

# Stronger Families Learning Exchange

Where we're at

This fourth Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin focuses on the work accomplished at the National Workshop for Stronger Families Fund projects held in Melbourne in April 2003. These projects are funded by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) to strengthen local communities and families. They have a particular focus on working with families with children aged up to five years, and they are using early intervention strategies.

The National Workshop was auspiced and managed by the Stronger Families Learning Exchange staff at the Australian Institute of Family Studies. The Learning Exchange provides a clearinghouse and training and support in action research and evaluation for the Stronger Families Fund projects.

The workshop provided an opportunity for the current 46 Stronger Families Fund projects to come together, to network and to work on action research and evaluation issues. It also gave further guidance for the Stronger Families Learning Exchange staff about what projects needed in order to undertake their work with families and communities around Australia as part of the Australian Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. Speakers at the workshop stimulated new ideas and discussion and their papers have been included in this Bulletin.

Since the workshop, Stronger Families Learning Exchange has worked with projects in a number of different ways.

- The Training and Support Team members, who work directly with projects



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to support them in using action research and evaluation, have continued to work individually with 46 projects around Australia.

- There has been a focus on the production of practical tools and resources which can assist projects in undertaking their work.

Many of these resources are now on the website.

- Some of the materials and resources that the Team has been developing with the projects have been sent to FaCS and have proved useful in framing policy and ideas for its work.
- An action research workshop has been developed and run successfully with small groups of projects on a regional basis.
- Assistance has been given to projects in documenting their work creatively and assisting them in the production of reports about project outcomes.
- Clearinghouse staff have responded to an increased demand by projects for resources and have provided literature searches and compiled bibliographies for general dissemination to projects.
- The SFLEX website has been expanded with the addition of many more practical resources for projects and information about specific projects.

The year has been extremely busy and creative for both the projects and the Stronger Families Learning Exchange team. It has been exciting to see some projects move on to a stage where they can begin to assess outcomes of their work over nearly two years. It has also been great to welcome new projects which have begun during this year.