

national advisory meeting 2007

8-9 September 2007, Melbourne

Every year FDCA hosts a two day meeting of members in which the 16 FDCA Directors and up to five FDCA members from each State and Territory participate.

Qualifications

Several early childhood educators informed us about TAFE and university qualifications and pathways, research on how qualifications improve the quality of care, and how quality early education and care improves children's development and their later life outcomes. We asked one of the

presentation that made you want the conference to be tomorrow, and the start of an Australia-wide journey for eight Tassie Tigers named Derwent, Richmond (Richie), Freycinet, Tamar, Franklin, Wellington, Roland and Stanley (all Tasmanian place names).

These little ambassadors will go from



The program began with an interactive presentation about values and relationships which gave us the opportunity to better understand what people want, how they want it and why. This session taught us how to ask questions neutrally and carefully so that people will give us real insight into their values and motivations.

Panel Discussion

Of particular interest was a research and strategic planning project by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) which aims to help local government better understand family day care unit costs, practices and people. The project is expected to be finalised in mid-2008. The project dovetails with a study on new service configurations being researched by a group of schemes in the northern Melbourne region. The end result of both studies will be a sustainable model of family day care.

presenters, Dr Susan Edwards, to write for this issue – see page 21.

Media and Marketing

We launched two new television commercials – one to attract families and one to attract carers. Already these have been shown on TV in metropolitan Sydney and Tasmania. The commercials are also being used in cinema advertising in several States.

Denise Holden of Media Monitors was contracted by us to write a comprehensive guide to media advertising which will be provided free to all schemes. It is also available in the marketing section of the FDCA website: www.fdca.com.au.

2009 National Conference

The Tasmanian delegates launched the 2009 National Family Day Care Conference in tremendous style with a visit by a 'real' Tassie Tiger, a

scheme to scheme in the next 18 months, have exciting adventures that will be uploaded to the conference website, and end their journey as guests of honour at the National Conference 20-23 May 2009. National office also has a tiger named Sammy who will come with us to conferences and events.

The conference registration is likely to be around \$745 for members – that's about \$10 a week if you start saving now! We are also working on a payment plan to help spread the cost into fortnightly instalments – more information about this will come by email and the next issue of JIGSAW. Don't forget to register your interest in the conference at www.cdesign.com.au/fdc2009

Members' Forum Issues

This interactive session discussed current and forward thinking issues and canvassed solutions with the group. Major issues included:

- access to CCB for carers' own children; access to CCB for migrant families on temporary resident working visas, and the level of Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) vs the increased workload associated with providing care to children with a disability
- the definition of a school-age child which impacts on how carers can accommodate these children in the period after Christmas and before school begins, as well as booking in new children for the year
- accreditation, particularly the absence of the word 'quality' from the new system (replaced with 'satisfactory' or 'not satisfactory'), and the leadership required to achieve the cultural changes

introduction of new initiatives are borne by schemes which are forced to pass on costs to carers and parents.

Family Day Care Australia has taken these points on board. We will continue to move the industry in a positive direction, improving market share and promoting family day care as a quality childcare option providing early learning experiences for children based on relationships and a sense of belonging.

Take home messages

Participants were asked what messages they would take home to share with colleagues.

Values and relationships topped the list followed closely by proactive promotion, marketing and brand awareness strategies to boost market share. One clever idea was

in terms of member services, marketing, media, policy and professional services:

- shared information – continue to engage the community and provide follow up information on the MAV work and other research projects
- business support for carers and scheme staff
- promotional items such as bumper stickers and letter box signs similar to that used in the TV commercial (see the commercials at www.fdca.com.au/newsroom)
- help schemes/regions with national TV advertising
- host mini workshops and encourage greater participation in members' forums (eg each regular attendee brings another member along)



- indicated by the alignment with the emergent curriculum
- the number of pre-school aged children that a carer can have in care at any one time. The ratios differ between States (1:4 or 1:5) with at least one model (Tasmania) enabling carers to have a fifth child if they hold a formal qualification
- marketing, promotion and understanding local competition and national industry trends
- formal qualifications and the delivery of pre-school programs in family day care; business skills for carers and staff
- fee deregulation where carers take control of their income and set their fees according to their quality service to ensure a viable business
- cost-shifting by the Commonwealth where costs associated with the

to use word of mouth by making a point of talking to at least one person every day who knows nothing about family day care.

Actions participants will take in the immediate future as a result of attending the NAM include:

- develop media and marketing plans and refocus promotion from awareness to action – promote, promote, promote!
- organise a State planning group to work on recruitment and retention of carers
- investigate relief care models
- start talking and encouraging people to go to the 2009 conference in Tasmania
- gather all the NAM information and share it with colleagues

We also asked participants what they would like to see FDCA provide more of

Conclusion

The 2007 National Advisory Meeting covered a lot of ground – both old and new – and provided FDCA with a raft of ideas and strategies to help take the industry forward. There was clear agreement that none of us can work in isolation and that only collectively can we achieve a greater market share for family day care.

Participants enjoyed the human side of the meeting which focused on relationships and what people value and why, and they were keenly interested in strategies for media, marketing and low cost promotion.

There is good understanding that the industry needs to offer early learning experiences underpinned by formal qualifications and that this should be balanced by business skills for both carers and staff. ✨