths.

### Key Findings

- 1. Parents and children often need help to be able to identify what they are doing well. Pilot projects identified a number of important activities to assist parents and children. These include: modelling of positive interpersonal interactions, praising achievements, celebrating positive change with parents and children and assisting people to develop their own goals and working with them to achieve these.**
- 2. Positive reinforcement resulted in improvement in self-esteem and decision making abilities.**
- 3. Using a strengths approach supports workers. Pilot project SA reported that using a process of reflecting at the end of each playgroup session, and identifying the strengths of each person (child and adult) attending that session, helped workers focus on the positives and not get dispirited by negative events and crises.**
- 4. A focus on strengths helped positive changes in attitudes among other stakeholders.**

Case Study: Pilot Project SA. By continually focussing on strengths when discussing families with the park operator, the park operator can identify strengths in the families for himself due to a change in perceptions.

- 5. Playgroup is positive in nature and creates a positive communal space in the parks.**

### **Key Learnings**

- All families have strengths. When workers are consistent in talking to families about their strengths and where they were doing well, this assisted people to introduce positive changes in their lives and to take on new ideas.
- Smaller numbers at playgroup maximised the one to one opportunities that were beneficial in identifying and building on strengths. Smaller numbers enable parents to take on various roles and responsibilities within the group and be acknowledged for this and the benefits that such activities bring to the group.
- Training in a strengths approach is important.

*Pilot project NT reported that after attending the 2002 National Caravan Park Workers Conference that had a strengths approach theme, they were able to adopt a stronger strengths based approach to their work. This was beneficial as it helped transform stereotypes about permanent residents displayed by tourists and helped counteract the negative attitudes showed to permanent residents by management on the target park.*

*Pilot project SA organised a Strengths workshop for Pilot project staff, other Playgroup SA staff and the wider community.*

- To challenge a deficit approach and move to a strengths focus is a slow process due to systemic and cultural issues.

## 9 MODEL OF BEST PRACTICE FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

Child oriented playgroups are proven effective mechanisms for connecting with families on caravan parks. This has been the experience of the Caravan Parks Pilot and reflects the experience over many years of working with families in caravan parks in Queensland and NSW of the Family Action Centre and Save the Children Q.

The aim of the Caravan Parks Pilot was to demonstrate an appropriate playgroup model to utilise when working with families in crisis.

There are a great variety of ways in which playgroups operate in Australia and, in general there are three types of playgroup models.

One is the traditional community playgroup which is a well established support mechanism for parents and young children and where the parents take responsibility for organising and running the group with limited support from Playgroup Associations. A second model is that of a supported playgroup aimed at families with special needs who have no resources to set up playgroups for themselves and require some support. The third model trialed by the Caravan Parks Pilot is a targeted playgroup for marginalised and isolated families who are more transient and at greater risk of homelessness. **Playgroup Plus** is a working title suggested to describe this third model and represents the model of best practice for service delivery for the identified target group.

### KEY PARAMETERS OF PLAYGROUP PLUS

1. Onsite location of Playgroup Plus on caravan parks to ensure families are able to access the service easily.
2. Playgroup Plus has a child and parent orientation. The model provides a regular point of contact and support in a positive non-threatening child focus environment. The model provides direct and facilitated access to support and information by linking with appropriate services.
3. Playgroup Plus requires substantial levels of staffing and staff with a mixture of skills to ensure a quality service. A basic requirement is two workers with a mix of qualifications and experience in early childhood development, social welfare or social work, and community development.
4. To enable Playgroup Plus the capacity to develop an effective crisis response, a dedicated family support worker is crucial. This model has been trialed in Pilot projects Queensland and Tweed/Gold Coast. The scope of family support work encompasses crisis intervention, emergency relief, and development of supportive relationships with families, park operators and community services. This support has to be flexible and very responsive by recognising and responding to any level of participation whether ongoing or sporadic. In order for this model to be effective the Family Support Worker should be employed full time if working on more than one park and in more than one community. If part time resources for this position are available, then the Family Support Worker should work only in one park and one community. This is due to the multidimensional nature of family crisis, the need for intensive assistance for a period of time, and the need to build trust with families. In

addition, other aspects of this work include networking with other agencies and local communities to provide more integrated services to park communities.

5. Flexible funding arrangements are required to allow the service to operate on a park even when the numbers fluctuate and at times may be very low. This is a responsive service to assist a largely transient group of families experiencing high levels of stress. Organisations need the flexibility to allocate other staff or experienced volunteers to assist when the need arises.
6. Safety monitoring—Park communities can be volatile environments in which to work and this impacts on the safety of staff in delivering their services. Safety audits should be carried out before work begins on parks and on going monitoring of conditions on the parks is essential. The lead organisation should have well thought out policies and procedures to ensure safety of staff and their clients. One example is to ensure that two staff members are present on the park and work together.
7. Resources
  - Sufficient resources are required for effective outcomes. This means adequate staffing levels, and capital funds to purchase fully equipped vehicles to carry equipment and shelter onto the parks. Such vans have proven valuable assets for Pilot projects Tweed/Gold Coast and NT. Vans assist the instant positive recognition of Playgroup Plus on the parks. Pilot project SA reported that negative consequences of operating without a van included: a reduction of project staff's ability to deliver project activities due to time having to load and unload vehicles and equipment; having to use their own vehicles to carry equipment; and lack of visible promotion of the playgroup on the parks.
  - Funds for brokerage services should be included in this model. This allows the organisation to buy in services needed for the families and allows formalisation of working relationships with appropriate services to ensure that they understand the needs of families and have the capacity to assist in an appropriate way.
  - Purchase of an onsite van to meet shelter and office space needs on the target park was trialed by Pilot project (NT). This proved problematic. Difficulties in the choice of a suitable onsite facility and unsatisfactory negotiations with park management over the long-term siting of the facility, coupled with inadequate arrangements for long-term maintenance and insurance of the facility, meant that this option was not viable. Playgroup Plus requires suitable vehicles which are road worthy and can be moved in response to demonstrated need thus maximising the capital investment.
8. Playgroup Plus providers need to have organisational capacity to:
  - Deliver onsite service.
  - Facilitate and mediate an open relationship with families, park operators and services providing education, social support, housing and education.
  - Understand that the core business of lead agencies needs to be congruent with principles and practice of family crisis work and community development and that this needs to be agreed at management level and project level.

- Possess a recognised public profile in the local network of human service agencies or be strategically working to develop one.
- Supervise and support staff at a high level. This type of work has proven very challenging to staff, particularly those who may have worked for the first time with families in caravan parks or been faced with large numbers of clients, few resources and multiple crises.  
(Please see Appendix G for Organisational Capacity Check List)

#### 9. Developing successful strategic partnerships

- These are developed at local, state and national levels. Again, organisational capacity is a crucial factor because the Caravan Parks Pilot has demonstrated that much effort is required to sustain multi layered partnerships and that care is needed to choose the right partner and to agree on common goals.
- Employment and supervision of project staff is more effective when it is the responsibility of one organisation. Pilot projects Queensland and Tweed/Gold Coast trialed an innovation partnership between Save the Children Queensland and Playgroup Queensland with workers employed by both organisations. While both partners reported collegiality and professionalism in this arrangement, there were ongoing structural difficulties that led to staff being unclear of roles and responsibilities and issues with adequate staff supervision and differing organisational objectives.
- Organisations need to be able to deal with unrealistic expectations around what the staff can actually accomplish and what roles are required to assist families in crisis with complex social and housing needs. The Caravan Parks Pilot's model of playgroup has been very successful in providing an access point for other services to "piggy back" into the parks where previously they have been refused access. This requires careful and respectful negotiations with families, park operators and the lead agency.
- Partnerships at national level are important to widen the scope of learning and to influence policy. Partnerships that developed between the Pilot projects and the Department of Family and Community Services resulted in practice based learning being used to influence policy and practice at a national level. Collaboration to develop the Caravan Parks Pilot between two areas of responsibility within government has been beneficial. The considerable community based expertise of departmental staff has been influential here and the work of state/territory based officers from the Department of Family and Community Services has facilitated this process considerably.

However, future collaborations require streamlining in terms of role clarity, relationships and reporting requirements. One area for improvement identified by the Caravan Parks Pilot was the determination of performance indicators that accurately reflected the goals of both areas within government. This could be linked in easily with agreed national action research questions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

12. Provide future projects working intensively with caravan park communities and people suffering housing stress and degrees of homelessness, with training, resources, and incentives, that enable quality evaluation and research using a participatory action research approach.
13. Work with Playgroup Associations nationally to critically examine core business, challenges, and achievements, in delivering outreach services to families living in caravan parks, for the purpose of determining whether these associations are willing and able to take a lead role in service provision to families at risk of homelessness.
14. Up front capital funding is essential for projects engaged in park work for a fully equipped van to carry equipment and shelter facilities.
15. Key elements of the model of service delivery, “Playgroup Plus” developed through this national Caravan Parks Pilot be included in future project implementation.

**10 ANALYSIS OF ACTION RESEARCH APPROACH**

<p><b>PERCEIVED STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided a framework in which to develop and trial local and national strategies and to extract key learnings and competencies.</li> <li>• Agencies and funding body worked together to determine scope of Caravan Parks Pilot as articulated in the National Questions.</li> <li>• Responsive, flexible and appropriate given that the context in which the Pilot projects operated was constantly changing.</li> <li>• Created an environment where practitioners felt engaged in the process.</li> <li>• Pilot project staff had access to skills and resources through NDP, other Pilots projects and their own supervisors, to facilitate the action research process.</li> <li>• Stakeholders saw the benefits of the process for group and own practice.</li> <li>• The responsive nature of the approach facilitated advocacy on key issues as they emerged.</li> <li>• Participation of the many stakeholders was encouraged in a way that showed Caravan Park Pilot’s willingness to share power and to reconsider value positions.</li> <li>• Learning and change processes were based on a good mix of qualitative and quantitative information sources.</li> <li>• Considerable energy was expended in the transfer of information. Examples here are: formal reports, development and presentation of background information, and case studies. This information was used to engage and educate community services and input into the development of a training package. The training package will use the Pilot projects’ experience to build sustainable action by training other practitioners.</li> <li>• Pilot projects became familiar with the action research approach and have incorporated it into their regular work and reflection practices.</li> </ul>	<p><b>PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful undertaking the action research approach was limited when individual staff members or management did not feel safe to engage in this process. For example having permission to examine ways of working, to experiment and to change was perceived by some as threatening. For some staff members the idea of research was in itself threatening.</li> <li>• One Pilot project reported continuing confusion about the process and needed clearer articulation of its purposes and the required reporting systems to be used.</li> <li>• Frequent staff and management changes impact on an organisations ability to establish a regular pattern of action, research, reflection, and planning. This makes it difficult to ensure commitment to the action research process.</li> <li>• Action research is resource intensive. If supervisors do not have the time or capacity to provide ongoing training to new staff, and support to current staff, then the implementation of the process is limited.</li> <li>• One Pilot project required firm direction and staff felt inadequate due to frequent staff changes and negative perceptions of their service as the lead agency.</li> <li>• Action research reporting process under national questions did not capture structural elements around organisational capacity, staff recruitment and supervision and critical needs of workers in delivering the services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process is an effective and responsive way to address critical needs of families at risk of homelessness. It has the flexibility to allow new learnings and ideas to be tried out. This practice driven information is easily accessible during stages of project development and has been used to inform policy makers about effective strategies and models to work with families in need. Pilots have used national reflection forums to facilitate planning and action to advance the issues and to investigate funding options and future sustainability of key elements of the work.</li> </ul>	<p><b>POSSIBLE THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource intensive nature of the action research approach and on going need for training and support for those who are engaged in the process, means the process may be limited without support and allocation of resources.</li> <li>• Engagement of key stakeholders such as park operators can be difficult and this impacts negatively on the success of the project.</li> </ul>

## 11 TRAINING, SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The National Dissemination Program provided key elements of training, support and development to Pilots around the action research process undertaken by Pilots.

The NDP provided a range of support, training and cross project communication activities. These include:

- Five site visits per Pilot project made by national action research manager, Gus Eddy. Activities at the site visits included: facilitation of community Reflection Groups, participation in playgroup programs on local parks; discussions with parents at playgroup about their perceptions of important project activities for the Key Stakeholder Survey, and working with key stakeholders to determine their key activities for inclusion in the Survey. Additional activities to develop a training kit included brainstorming with all Pilot projects on the format, content, training criteria, marketing and dissemination of the kit.
- Convening regular monthly or bi-monthly teleconferences for Pilot project staff and Department of Family and Community Services personnel and other telelinks as required.
- Organisation and facilitation of two National Planning and Review Days.
- Organisation of training opportunities through:
  - 1) The 9<sup>th</sup> National Caravan Park Workers Conference in March 2002. Pilot projects were provided with the opportunity to share information and gain a wider understanding of caravan park issues through attendance at this conference. This annual forum brings together a collective of informed workers, park residents, and representatives from government and research agencies. Pilot projects were provided with a wider understanding of caravan park family issues in other regions and participated in the development of recommendations to government on behalf of families and other groups of caravan park residents.
  - 2) Organisation of training in Strengths Approach to Community Development. Simone Silberberg (trainer) and Gus Eddy (group facilitator) provided a one-day workshop to SA Pilot project staff, SA Playgroup Association staff, interested community service providers, and government departments who had involvement in the SA Pilot project. This training was well received as it provided both a theoretical and practical approach to community development. The capacity of SA Playgroup Association to draw together these agencies was seen as an indication that this association is now a valued player in the state's child and family services system.
  - 3) Specific training in the application of an action research approach for Pilot project staff and interested community and government agencies.
  - 4) The development of training package. NDP worked collaboratively with staff at all Pilot project sites to identify: potential audiences, training criteria, key content areas, format, piloting procedures, determination of market potential, and dissemination and promotion of training. The Package includes a toolkit of important learnings from the Caravan Parks Pilot for workers in community and early childhood fields.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

16. To ensure success in maximising learning opportunities through action research implementation, as a minimum requirement when implementing programs the Department of Family and Community Services should bring together key stakeholders at the beginning, middle and end of a program cycle. These stakeholders should include management of funded services, workers on the ground, people from the national office representing policy areas of the Department, and FACS state and territory officers.
17. At the meeting mid way through the program, the key stakeholders should assess the progress of the program, make adjustments and ensure necessary information is in place for a final evaluation.
18. Action research questions and performance indicators should be consistent across all funded programs and national policy areas.
19. Agreement should be negotiated for an ongoing networking and communication process between the funded services, those from national office representing policy areas and FACS state and territory officers. Funding resources should be made available by FACS to ensure the success of this process.

# APPENDICES

- A. CASE STUDIES ONE, TWO AND THREE**
- B. TRAINING PACKAGE OUTLINE**
- C. NATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS**
- D. SUMMARY OF KEY STAKEHOLDER SURVEY**
- E. NATIONAL STATISTICS**
- F. PATHWAYS IN AND OUT OF CARAVAN  
PARKS (South Australian Data)**
- G. CHECK LIST - ORGANISATIONAL  
CAPACITY TO WORK WITH PARK  
COMMUNITIES**

## CASE STUDY NO. 1

To maintain confidentiality names and some details have been changed.

### **FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES**

I first met Pauline and Don at playgroup in 2001. They actually only attended a few times so I never got to know them very well.

However, they came forward with a housing crisis. The family had been evicted from the caravan park two weeks previously because of a \$400 debt they had accrued through non-payment of rent. At this time they were living in a local hotel and were \$200 behind in their rent at this establishment and were asked to either pay their back rent or leave.

The family had no money and no food when they approached me. They were in desperate circumstances and in a very distressed state with both of them breaking down and crying on several occasions. They have 2 children, Michael 7years and Natasha 3years. Michael is assisted in school through the supported learning program and has a prominent speech difficulty. Natasha is a very active 3 years old who also has speech delays. Her father may also have a very mild intellectual disability and Pauline has a Special School Education. Both Pauline's parents are deceased and Don, who spent most of his childhood in foster care, has few family ties. There are no family supports and therefore no family member or friend who could offer them accommodation.

Pauline and Don do not have any problems concerning drugs or alcohol. They are loving parents who demonstrate patience and kindness with their children. There is no evidence of child abuse in any form. Don, in particular, plays with the children and is very good-natured where the children are concerned. The central issues appear to be difficulties in managing their money and inability to prioritise (This all came out later as I got to know the family better).

### **ACTION**

- Several hours of ringing around for accommodation - no luck
- Rang Families Department and requested payment of accommodation for at least a few days. They gave me four days payable to a local hotel.
- Rang Lifeline who paid their debt to the previous hotel.
- Family were to put in money for 3 days so they could stay a week
- Local service provided a food parcel
- The following day I rang around for a few more hours for further accommodation and could find nowhere to accommodate a family. The family were terrified of being split up or the Families Department becoming involved.
- Found accommodation through another resident who gave me the number of a house where he had previously stayed.
- Picked the family up on the following Tuesday evening and transported them to the house.
- The house was run by a catholic priest who hurriedly made up a room for them. The house was in poor condition and inhabited at this time by street kids on drugs and a variety of other interesting personalities. Over time the street kids left and the living arrangements became more manageable for the family.
- Borrowed a van and physically moved two thirds of the family's belongings myself to a shed on my property.
- This operation took seven hours including pick up and delivery of truck.

- During the 3 weeks they were at the house, the family managed to pay off a \$350 housing department debt and then went straight on the Department's waiting list.
- While accessing services such as Department of Housing and Centrelink, I worked with the family on how to best approach agencies. The main emphasis was on how to handle frustrations without getting angry and rude. The frustration came from long waiting lines and delays that were very hard on a couple already extremely stressed. The children picked up on that stress and worry and acted out.
- A house came up within days and I transported them to the Department of Housing office and spent the day waiting, viewing the house, returning to the Department, waiting again, accepting the house and receiving the keys.
- Transported the family to St Vincent De Paul and made arrangements for a house inspection for furniture and arranged a food parcel.
- Transported the family back to the house and arranged for the priest to move the family to the new house the following day. They were in and settled by Friday night.
- St. Vincent de Paul delivered new furniture by the following week.
- I delivered the furniture in storage on my property in dribs and drabs.
- I have been visiting the family on a weekly basis since relocation.
- Michael is now in the local school. Natasha is attending child-care 3 days a week and loving it. She is now toilet trained. Don is applying for a traineeship at the local council. He has fears about it as he has been unemployed for a long time.
- Weekly visits have included addressing issues of financial management-rent and electricity coming out of Centrelink payments through Centrepay. Assertion and setting boundaries-as this family historically tends to get used. For example a brother has surfaced and is now living with them, and they experience problems with a neighbour coming in and out of the house at will. Pauline and Don are working well at this. I have also been addressing accommodation issues with the brother and talking to him around issues of health and employment.
- Pauline is 3 months pregnant and I have spoken to the local Hospital social workers in the hope she could be accepted into the Care Program organised by the States Health Department. This is a 2-year program that offers support to women with new babies and their families. This support can begin when women are pregnant.
- Visits are now fortnightly. I am hoping to link this family with another support agency at the local community centre.
- The family has list of Emergency Relief agencies in the area.
- The family will soon own their own fridge that they have paid off.

## **ISSUES FOR ME**

- The family have become extremely attached to me. It is transference of the parents to a mother figure and the children to a grandmother figure and they are finding it difficult to think of me not in their lives. Don may never have had a maternal figure in his life and Pauline is still grieving over the loss of her mother three years ago.
- I am addressing this by slowly disconnecting from their lives. The visits have now become fortnightly and we have talked about how as time goes by I will be seeing less of them. This distresses them.
- And I am also left with a sense of grief. This family has worked hard and well and because there has been no drug or child abuse it has not been a particularly difficult and distressing

task. There may be counter transference issues for me having lost my mother before my children were born and knowing the struggle of raising children without maternal support or a grandmother figure. On the whole this case has been satisfying and I feel it is really up to the family now to make the best of the situation they are in –which is pretty good.

## CASE STUDY NO. 2

To maintain confidentiality names and some details have been changed.

### **FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES**

Darren was a father living with his four children Peter (9), Tessa (7), Maddy (6) and Emma (2) in a small caravan without an annex or toilet. There were two small tents set up outside the caravan that they assured us were not used for sleeping. We came into contact with this family on our first session in the park where we were set up directly across from their van. When we approached Darren he was extremely angry and disinterested in us. We gave him information on the project and explained we offered a free play session as well as acting as an information and referral service. He initially did not want the children to attend but soon saw the benefits of having a break. He explained that his wife Cindy had gone back to Victoria 6 weeks prior and did not indicate when she would be back. He was left with the 4 children including Peter who has been diagnosed with ADHD. A resident later informed us that Cindy was completing a jail term.

### **ACTIONS TAKEN BY WORKERS**

- We took a careful approach with Darren to ensure our safety, and believed this was the best way to build trust with him.
- When we arrived at the park the children would see us and come over. We always said hello to Darren and brought the children back to the van at the end of the session.
- Initially Darren greeted us with a grunt, however we continued a friendly approach without placing any expectations on him.
- He eventually began to disclose that he was struggling financially and could not afford petrol to take the children to school some days. We offered him a referral sheet of all the local aid agencies.
- Darren's children, particularly the eldest girls were very clingy with us. Fighting, whinging and aggressive behaviour were common. We had to set clear and firm rules about their behaviour at Playgroup while at the same time taking every opportunity to give them positive attention. Emma (2) was very clingy towards Darren and he was aware of her needs.
- We made contact with the Education Department's Attendance Counsellor after several weeks of the school age children being home on our visits. A park resident disclosed to us that the children were rarely attending school.
- We also made a notification to Family and Youth Services after it was disclosed to us that Darren had been leaving the children for several hours after they were in bed. One of the children also disclosed to us that Peter had got a thrashing from Darren and was not allowed to attend. At this stage Darren appeared to have the potential to cause serious abuse and we were witnessing angry outbursts directed the children and at us.
- Police became involved when Peter was caught stealing from the park shop. The family began to be ostracised by other park residents.
- Darren began to feel more comfortable with us and we were able to discuss housing options with him. Upon his request we rang the Housing Trust Coordinator who informed us he had been on the Priority One Housing waiting list for 2 months and the address on his file was incorrect, therefore any correspondence would not have reached him. We

explained his current situation and the Housing Trust Coordinator suggested he get in touch with her to discuss his change of circumstance.

- Tracy returned the following week and there was a notable improvement in the children's behaviour. Darren was also extremely happy and appeared to be making a big effort to cater for Cindy.
- The following week we had a special lunch for the adults and Darren and Cindy came for the entire session. Darren joined in during song time and told a story. The children's behaviour had improved. They were more settled and had fewer angry outbursts.
- Within two weeks of contacting the Coordinator the family were informed they had secured a house in the area where the children attended school. Darren had a red file at the Salvation Army because he had received the maximum amount of assistance. We put him in touch with another agency that assisted them with furniture and outstanding bills.
- The Attendance Counsellor visited the family in their new home and put them on a case management plan that would keep watch on the children's school attendance for 6 months.

## **DISCUSSION**

It has been our experience that male sole parents living in the park are much more suspicious of our intentions and more likely to have violent outburst when approached. They often question our intent for example several fathers have asked if we are from 'welfare'. When one father with 3 children was asked if the children would like to attend he became very angry and said "I've got 10 children, I know how to be a parent and don't need help from you!" Father's are more likely to let the children attend when told about the group by other park residents.

We were able to work with this family by taking a slow approach. We were able to assist with their Housing Trust application by building a partnership with the Housing Trust.

## CASE STUDY NO. 3

To maintain confidentiality names and some details have been changed.

### **FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES**

Sara (23) has three children. Her son Jack (3) has resided with his father since the age of 3 months. Sara shares custody of her two daughters Abby (4) and Jessica (2) with her mother Betty (45). Betty was living in the park until evicted in August 2001. When we met this family Betty was staying with friends and had no fixed address.

Sara also has a partner John (46) who she has been with for just under 2 years. John has recently been released from prison.

Sara spent her childhood living with her mother and an abusive father in various Caravan Parks in South Australia. Sara has continued this lifestyle pattern into adulthood living in Caravan Parks and private rental in the Adelaide area and regional centres of South Australia. Both Sara and John have Previous Housing Trust debt and believe they are on a private rental black list.

Sara and John attended playgroup with the girls on a regular basis since late September 2001. On our first meeting Sara, John, Abby and Jessica were living in a tent on the park. They were about to move into a caravan after Family and Youth Services (FAYS) had urged them to move out of the tent or the children would be removed from their care. Park management agreed to let them rent a caravan.

During playgroup sessions it was clear both Sara and John were committed to the children and were keen to have access to play experiences. Some of their interactions with the children were inappropriate, however they took in information and picked up the workers modelling of appropriate responses to children. For example Sara became cross when Jessica began to eat the playdough, a worker explained that this was normal 2-year-old behaviour and modelled how to distract Jessica onto something else. The following week Sara had an appropriate response when Jessica began to eat playdough.

Sara's relationship with her mother was initially strained and involved an ongoing custody dispute, however over time they had begun to resolve their differences for the benefit of the children. There was a court order that Sara and the children could not live further than 50 km from Betty.

It became clear to the workers as they got to know this family that they had difficulty advocating on behalf of themselves and the children. They have not demonstrated an ability to understand or follow through with the correct processes. Securing and sustaining tenancy had eluded this family up to this point. It was clear they needed ongoing advocacy and support to access services more effectively.

## **ACTIONS TAKEN BY WORKERS**

## APPENDIX A

- In the first few sessions we focused on the children's strengths and Sara and John's positive parenting skills. As we established rapport with the family we focused on the importance of play and talked at length about giving the children stability. The family began to gain an understanding of how their unstable living arrangements were effecting the children's development.
- Sara had discussed her concern regarding Abby's behaviour - tantrums, defiance and answering back. We referred her to the HAPPI Program (Homeless Parenting Initiative). A worker began to visit Sara and John fortnightly and was pleased with their progress.
- In November 2001 we arrived at the Park and found Sara distraught. John had reported the condition of the van they were renting to the Housing Authority. Upon its inspection the van was deemed unfit to live in, they were given one week to move out of the van. They felt their only immediate option was to move back into a tent, but feared the reaction of FAYS.
- We contacted their FAYS worker and negotiated the family living in a tent until more suitable accommodation had been found. We also asked the worker to write a Housing Trust Support letter for the family.
- We gave Sara and John numbers to the Supported Accommodation services in the area and encouraged them to call daily for vacancies. We also gave them a list of local property management agencies to try the private rental market.
- We wrote a Housing Trust Support Letter outlining this families current housing crisis, family background, financial difficulties and our knowledge of why living in the park is not an appropriate long term option for families.
- We rang the Housing Options Coordinator at the Housing Trust who had recently attended our Reflection Group. She felt this family fitted the criteria for Priority One Housing because of their complex needs.
- The family was given Priority One Housing within two days and moved into their house within a week. We assisted them in negotiating to pay back their Housing Trust dept and encouraged them to use Centrepay for their rent.
- We talked to them about ways of sustaining their tenancy and the importance of stable housing for the children.
- We made referrals to Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Society to acquire furniture and other goods they needed.
- The house is located within walking distance to a local Community Centre with excellent facilities including a Playgroup, Family Worker, food co-op, gardening co-op and various courses and functions. Three weeks after they moved into the house a worker took the family to the local Community Centre for a Playgroup session.

- The family continued to visit the Playgroup at the Caravan Park for one month until the manager asked them not to enter the park. APPENDIX A
- Betty initially moved in with the family as her current living arrangement broke down. We wrote her a Housing Trust Support letter and encouraged her to have a Housing Options Interview with the Housing Trust to arrange Bond Assistance. Betty found a private rental unit in the area soon after.
- We continue phone contact with the family and have arranged to take them to Playgroup at the Community Centre in one week to introduce them to the Family Worker.

## **DISCUSSION**

We enjoyed working with this family, they were cooperative and motivated to improve their current situation. They appeared to lack those survival skills that many of the families in the parks have and therefore move from one crisis to another being taken advantage of along the way.

Priority One Housing was extremely difficult to secure in this area at the time of application. By building a relationship with the local Housing Trust Coordinator and informing her of the conditions of this particular park through the Project, it is our belief that this family's application for Priority One was given serious consideration.

Although this family may continue to fall into crisis it was our aim to put in place the supports of other services such as the Housing Trust, HAPPI and the local Community Centre that will support them. The most challenging part of working with this family was not rescuing them but rather guiding them through their crisis, supporting them and building their skills for advocating for themselves and making appropriate choices.

## **TRAINING PACKAGE OUTLINE**

### **MODULE ONE**

Half Day Training-Can be presented as a 'stand alone' Module

#### **Broadening Understanding Issues for Families in Caravan Parks**

Session One : Introduction to topic and each other

Session Two : Living in caravan parks, what does this mean for families at risk of homelessness?

Session Three : Using a strengths approach to building community on caravan parks

### **MODULE TWO**

Half Day Training- Needs to be presented in conjunction with Module One as it builds on the learning of participants from Module One

#### **Developing a Blueprint for Action**

Session One : Integrating understanding of critical issues for families at risk of homelessness, strengths perspective and participatory action research in order to develop strategic action plans for own organisation.

### **MODULE THREE**

Half Day Training- Needs to be presented in conjunction with Module One as it builds on the learning of participants from Module One

#### **Building Communities through Play**

Session One : Introduction/review of topic

Session Two : Facilitating entry into caravan parks

Session Three : Tool Kit of ideas and Creative activities in a park setting

Session Four : Supporting Families at Playgroup and beyond

## **NATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How can the Pilot Project best impact on children's development (social, emotional, educational)?
2. How can the Pilot Project best impact on parent/child relationships?
3. How can we best engage with families in crisis who are highly mobile?
4. How can we best identify and build on the strengths of families and children living in caravan parks?
5. How can this Project impact on families living in caravan parks being aware of and using community and family oriented services and informal networks ?
6. What would it take to increase housing options for families living on caravan parks?
7. How can we identify learning needs of key stakeholders (including families) working collaboratively in caravan park communities.

## SUMMARY OF KEY STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

### Survey Aim

The aim of the Key Stakeholder Survey (KSS) was to develop a shared language across all Pilot projects and stakeholders with which participants can describe their experiences. Information of this nature is valuable in demonstrating what constitutes effective and ineffective practice related to project activities as it has emerged from actual practice and action, rather than being imposed from outside. The KSS provides a useful tool for analysing effectiveness of the work, informing strategies in order to improve practice and helping to determine the Caravan Parks Pilot's progress towards desired outcomes.

### Definition of Key Stakeholders

Caravan Park Pilot projects are engaged in an action research process. Crucial to this process is its participatory nature and inclusion of interested people in development and evaluation of the process. Pilot projects have identified their Key Stakeholders as: families and children living permanently in caravan parks, other park residents, caravan park operators, Pilot project staff and project management (local and state and national) and community services (including local government, health and education services).

### Scope of Survey

- KSS development included participation of stakeholders across the four project sites in development of practice indicators. Twenty five (25) indicators of effective practice emerged and were grouped under six (6) main action strategies relating to national action research questions. These were: co-ordination and worker support, children's development, developing relationships, raising awareness of issues and activities, learning, and learning about and using community and informal networks. *Effective practice indicators were actions considered by participants to be important for the successful implementation of pilot projects.*

### KSS Findings

- Thirty-nine (39) stakeholders responded with representation from all major key stakeholder groups. *Results of the weighting process demonstrate that key stakeholders who responded considered all 25 indicators of effective practice to be either crucial or important. This means a high correlation between the activities project participants thought important and the activities rated as important by survey respondents.*
- Comments provided by respondents related to these weightings and were analysed by a SWOT analysis (Perceived Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). This analysis articulates how stakeholders see the strengths and the challenges of the pilot project. Much of the information supports what has already been learned from the action research process engaged in by the pilots. For example:
  - a) The Pilot projects are challenging and emotionally draining. They require excellent organisational capacity for project management and intensive staff support,

training, and debriefing. There are challenges in sustaining the projects when this intensive support is not ongoing.

- b) Child oriented playgroups are rated as crucial mechanisms for engaging with parents living in caravan parks and parent/child activities are very relevant. Parents' comments indicate their high regard for the project workers. Parents also report individual benefits for themselves and their children, through: playgroup activities, receiving of information, support in crisis situations, and advocacy and facilitated links with important service provider agencies.

*“Doing a really good job-the kids love it” Parent*  
*“Kids love it when project staff come to the door and invite them to playgroup”. Parent*

- c) The challenges identified are the short -term nature of contact with families, the high degree of crisis work, and lack of parental participation. Ongoing support and inclusion of park operators was rated as very important. The main challenge was how to engage park operators, improve their capacity to respond as significant people in the lives of families, and to improve the often negative attitudes of park operators towards the families and children living on their parks.

*“The guy (park operator) doesn't support the project-hates kids“ Parent*  
*“I feel I can go to the school with my problems and they will understand and won't look down on me “ Parent*

- d) The Pilot projects were seen as having a vital role in raising local awareness of issues for families in caravan parks and acting as a catalyst for action. This is achieved through the combination of on the ground work, and effective strategies to engage other services in the work. A key challenge was how to gain further government support and increased promotion of the project.
- This survey provides a basis for articulating indicators of effective practice for pilot projects working in caravan parks with families at risk of homelessness. While not exclusive, they are firmly based on what project participants believe to be important activities for the success of this Caravan Parks Pilot.
  - Survey results provide information to the Caravan Parks Pilot as part of a national reflection activity. Local Pilot projects were encouraged to reflect on these findings in the context of their local projects and their ongoing work with park communities.

<b>CARAVAN PARKS PILOT</b>					
<b>NATIONAL STATISTICAL INFORMATION</b>					
	<b>NT</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>QLD</b>	<b>TWEED/GOLDCOAST</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1. Number of Children attending playgroup sessions	358	207	468	747	1780
2. Number of parents or affiliated family members attending playgroup sessions	249	111	282	601	1243
3. Number of playgroup sessions provided	57	77	119	198	451
4. Average duration of sessions	2.5hours	2.5hours	2hrs	2hrs	
5. Number of parental learning and support activities provided	1*	884	55	3*	943
6 Number of families assisted in project	56	131	86	60	333
7. Number of links/referrals made to other agencies	17	263	66	81	427
8. Number of families linked to other playgroups and child care services outside of park	15	39	5	7	66
9. Number of parks visited	1	3	1	3	8
* Information not available					

**Source** : Regular progress reports against performance indicators provided by Pilot projects to Department of FACS Child Care Section.

**PATHWAYS IN AND OUT OF CARAVAN PARKS. South Australia data**

This table summarises the details of families, including their paths into the Caravan Parks, their paths out of the Caravan Parks, details of the van or other that they were living in and some details of their personal circumstances.

All information printed here was gathered anecdotally by the Pilot project SA staff and was included in their final report to Department FACS of November 2002.

The period of this summary is October 2001 to October 2002.

<b>Family</b>	<b>Families Paths into Parks</b>	<b>Families Paths out of Parks</b>	<b>Living situation</b>	<b>Family Characteristics</b>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> <li>▪ Living in the park for more than 1 year</li> <li>▪ Housing Trust debt</li> </ul>		Own their own van with annex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blended family /step parent</li> <li>▪ Domestic Violence</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Getting on feet, saving for a house</li> <li>▪ Living in the Caravan Park for more than 1 year</li> </ul>		Own van with additional rooms, including toilet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> <li>▪ Family member with a mental illness</li> <li>▪ 5 kids</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Care by non custodial parent, or extended family member</li> <li>▪ Living in the Caravan Park for more than 1 year</li> </ul>		Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non custodial</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Care by non custodial parent, or extended family member</li> <li>▪ Living in the Caravan Park for more than 1 year</li> </ul>		Own their own van with annex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>		Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole Parent</li> </ul>

<b>Family</b>	<b>Families Paths into Parks</b>	<b>Families Paths out of Parks</b>	<b>Living situation</b>	<b>Family Characteristics</b>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental, eg Housing Trust or private rental</li> </ul>		Bus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blended family /step parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto is in/has been in prison</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ 6 children</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental, eg Housing Trust or private rental</li> <li>▪ Left home, moving in together, starting life as a family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Left to go interstate</li> <li>▪ Moved in with mother because of Domestic Violence</li> </ul>	Own their own van	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blended family /step parent</li> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ Domestic Violence</li> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>		Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole Parent</li> <li>▪ Aboriginal family</li> </ul>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental</li> <li>▪ Housing Trust and private rental dept</li> </ul>		Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> <li>▪ Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background</li> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Living in the park for more than 1 year</li> </ul>		Own their own van with annex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non custodial</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> </ul>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Into private rental</li> </ul>	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental, eg Housing Trust or private rental</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evicted</li> </ul>	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole Parent</li> <li>▪ Children in Foster care</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>
13	Unknown		Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>

<b>Family</b>	<b>Families Paths into Parks</b>	<b>Families Paths out of Parks</b>	<b>Living situation</b>	<b>Family Characteristics</b>
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental, eg Housing Trust or private rental</li> <li>▪ Moving in together, starting life as a family</li> <li>▪ Grew up in caravan parks</li> <li>▪ Housing Trust Debt</li> </ul>	Moved into Housing Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tent</li> <li>▪ Onsite van with additional rooms (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blended family /step parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto is in/has been in prison</li> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ Intellectual disability</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental, eg Housing Trust or private rental</li> <li>▪ Housing Trust Debt</li> </ul>	Went to prison	Onsite van with additional rooms (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blended family /step parent</li> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ Domestic Violence</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>
16	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
17	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
18	Unknown	Moved into Housing Trust	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> </ul>
19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental, eg Housing Trust or private rental</li> <li>▪ Left home, moving in together, starting life as a family</li> </ul>	Moved into Housing Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tent</li> <li>▪ Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ Domestic Violence</li> <li>▪ Child in foster care</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental, eg Housing Trust or private rental</li> <li>▪ Left home, moving in together, starting life as a family</li> <li>▪ Getting on feet, saving for a house</li> <li>▪ Living in the park for more than 1 year</li> </ul>	Moved in with mother because of domestic violence	Onsite van with additional rooms and toilet (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ Domestic Violence</li> <li>▪ Family member with a mental illness</li> </ul>
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental, eg Housing Trust or private rental</li> <li>▪ Come from interstate</li> <li>▪ Come from another Caravan Park</li> </ul>	Moved into Housing Trust	Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party) Tent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Domestic Violence</li> <li>▪ Family member with a mental illness</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto is in/has been in prison</li> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> <li>▪ Four children</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>

<b>Family</b>	<b>Families Paths into Parks</b>	<b>Families Paths out of Parks</b>	<b>Living situation</b>	<b>Family Characteristics</b>
22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from interstate</li> <li>▪ Come from another Caravan Park</li> </ul>	Evicted	Own van with annex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> </ul>
23	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	
24	Unknown	Evicted	Unknown	
25	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	
26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental, eg Housing Trust or private rental</li> </ul>	Unknown	Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> <li>▪ Aboriginal family</li> </ul>
27	Unknown			
28	Unknown	Evicted		
29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from interstate</li> <li>▪ Come from another Caravan Park</li> <li>▪ Moving in together, starting life as a family</li> </ul>		Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aboriginal family</li> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ Blended family /step parent</li> </ul>
30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> <li>▪ Come from another Caravan Park</li> <li>▪ Lining in the park for more than 1 year</li> </ul>		Own van with annex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blended family /step parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>
31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> <li>▪ Come from another Caravan Park</li> <li>▪ Grew up in caravan parks</li> </ul>	Moved into another Caravan Park	Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto is in/has been in prison</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>
32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> <li>▪ Come from another Caravan Park</li> <li>▪ Grew up in caravan parks</li> </ul>	Moved into another Caravan Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)</li> <li>▪ Cabin</li> <li>▪ Own van</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> <li>▪ Non custodial</li> </ul>

<b>Family</b>	<b>Families Paths into Parks</b>	<b>Families Paths out of Parks</b>	<b>Living situation</b>	<b>Family Characteristics</b>
33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> </ul>	Into private rental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ tent</li> <li>▪ Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> </ul>
34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> </ul>	Left owing rent etc	Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> </ul>
35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Care by non custodial parent, or extended family member</li> </ul>	Evicted	Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole Parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ Family member with a mental illness</li> </ul>
36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> <li>▪ Living in the park for more than 1 year</li> </ul>		Own their own van	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> </ul>
37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> <li>▪ Living in the park for more than 1 year</li> </ul>		Own their own van	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> </ul>
38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from another Caravan Park</li> </ul>	Moved into another Caravan Park	Own their own van	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blended family /step parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ 4 children</li> </ul>
39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Placed in park by SAAP</li> </ul>	Moved into Housing Trust	Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> <li>▪ Family member with a mental illness</li> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>
40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Waiting for Housing</li> <li>▪ Care by non custodial parent, or extended family member</li> </ul>	Moved in with a friend	Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Family member with a mental illness</li> <li>▪ Non custodial Grandparent</li> <li>▪ Domestic Violence</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>

<b>Family</b>	<b>Families Paths into Parks</b>	<b>Families Paths out of Parks</b>	<b>Living situation</b>	<b>Family Characteristics</b>
41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>		Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> </ul>
42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>	Moved into Housing Trust	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> <li>▪ Blended family /step parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> </ul>
43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Came from interstate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Moved into another Caravan Park</li> <li>▪ Left owing rent etc</li> </ul>	Own their own van	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> <li>▪ Domestic Violence</li> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>
44	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Came from interstate</li> <li>▪ Waiting for housing</li> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental, eg Housing Trust or private rental</li> <li>▪ Living in the park for more than 1 year</li> </ul>	Moved in with mother	Cabin with toilet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> <li>▪ Aboriginal family</li> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> </ul>
45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>
46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>
47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>
48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Came from interstate</li> </ul>	Moved into another Caravan Park		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>
49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Waiting for housing</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>	Moved into another Caravan Park	Cabin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non custodial Grandparent</li> </ul>
50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ living with parents</li> </ul>	Moved into another Caravan Park	Cabin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ Domestic Violence</li> <li>▪ Family member with a mental illness</li> </ul>

<b>Family</b>	<b>Families Paths into Parks</b>	<b>Families Paths out of Parks</b>	<b>Living situation</b>	<b>Family Characteristics</b>
51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Came from another Caravan Park</li> </ul>	Went to prison	Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ Domestic Violence</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto is in/has been in prison</li> <li>▪ Children in foster care</li> </ul>
52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> <li>▪ Had a baby at near by hospital</li> </ul>		Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> </ul>
53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> <li>▪ Come from another Caravan Park</li> <li>▪ Unable to secure rental, eg Housing Trust or private rental</li> </ul>	Moved into Housing Trust	Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto is in/has been in prison</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ Family member with a mental illness</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>
54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> <li>▪ Come from another Caravan Park</li> </ul>		Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sole parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ Blended family</li> </ul>
55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ unknown</li> </ul>		Onsite van (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> <li>▪ Intellectual disability</li> <li>▪ FAYS involvement/ child protection issues</li> </ul>
56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> <li>▪ Come from another Caravan Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Left owing rent etc</li> <li>▪ Moved into emergency accommodation</li> </ul>	Onsite van with additional rooms (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blended family /step parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> </ul>

<b>Family</b>	<b>Families Paths into Parks</b>	<b>Families Paths out of Parks</b>	<b>Living situation</b>	<b>Family Characteristics</b>
57	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Left owing rent etc</li> <li>▪ Moved into another Caravan Park</li> </ul>	Onsite van with annex (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blended family /step parent</li> <li>▪ Parent/defacto with drug and or alcohol dependency</li> <li>▪ Aboriginal family</li> <li>▪ Five children</li> </ul>
58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Left home, moving in together, starting life as a family</li> </ul>	Mother admitted into mental hospital	Onsite van with additional rooms (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young parent/s (under 25)</li> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> <li>▪ Family member with a mental illness</li> </ul>
59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Care by non custodial parent, or extended family member</li> </ul>		Onsite van with additional rooms (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> <li>▪ Non custodial Grandparent</li> </ul>
60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Come from Interstate</li> </ul>	Moved interstate	Cabin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nuclear family</li> <li>▪ Six children</li> </ul>
61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul>		Onsite van with additional rooms (belonging to Caravan Park or third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>

**CHECK LIST****ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY TO UNDERTAKE CHILD/PARENT FOCUSED  
ACTIVITIES ON CARAVAN PARKS**

1. Trained staff with qualifications in early childhood development, welfare and community development.

Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No

2. Resources to enable a minimum of 2 staff members working together on the park at all times.

Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No

3. Capacity to regularly supervise and support staff working in areas of early childhood development, welfare, community development.

Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No

4. Procedures for Critical Incident debriefing.

Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No

5. Staff trained in procedures for child protection notifications.

Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No

6. Policies and procedures of organization can be adapted to meet needs of fluctuating numbers ,levels of parent/carer participation and time needed to build trust and establish regular presence on a park.

Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No

7. Has good working relationships with local key service providers in education, social support, housing and child care and an agreed referral process.
- Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No
8. Possesses a recognised public profile in the local network of agencies or be strategically working towards such a profile and has the capacity to raise awareness of issues and promote integration of local services to assist families.
- Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No
9. Core business includes a vision of social justice for all families.
- Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No
10. Regards families as important partners and has strategies to work respectfully with families in order to build on strengths.
- Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No
11. Provides targeted training for staff when required. For example, Child Development, Strengths Approaches, Child Protection, Domestic Violence, Mental Illness and other
- Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No
12. Has suitable vehicle /van to carry equipment, shelter etc which is well equipped and easy for staff to pack and unpack.
- Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No
13. Understands the potentially volatile nature of caravan park communities and has comprehensive policies and procedures to ensure the safety of staff working with these communities and of families and their children who attend the programs.
- Yes  Working Towards and time frame  No

