

WHAT CAME OUT OF THE WORKSHOP?

NEW REFERENCE GROUP

The Stronger families Learning Exchange has been working hard with many of the Stronger Families Fund projects to help them to establish a reference group. We see reference groups as being an important mechanism for increasing participation in projects and bringing in extra skill and expertise to guide the work of the project.

At the Strong Families Fund National Workshop, we invited people who were interested in joining a SFLEX Reference Group to put their names on the wall newspaper. Since then we have made submissions through our management at the Australian Institute of Family Studies and received permission to start our own reference group, which we are greatly looking forward to.

We will be inviting projects that indicated interest, SFLEX team members, and external people with specific expertise to be part of our reference group. Hopefully in the coming months you will see some more information about the development of this group on the Stronger Families website, or in the Bulletin.

If you are interested in receiving information about the SFLEX Reference Group, or would like to be involved, please contact Kelley Johnson on (03) 9214 7817.

REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

Part of the role of the Stronger families Learning Exchange is to provide training for Stronger Families Fund projects. At the National Workshop, people asked us if we would consider doing regional workshops focused on

a specific theme or topic, instead of having another national workshop.

We thought that this was a fantastic idea, and so we are in the process of planning a series of regional workshops to be held around Australia, between September 2003 and June 2004. We will design these workshops in response to the needs of, and requests from, the projects and the department of Family and Community Services (FaCS). While we already have some of these planned we would be very interested to hear new ideas and thoughts about themes or topics for workshops.

The first regional workshop will be about "Action Research in Your Organisation", designed for project teams (workers, managers, reference group members and community members) and FaCS workers.



If you have any ideas about topics for workshops, we would love to hear from you. This could be an issue you are trying to work through, something you have learned and want to share with other projects, a resource you are interested in developing – the possibilities are endless!

Please contact Katrina Bredhauer on (03) 9214 7873 to talk about regional workshops.

BRINGING PROJECT TOGETHER

At the workshop we started the process of talking about and sharing some of the work that Stronger Families Fund projects are doing, including what has worked, what has not worked, and what the projects have learned.

The aim of this process is to document what has been learned from the work

of the projects in a way that will be useful for future policy, program and project development with families and communities.

CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES

There was a diversity of participants and presentations at the workshop. Some issues arose around levels of inclusion and participation, and there were a range of reactions to some of the presentations throughout the workshop.

To explore this further, a meeting was held during the workshop with several Indigenous participants. This was a productive learning experience for all involved, and from it several actions have been planned.

Later this year there will be three regional workshops for projects

working with Indigenous communities. Several Indigenous participants indicated interest in joining the SFLEX Reference Group. There will also be action research findings produced about working with Indigenous communities and people.

It was fantastic to have such a diverse attendance at the workshop, and to have presentations that stirred our emotions and our thoughts, and sparked us into action.

You will hear more about these things as time progresses, but if you have any inquiries in the meantime please contact Kelley Johnson on (03) 9214 7817.

