

The Family Action Centre
Annual Report 2003





In 2003 the Family Action Centre continued to drive the development and delivery of family and community programs. Our work has been underpinned by our commitment to issues of equity and access for all families and reflective practice to ensure quality practice outcomes. There has been increasing recognition of the value of the Centre's work by the Faculty of Health, Federal and State departments, local communities, schools around Australia, regional government offices and non-government organisations.

Staff have acted as consultants to government departments, initiated a number of research projects and contributed to national policy. Richard Fletcher and Deborah Hartman were consultants for the National Ministerial Council Overseeing Education to develop a new Gender Equity Policy, an outstanding achievement for the Family Action Centre.

During the year Family Action Centre staff members provided guidance and training to Early Intervention and Early Childhood projects in New South Wales and Queensland. This consultancy was for the Federal Department of Family and Community Services.

The Centre has also undertaken several consultancies at a regional level including the development of Risk and Protective Factor Tools for Adolescents for the NSW Department of Community Services, and in partnership with the School of Social Sciences, the development of a conceptual framework for an Integrated Service Centre for Families in a Hunter locality.

A community partnership in action in 2003 was the implementation of the Swansea Boys Resilience Project, drawing on the skills and expertise of several Family Action Centre programs and the assets of the local schools and community.

During the year, purposeful planning and management has increased the Centre's research profile and academic standing. Three staff members are now employed as academics and the implementation of the Masters of Education (Educating Boys) has been successful.

Director's Message

Many staff have provided guest lectures to several University departments. Simone Silberberg has worked with the School of Social Sciences Social Work Department to develop an innovative 4th year Primary Education Course "Schools, Families and Community". Simone also developed a postgraduate course in Narrative and Community Interventions, for the Department of Psychology, Macquarie University.

Three new research projects were implemented with funding from philanthropic organisations and Federal departments.

Three successful national conferences were conducted by the Family Action Centre:

- National Caravan Park Workers' Conference, in March, 2003.
- Boys to Fine Men Conference in March, 2003.
- Building Family and Community Strengths Conference in November, 2003.

These Conferences are important opportunities to promote theories of practice and practice models and also to promote the work of the Centre. Two of the conferences provided an additional day for policy development (Role of caravan parks in Australia's Housing Context and The Fatherhood Research in Australia Forum).

The Family Action Centre staff have undertaken the task of developing the five year Strategic Plan which will guide us over the next five years. There is a greater focus on all programs gaining a balance in their funding base to include grants, resource development, research and consultancy and training. The new Strategic Plan also involves a restructure to assist all programs grow their diverse funding base and to encourage integration of skills between programs and projects.

The Management Team is committed to the Centre's sustainability and is willing and determined to drive the necessary change. As Director, I am grateful for the professionalism, enthusiasm and passion that the Managers have for their work in steering the Centre. This is a challenging role pushing the boundaries of practice and theory while guiding and supporting staff.

Our field staff are exceptional in their commitment to the communities in which they work and their willingness to implement reflective practice. Administration and support staff continue to take up the challenge to review and refine administration

processes that ensure accountability between programs, collaboration and communication. All staff continue to contribute in a significant way to the work culture of the Centre making it a challenging yet caring environment in which to work.

The Advisory Board members have provided invaluable advice, support and expertise to the Family Action Centre and its staff, on an individual basis. The Advisory Board, as a whole, with its wide representation of community and University personnel, have been an excellent sounding board for current and future issues.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judi Geggie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Judi Geggie
Director, The Family Action Centre



Professor Trevor Waring



Shirley McIlroy (left) and Judi Geggie (right)



FAC Award recipients Kathy Rodgers and Anne Deveson, with Geraldine Doogue

Chairperson's Message

Even a cursory glance at this report will see a clear demonstration of the impact the Family Action Centre is having at a local, state and national level. While continuing to serve the local community in innovative ways, the Centre is now leading the nation by way of major conferences and policy development.

Such is the level of esteem in which the expertise and experience of the Family Action Centre is held, an increasing demand for consultative input has been experienced particularly in the fields of family strength building and the vexed area of developing boys into men and what this means for the country.

The Family Action Centre staff is a dedicated highly skilled group of individuals who manage to work as a team to produce something very special of which the University of Newcastle is very proud.

Professor Trevor Waring
Chairperson

Family Action Centre Awards

Shirley McIlroy, Personal Assistant to the Director was nominated for the Award for Excellence and Contributions to the Family Action Centre. This award was presented at the Faculty of Health's annual 2003 dinner.

The Family Action Centre Award for outstanding contribution to the Australian Community was presented to Anne Deveson at the Family and Community Strengths Conference in November 2003. A writer and a journalist, Anne has lectured on social justice issues around the world. Her book about her son Jonathon's struggles with schizophrenia won international and national acclaim and helped change Australian mental health policy and laws.

In 1986 she helped establish the first national organisation for schizophrenia in Australia. Anne is an Officer of the Order of Australia, holds three honorary doctorates and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Australian Producers and Directors Guild and is currently undertaking a Doctorate in Creative Arts at the University of Western Sydney.

The Family Action Centre Award for outstanding contribution to our local community was presented to Kathy Rodgers. Kathy is a prime example of community leadership. This award recognises Kathy's energy, persistence and passion to make Swansea a safe and healthy community for children to grow up.

As a community volunteer Kathy has been instrumental in founding and supporting a range of community initiatives. These include Swansea Boys' Resilience Project (in conjunction with the Family Action Centre), the Lake Macquarie Community Drug Action Team and the Swansea Community Network.

National Conferences

Boys to Fine Men – Schools and Community Partnership Conference.

March 2003, 500 delegates attended. Major sponsorship provided by the Department of Education, Science and Training. Minor sponsorship provided by Rio Tinto to bring the Boys' Business Group from Darwin to participate in the Conference.

10th National Caravan Park Workers' Conference

was held in March 2003 in Brisbane. Eighty delegates attended with representation from park residents, community organisations, government departments, research institutes and tertiary institutions. This conference was supported with funding from the Federal Department of Family and Community Services.

3rd Family and Community Strengths Conference – a Truly Civil Society

was held in Newcastle, November – December 2003. Five hundred delegates attended with major sponsorship provided by the Federal Department of Family and Community Services



Participants at the National Caravan Park Workers Conference



Darwin Boys Business Group who performed at the 2003 "Boys to Fine Men" Conference



Advisory Board Members and delegates from Korea and U.S.A. at the Building Family and Community Strength Conference

Family Action Centre Programs Significant Highlights in 2003

Caravan Project

The Caravan Project engages marginalised families and residents in caravan parks and mobile home communities to improve quality of life. The service operates in Maitland, Cessnock, Raymond Terrace and Lake Macquarie and also provides training and consultation to health and community services through the National Dissemination Program.

Following a major review and new strategic direction determined in late 2002, the Caravan Project incorporated action research into its daily practice, developed a project investigating community leadership on parks and initiated a number of community forums to engage with key stakeholders. These included:

- Residents' forum
- Caravan Park Managers' forum
- Community Agency forum

The Community Leadership strategy supported residents to foster group membership and initiate leadership activities, reflecting the objectives of the Centre in blurring the line between service provision and client self determination.

National Dissemination Program (NDP)

Family Crisis Child Care Caravan Park Pilot. The final report detailing the action research analysis of this two-year pilot was completed and the Training Kit completed.

The success of this pilot project across three states and one territory has resulted in the Department of Family and Community Services allocating implementation funding to continue work in caravan parks and extend the strategies to housing department areas in South Australian, the Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales. The NDP continued with key communication activities which included publication of a national newsletter 'Insite', website development and the organisation of 10th National Caravan Park Workers' Conference and the National Policy and Research Forum. One significant outcome of this forum was a national policy statement on the Role of Caravan Parks in the Australian Housing System.

Parent and Children Support Service (PACSS)

This initiative provides support to methadone using parents through supported playgroups located at the methadone clinic, after identifying the children's lack of access to helping services. A volunteer training program was conducted and volunteers set up playgroups and other activities for the children of parents attending the clinic at the Royal Newcastle Hospital. In the first year of this two-year program we have observed that client participation has been limited due to the enormous social barriers in attending a social/parenting activity, particularly in a hospital setting. PACSS is currently considering involvement at the Cessnock methadone clinic and establishing a volunteer home visiting service.

Home-Start

Home-Start utilises trained volunteers to provide support to families with young children. Referrals are made by a variety of government and non-government services, as well as self-referrals.

With the acquisition of funding through the Families First Strategy the program has been able to further target populations not traditionally accessing the service, such as male carers, Indigenous and CALD families and people living with disabilities. Of note, a volunteer preparation course for men was undertaken. This is the first course to be developed in the world network of Home-Start programs, ie 10 countries and over 700 Home-Start Programs. Home-Start incorporated action research into its operation with regular supervision and debriefing becoming an integral part of its practice.

Boys in Schools Program

Provides consultation, training and resources to schools in order to enhance educational outcomes for boys.

Boys Education, Boys Outcomes Project (BEBOP) commenced in four schools/clusters in NSW and Victoria.

Program Manager Deb Hartman undertook the role of advisor to the National Lighthouse Schools Projects.

Freerk Ykema from Gadaku Institute, The Netherlands conducted a national program of Rock and Water workshops. In 2003, Freerk also conducted advanced training workshops to increase the number of trainers of the Rock and Water program in Australia.

Due to increased workload an Assistant Manager, Steve Gaul, was brought on board. Steve was the first graduate from the Graduate Certificate in Educating Boys and had worked with DET as a consultant in boy's education.

Project Developing Boys Literacy – Ms Victoria Clay was employed to undertake a Boys' Literacy Project, funded by the Commonwealth of Australia Innovative Projects Initiative.

The first courses in the Master Program in Educational Studies (Educating Boys) were offered to distance education students through the School of Education, the University of Newcastle.

Engaging Fathers

Challenges institutions which are family focused to review their practices and to develop strategies that will engage fathers in their services.

Project staff work with early childhood, health and welfare services, schools and Indigenous organisations to develop father-friendly practice. Achievements during 2003 included: establishment of the Males in Early Childhood Network, Nuts and Bolts course for school dads in Newcastle, an ongoing fathers' group in Neonatal Intensive Care and the Young Aboriginal Fathers research project. Project staff also provided training and consultancy to groups around Australia.

Family and Community Research Program

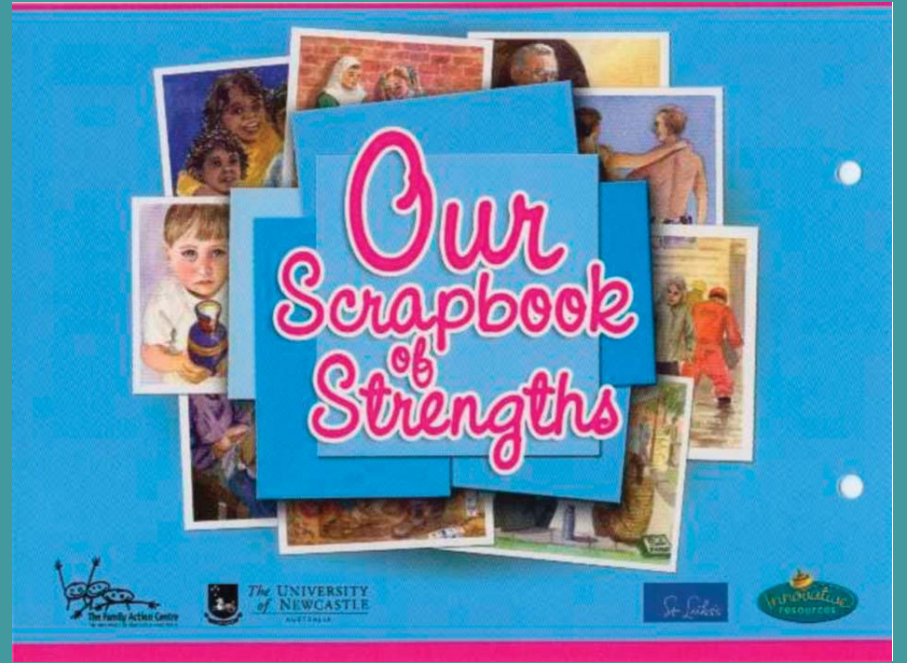
Provides research support to Family Action Centre programs and develops community workshops which focus on strength based practice in family and community work.



HomeStart enriches children's lives



FAC staff provide workshops as part of the consultancy to "Stronger Family" Projects in NSW and Queensland



Our Scrapbook of Strengths Resource

Research and Consultancies

Financials

Simone Silberberg has presented strengths based workshops for the business community through the Executive Connection in addition to workshops on family resilience and community capacity building. The team has brought in renowned international presenters and run very successful workshops.

Our Scrapbook of Strengths was produced in conjunction with St Lukes Innovative Resources. This valuable resource is a tool to identify, explore and celebrate the strengths that bind families and communities together. The resource is based on the Family Strengths Research Project carried out by the Centre in 1999. Media interest in this resource promoted an interview with Simone Silberberg on our understanding of strong families for the ABC program New Dimensions which went to air in May.

In collaboration with the Schools of Social Sciences and Education (the University of Newcastle), this team contributed to the development and delivery of a fourth year primary education course called Families, Schools and Communities. The aim of the course is to provide students with an understanding of the relationship between children's educational experience and their family and community contexts. The course examined dominant beliefs and values relating to family, policy contexts for school-community collaborations, notions of community development, and strategies to engage parents and community members.

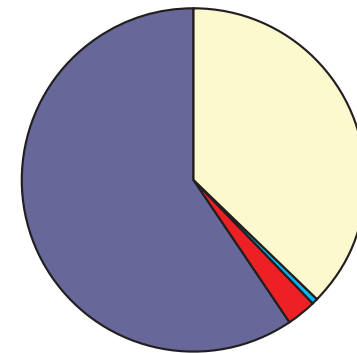
The Family Action Centre management team provided guidance and training to Early Intervention/Early Childhood projects funded under the Stronger Family and Community Strategy for the Department of Family and Community Services. This involved the organisation and running of two forums in Brisbane and Newcastle, training in action research for projects in Queensland and individual project support in NSW and Queensland.

Medicine Information Persons research project. This was completed in 2003 for the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW. This research investigated the impact of the Medicine Information Project on a group of consumers who had not been previously engaged in a formal evaluation process. This group included community members receiving the information on wiser use of medicines provided by trained volunteers and represented three language groups – English, Greek and Cantonese.

FAC provided consultation to Habitat, Uniting Care Burnside in Wyong, facilitating reflection groups and conducting focus groups for evaluation purposes.

Income Total

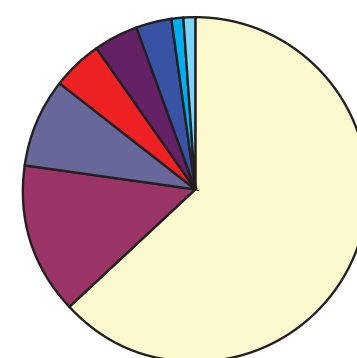
\$2,401,665.78



- Grants
- Donations
- Fees & Charges
- Services and Sales

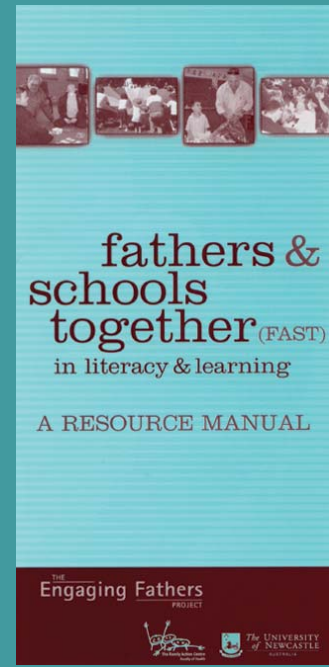
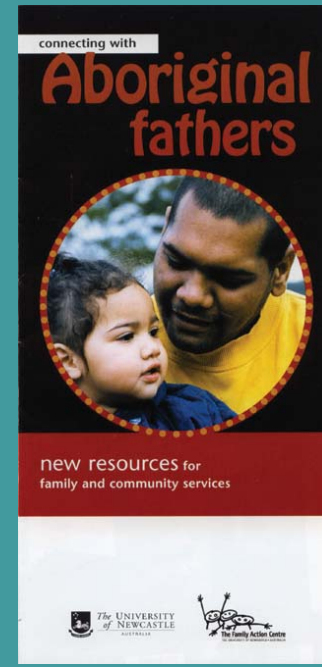
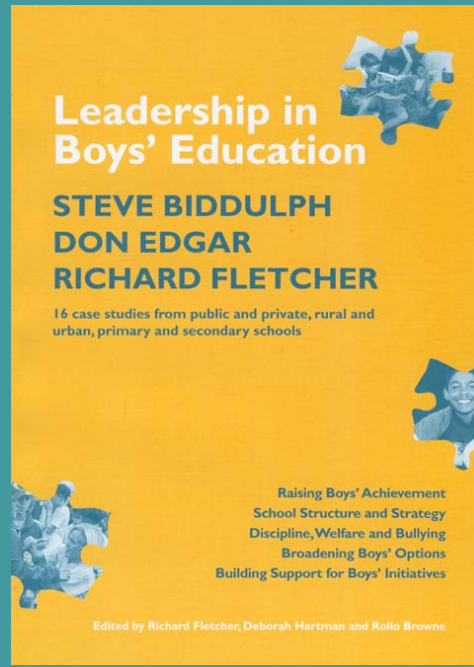
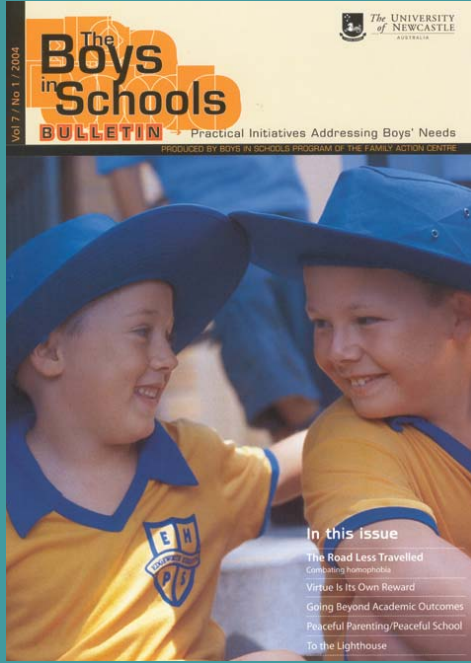
Expenditure Total

\$1,910,503.26



- Consumables
- Services
- Travel
- Utilities
- Equipment
- Other
- Management Fees
- Salaries & Oncosts

Examples of Resources Available from the FAC for the Boys in Schools Program and Engaging Fathers



Conference/Seminar Papers presented by FAC staff

New Resources and Publications

Three new editions of the Boys in Schools Bulletin were produced in 2003.
 Production by Engaging Fathers "Our Kids Need Dads Who" posters
 Video and DVD – Skills and Strengths of Indigenous Men
 Our Scrapbook of Strengths
 Young Aboriginal Fathers Report. Inviting Dads In
 Fatherhood Definitions. Richard Fletcher
 Insite national newsletter

Caravan Parks Pilot Training Kit

Hartman, Deborah – Presentation at the School and Community Forum, Woodrising – February 2003

Fletcher, Richard – Keynote speaker at The National Association of Childbirth Educators (NACE) 8th National Conference, February 2003 – Families: Myths, Dreams and Realities

Fletcher, Richard – Presented paper at the Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference Melbourne, February 2003.

Schott, Paul – National Caravan Park Workers Conference, March 2003 – paper entitled Community Leadership on Caravan Parks.

Fletcher, Richard; Bright, Ken; Tranter, Stephanie and d'Arcy, Craig – Engaging Fathers presentation at the Building Fine Men Conference, March 2003.

Hartman, Deborah – Presentation at the Boys to Fine Men: School and Community Partnerships Conference, March 2003, Boys – Don't ya love 'em!

Hartman, Deborah – Presentation at the Northern Territory DEET Leaders' Forum "Actioning the Vision", April 2003, Boys' Behaviour and Learning

Hartman, Deborah – Presentation at the Inter-District Primary Principals' Conference, "Public Education: QUALITY Today and Tomorrow", June 2003, Boys' Education: Where are we now?

Silberberg, Simone – Keynote speaker at the 25th Anniversary of the After Hours Family Crisis Service, Western Sydney – topic – Building Family Resilience from a Strengths Perspective.

d'Arcy, Craig – Presentation at Home-Start National Conference, July 2003

d'Arcy, Craig – Presentation to Queensland Health Parenting Forum on the topic Inviting Dads In, July 2003

Fletcher, Richard and Bright, Ken – Presented an all day Engaging Fathers Project workshop at Cabramatta Public School for Schools as Community centres people, August 2003

Bright, Ken and d'Arcy, Craig – Presented at Home-Start Male Volunteer Training Preparation Course, Myuna Bay, August 2003. Theme was Engaging Fathers

Fletcher Richard – Paper presented at the National Strategic Conference on Fatherhood Main Committee Room Parliament House, Canberra, August 2003

Bright, Ken; Hammond, Craig and Tranter, Stephanie – Presentation for Schools as Community Centres – Anna Bay Public School, August 2003

d'Arcy, Craig – Inviting Dads In Presentation to Kindergarten Union, Sydney, August 2003

d'Arcy, Craig – Keynote speaker at the Independent Education Unions Conference in Sydney – September 2003

Fletcher, Richard – Presented paper at The Men and Boys Health Conference, Cairns, September 2003

Hartman, Deborah and Clay, Victoria – Workshop at the Family and Community Strengths Conference, November 2003, Boys and Literacy

Bright, Ken, and d'Arcy, Craig – Attended and presented workshop at 3rd National Indigenous and 5th National Men's Health Conference, Cairns, November 2003

Hartman, Deborah – Presentation to Calora TAFE program, November, 2003 – Boys' Education

Gaul, Stephen – Presentation at Department of Education & Training Campbelltown District Principal Conference, December 2003 – Rock and Water

Clay, Victoria – Building Family and Community Strengths Conference, December 2003 – paper entitled Developing a Capacity Inventory as a Tool in Boys' Literacy

Schott, Paul – Building Family and Community Strengths Conference, December 2003 – paper entitled "Resilience in Teams and Organisations"

Engaging Fathers Program



Home Start presenting their team goals at the 2003 FAC Staff Retreat



Mark Douglas facilitates the development of the 5 year strategic Plan with FAC Management and Advisory Board members

Staff Training

Culture of the FAC

Fletcher, Richard – Keynote speaker – Building Family and Community Strengths Conference, December 2003

Hartman, Deb, Silberberg, Simone, Bright, Ken and Gaul, Steve – Building Family and Community Strengths Conference, December 2003. – Mentoring for Boys in Schools Project
Eddy, Gus – Presentation at the National Caravan Park Workers Conference "Building Communities through Play," March, 2003

Eddy, Gus – Presentation at the National Caravan Park Workers Conference "Building Communities through Play," March, 2003

Eddy, Gus – Presented a workshop on Action Research for Community Groups for Barnados South Coast Centre project team and partnership agencies in Wollongong, May, 2003

Eddy, Gus – Presented findings of the Medicine Information Persons Research Project to NSW Health, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW and partnership agencies in December, 2003.

Eddy, Gus – Presentation at the Building Family and Community Strengths Conference Influencing national policies and practices to improve outcomes for families at risk of homelessness. December, 2003.

Workshop/Tours Organised For Overseas Experts

Tom Dewar – School & Community Partnership

Freerk Ykema – Rock and Water

Jody Kretzmann – Asset Based Community Development

John DeFrain – Project to develop narrative stories with Windale, Booragul/Bolton Point

Staff have undertaken a range of training provided by the University and outside (independent) training providers including:

- Purposeful facilitation – two-day workshop
- Photovoice
- Powerpoint
- OH&S Training for supervisors and managers – Two-day workshop
- The Early Years – Run by Centre for Community Child Health (Royal Childrens' Hospital, Melbourne)
- Lifeline Training for administrative staff.

A staff retreat for all staff was held at Hawks Nest in February. Nancy Snow, Paul Schott and Simone Silberberg provided team training.

Strategic Planning with Mark Douglas as facilitator. Mark also facilitated this process for the Faculty of Health. A five-year strategic plan for the Family Action Centre is now completed.

Life coaching opportunities with Julie Midson-York. This provided excellent support and development opportunities for those managers taking part.

Bruce Furner, a member of the University's counselling unit provided staff development opportunities for the management team.

Farewell to Kim Gough. Ten years ago Kim first connected with the FAC in a voluntary capacity as a park representative running playgroups on parks. She then joined the FAC as a community development officer, a position she held until her resignation in late 2003.

FAC Patrons

Geraldine Doogue Patron, Family Action Centre
Dr John Irvine Patron, Home-Start Program
Madeleine Randal Patron, Home-Start Program

FAC Sponsors

Bernard van Leer Foundation
**Federal Department of Education,
Science and Training**
NSW Department of Community Services
**Federal Department of Family and
Community Services**
Myer Foundation
Ian Potter Foundation
Department of Juvenile Justice
NSW Premier's Department
NSW Department of Education and Training
NSW Department of Health
Rio Tinto Aboriginal Foundation
NCOSS
Hunter Sports High School
**Combined Pensioners &
Superannuants Association of NSW Inc.**

FAC Advisory Board Members

Professor Trevor Waring (Chairperson)
Professor Margaret McMillan
Professor Diana Keatinge
Professor Graham Vimpani
Gus Eddy
Nancy O'Connor
Penny Crofts
John Clarke
Julie Midson York
Gary Kennedy

University of Newcastle Staff Supporters

Ms Carolyn Clark
Dr Vicki Clifton
Dr Benjamin Ewald
Ms Denise Croft

And numerous anonymous donors.

Staff for 2003

Judi Geggie Director, Family Action Centre
Gus Eddy Executive Officer, Family Action Centre
Richard Fletcher Manager, Engaging Fathers Project
Deborah Hartman Manager, Boys in Schools Program
Simone Silberberg Manager, Family and Community Research
Paul Schott Manager, Community Service Programs
Shirley McIlroy Personal Assistant, Family Action Centre
Camilla McQualter Administrative Officer, Family and Community Research
Lesley Asher Administrative Officer, Community Services
Alison Wnuk Community Development Officer, Caravan Project
Kerry Hernandez Community Development Officer, Caravan Project
Evelyn Gibson Coordinator, Home-Start (East Lake Macquarie)
Beth Deiter Coordinator, Home-Start (Newcastle)
Craig d'Arcy Coordinator, Home-Start Families First (North Lake Macquarie)
Loretta Lott Community Worker, Engaging Fathers Project
Coordinator, Home-Start Families First (North Lake Macquarie)
Vickie Meek Administrative Assistant, Home-Start and Family Action Centre
Michelle Gifford Administrative Officer, Boys in Schools Program
Megan McIlveen Administrative Assistant, Boys in Schools Program
Lindee Hahn Administrative Assistant, Boys in Schools Program
Ken Bright Community Worker, Engaging Fathers Project
Craig Hammond Community Worker, Engaging Fathers Project

New Staff

Janine Bendit Administrative Officer, Engaging Fathers Project
Steve Gaul Assistant Manager, Boys in Schools Program
Graeme Stuart Community Development Officer,
Community Leadership Program, Caravan Project
Debbie Milton Community Development Officer, Caravan Project
Debbie Boehme Program Coordinator, PACSS (Parents and Children Support Service)
Sue Pascoe Research Assistant, Engaging Fathers Program
Stephanie Tranter Literacy Officer, Engaging Fathers Program
Hedy Fairbairn Research Assistant, Engaging Fathers Program
Victoria Clay Research Assistant, Boys in Schools Program/Family and Community Research

Staff Who Have Left

Kim Gough Community Development Officer, Caravan Project
Michelle Hawkins Community Development Officer, Caravan Project
Tara Clinton Community Development Officer,
Community Leadership Program, Caravan Project

For further information contact

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