



**KEY CHALLENGES  
FACING THE NOT-FOR-  
PROFIT COMMUNITY  
SECTOR**

**WORKING PAPER**

October 2007

**Families Australia is the national, independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the needs and interests of families.**

**As part of its role, Families Australia conducts focus groups and other forms of consultation to explore understandings about contemporary family-related issues.**

**This Working Paper discusses some of the key challenges facing Australia's not-for-profit community sector organisations.**

**Comments on the paper are welcome.**

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**Nonprofit organisations make an even more important contribution to society through their demonstration of, and thus encouragement for, collective action. They play a central role in the regeneration of social capital. Nonprofit organisations also sustain and shape a democratic political system. They are the “elementary schools of democracy”.**

Professor Mark Lyons,  
*Third Sector: the contribution of nonprofit  
and cooperative enterprises in Australia*

**Working Paper:**  
**Key Challenges Facing the Not-for-Profit Community Sector**

**1. Summary**

Focus groups and other consultations conducted by Families Australia highlighted a range of issues for not-for-profit community organisations, such as funding, relations with governments, workforce recruitment, training and retention, accountability and reporting. Several suggestions were made about ways ahead, for governments and for community organisations themselves, including: understanding of, and allowance for, costs of regulatory and compliance practices; earlier evaluations and improved notice about the continuation of projects; a coherent national approach to staff recruitment, training and retention; longer funding cycles to reflect long term need; indexation of government project funding; more use of small-scale seed funding; less complex and more consistent application procedures and reporting; improved communication systems, to enable better sharing of information and more consistent record keeping and reporting; transferable long service and sick leave entitlements for community sector workers; and additional training opportunities, including in the area of business management, especially in rural areas.

A comprehensive national examination of the issues faced by the sector is warranted. Such an examination should be based on comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analyses and should consider: workforce training, retention and planning; reporting and accountability; relations with government at all levels, especially in planning and service delivery; legal and regulatory constraints on organisations; and constraints to funding and organisational sustainability in general.

To underpin this work, an up-to-date Australian Bureau of Statistics report on the community sector is needed, and Families Australia is pleased to learn that the

ABS is intending to re-run the Community Services Survey in the second half of 2009.

Relevant overseas models should also be investigated and considered, noting especially the work done in the UK.

## **2. Background and purpose**

In mid-2007, Families Australia conducted a preliminary examination of key issues facing the not-for-profit community sector in order to:

- better understand the challenges faced by the sector generally, including by the more than 400 community organisations which are members of Families Australia;
- position Families Australia to:
  - contribute to thinking on the issues;
  - work with other national organisations to advance the needs and interests of the sector; and
  - promote the interests of Families Australia's members at the national level;
- contribute information of a qualitative nature which would complement studies which have a largely quantitative basis.

In embarking on this work, Families Australia wishes to acknowledge, in particular, the leadership on the issue by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), especially through their annual *Australian Community Services Sector* (ACSS) reports, and the National Roundtable of Nonprofit Organisations.

The following working paper is based on evidence obtained through:

- two focus groups in Ballarat and Melbourne (May-June 2007), which involved representatives from local and State level community organisations;
- a Roundtable Meeting in Canberra (June 2007) which involved representatives of national and Territory level organisations; and

- in-house research (see references at the conclusion of the report).

In all, 18 not-for-profit community organisations working at either the national, State/Territory or local levels, participated in the project, bringing to bear a wide range of experiences in the field of community service.

Families Australia's methodology for the focus groups, which is described in *Appendix A*, is based on Australian and overseas best practice and is supported by a quality assurance framework. The following should not be taken to represent the views of any particular participant or participants, nor the consensus of the focus groups and other consultations. *Appendix B* contains further information about the consultations, including a list of participating organisations.

As well as being based on a relatively small consultation sample, the present report is presented with the caveat that Families Australia's examination is based mainly on face-to-face meetings with groups and individuals. Except where quantitative data as derived and referenced from other sources is cited, the primary source of information is qualitative; as such, it is necessarily limited due to the restricted number of participants and locations in which consultations occurred. As with all other Families Australia qualitative research, the following report carries the caveat that additional consultations are required to provide relatively greater assurance as to the accuracy of the findings. That said, Families Australia notes that there is a dearth of recent qualitative data on this topic.

With the foregoing factors in mind, Families Australia has limited its report to a preliminary exploration of the main issues which were highlighted during its consultations. These issues are discussed mainly with a view to pointing to areas which would benefit from further examination by relevant stakeholders and/or by Families Australia.

### **3. Context**

Defining the nature and size of Australia's not-for-profit community sector is itself a major challenge. As noted in ACOSS's 2007 *Australian Community Sector Survey*<sup>1</sup>, the various surveys conducted by government and non-government organisations proceed from differing starting assumptions. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's National Classification of Community Services, which is used as the basis for their publication *Australia's Welfare*, does not include organisations working in employment, housing or health services. The Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Community Services Australia* report covers only employing businesses and organisations that provide community services as defined by the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification. ACOSS's 2007 *Australian Community Sector Survey* does not include for-profit organisations.

Individuals and organisations describe the "sector" and its constituent organisations in various ways, such as "the not-for-profit sector", "the third sector"<sup>2</sup>, "the welfare sector", "the community sector", "the family sector" and "the voluntary and community services sector". In the UK, there has been a move in the past decade to define the broad range of organisations that are neither part of government nor the for-profit private sector as the "social economy"<sup>3</sup>.

Others have observed that the past two decades in particular have seen a substantial growth in the presence of 'for-profit' organisations in social service provision in many countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. One US observer, William Ryan, suggests that the continued blurring

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Council of Social Service 2007, 6.

<sup>2</sup> The UK National Audit Office defines the "third sector" as "the range of institutions which occupy the space between the State and the private sector. These include small local community and voluntary groups, registered charities both large and small, foundations, trusts and the growing number of social enterprises and co-operatives. Third sector organisations share common characteristics in the social, environmental or cultural objectives they pursue; their independence from government; and in the reinvestment of surpluses for those same objectives". UK National Audit Office, 2005, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Passey and Lyons, 2004, 1.

of distinctions between not-for-profit and for-profit organisations will raise questions about whether not-for-profit organisations can adapt to this new and more competitive environment without compromising the qualities that distinguish them from 'for-profit' organisations<sup>4</sup>.

While definitional issues need to be more widely debated and clarified, this paper adopts the term "not-for-profit community sector".

It is clear that this sector makes an enormous contribution to Australian society. The National Roundtable of Nonprofit Organisations states<sup>5</sup>:

- In 1999/2000, Australia had approximately 700,000 non-profit organisations, of which about 320,000 were incorporated as separate legal entities, and of these, about 35,000 employed over 600,000 paid staff and involved over four million volunteers.
- These organisations contributed about \$21 billion or 3.3% to GDP (4.7% when the value of volunteer labour is added in) and had an income of \$33.5 billion.
- In 2003, over 13 million Australians (86% of adults) belonged to at least one non-profit association, and 48% belonged to at least three organisations.

According to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data<sup>6</sup>:

- At June 2000, there were 9,287 employing businesses and organisations which provided community services, a 15% increase since June 1996.
- The 9,287 businesses and organisations comprised 2,800 'for profit' organisations, 5,938 'not-for-profit' organisations and 548 government organisations.
- Between 1996 and 2001, the number of 'for profit' and 'not-for-profit' organisations increased by 32% and 10% respectively.

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<sup>4</sup> Ryan, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> National Roundtable of Nonprofit Organisations, 2007, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001.

- At June 2000, 341,447 employees worked for community service organisations - a 7% increase in the four years since June 1996.
- 81% of employees worked directly on community service provision. There were 299,413 volunteers working at some time during June 2000 on community services activities, a 25% increase since June 1996.
- \$12,643 million was expended on community services and community services-related activities during 1999-2000, a 32% increase since 1995-96.
- While the direct community service expenditure by these organisations increased by 28% since 1995-96, the sectors showed different increases, with the expenditure by 'for profit' organisations increasing by 16%, 'not for profit' organisations by 47% and government organisations by 6%.

#### **4. Results**

The following section contains findings from focus groups and a roundtable conducted by Families Australia in May and June 2007. Participants were asked about the major challenges and barriers facing not-for-profit community sector organisations and ways to address these challenges, including with reference to rural and regional settings.

##### **4.1 Major challenges and barriers facing organisations**

Participants were asked:

- What new challenges/demands are your organisations being asked to respond to?
- What main external and internal barriers does your organisation face in doing its job?
- What are the main challenges facing national vs State/Territory vs local/regional, rural and remote organisations? (Roundtable participants only).

Participants highlighted a range of new and emerging challenges as well as barriers to the performance of community organisations, as follows:

### Sector wide issues

- The growing complexity of client needs is often not recognised in program funding. Where projects provide support to families with long-term needs, stability and continuity of funding is vital to achieving good outcomes. Vulnerable families who need long-term intervention are better served by organisations with the stability and continuity that comes with longer funding cycles.
- Governments require mainstream service providers to forge partnerships with Indigenous communities, but accessing Indigenous expertise is often a challenge because many Indigenous organisations are fully stretched.
- Corporate partnerships are often promoted by governments as a way forward for not-for-profit community organisations, but the costs and risks associated with such partnerships, such as that of deploying resources to seek grants, are not well recognised or supported.
- There is considerable room to improve coordination between State/Territory and Federal governments in the social welfare field. Several organisations made the plea for greater communication between Federal and State/Territory government agencies in relation to the development and delivery of programs to the same target groups.
- Many organisations at differing levels (local, State/Territory, Federal) wish to undertake public advocacy on behalf of their clients and/or membership but sometimes or often feel constrained in doing so, as they are a contracted government service deliverer. Several participants noted the tensions for organisations in advocating on issues whilst being conscious of the possibility that such advocacy may lead to a cut in future project funding.
- There is scope to improve the information flows and connections between organisations so that clients can go from one organisation to another without having to retell their entire history.

Comments on these themes included:

*Having worked in the sector for 20-25 years, mental health and drug and alcohol problems have become more prevalent in creating clients with complex needs. Our understanding of client needs and family needs have become more complex.*

*Because of housing costs in Melbourne, people are moving out to country areas, and in some towns there's an increase in the [rural] population of welfare recipients but a lack of services, I'd question whether decision-makers have a good understanding of regional and rural issues.*

*How can the sector develop new ways of delivering services? How should research and development and innovation be better undertaken? How best to link research and policy and practice?*

*Governments at all levels should embrace the idea of partnership in service delivery by the third sector and attach a real balance sheet value to the contribution it makes to overall government services. This approach would allow a return on investment approach to drive its relationship with these groups.*

*It is crucial that clients be able to go from one organisation to another without having to retell their entire history. Organisations are not well linked, and few common information and computer technology systems exist.*

*I see a shifting expectation about what community organisations can do, away from advocacy towards service provision, handing over money and giving legal advice. Government cut-backs are putting pressure on the community sector.*

*What's happened in last few years is outsourcing by government...and there's a real challenge for balancing; when do we say "yes, we'll take that on" and when do we say "no, that's outside who we are and what we want to do", but it comes from the government wanting to outsource as much as possible. While the community sector does it better in many ways, it creates a new set of challenges for the sector which is already stretched. If you take them [projects] on, who does the advocacy?*

*The impact of the privatised employment market has been huge, and there are major issues arising from this type of market. A major issue is the placing of community organisations in direct competition with for-profit organisations and the impact of this on the services and on the sector.*

*A challenge for my organisation is not to abandon the small rural communities because they are hard [to work in].*

*There's been a shift from supporting the independence of voluntary community organisations to using them as service delivery arms of government; so, looking at the underlying cultural shift, that's what's really happened – rather than value that independence and ability to advocate, to, basically through funding, buy that organisation as a service delivery arm.*

### Funding

- The prevalence of short-term government contracts and project funding cycles (sometimes for periods of as little as 1 year and up to 3 years) generally acts against effective project delivery and staff morale and retention. It sometimes exposes organisations to high risk, as they have to commit to purchase or lease property or employ staff on an assumption that a project will proceed beyond a pilot phase.
- Tender requirements are often seen as disproportionately time and resource-intensive compared with the likely financial return from the tender; this worked to the particular disadvantage of smaller organisations with relatively few resources to devote to writing complex funding applications.
- Evaluations of pilot projects are often conducted too close to the end of the pilot to provide certainty for employees, service organisations and clients in relation to possible next phases of project activity. Also, funders are often not prepared to signal early an intention to provide ongoing funding subject to the successful completion of the pilot phase. In these circumstances, staff members often seek other jobs to try to ensure continuous employment. High staff turnover rates, in turn, often have a negative effect on project delivery.
- Not all government contracts allow for cost of living or indexation adjustment, which means that, over time, organisations have to fill the gap between income received and the actual cost of project delivery.
- Smaller organisations face particular barriers to establishment and growth, due to initial and ongoing operational costs such as incorporation fees, insurance and accommodation costs. These barriers are usually not as

onerous for larger organisations and can jeopardise the viability of smaller organisations, especially in rural and remote areas where there might already be a shortage of community support infrastructure.

Comments on these themes included:

*On funding cycles, if you give a 12 month contract, you run a program for three months and employ someone, then they get another job before the program is finished.*

*I've managed pilots projects where you don't know what data to collect for 18 months and all of a sudden you've got six months left and the evaluation hasn't started and the funding finishes.*

*The complexity of our work now has changed over the years, and we are wanting to invest a lot more in assessment and trying to do good planning before [service] delivery. But that's an investment in time and money.*

*From the viewpoint of a very small organisation, the tension is to get a big enough base and operation to employ staff in the first place, and I suggest that a lot of community organisations are in that predicament...and a lot of them just don't survive...The application forms for grants, there's an assumption that you have lots of financial power behind you - certainly enough to pay the \$2000 per year insurance, for example.*

*We are more and more looking at universal services to assist with families who are on the edge, and we worry about putting demands on universal services – we don't have funding to work on [clients] for very long – we are there for three or four months, then we have to leave, but there's this group of children who, without ongoing support, will not have the advantages of other children. We know those children very well, and even in a local area many agencies know these children...but the nature of the funding is that at some point we have to stop.*

*A significant number of Indigenous organisations are feeling the strain of...increasing requests for them to partner with mainstream organisations, provide their expertise in delivering culturally appropriate services, and they are not specifically resourced to do that.*

### Accountability and reporting

- While organisations generally accept the need for high standards of accountability and quality assurance, there has been a general increase in accountability requirements imposed by government at all levels; this has stretched organisations' resources and has been a particular problem for smaller organisations which do not have resources to employ full-time quality assurance officers or the capacity to allocate staff across several projects.
- Reporting and accountability requirements vary according to whether the funding organisation is a State/Territory or the Federal government; this adds to workloads within organisations.
- The Australian taxation structure defines benevolent activities narrowly, which restricts opportunities for not-for-profit organisations to attract tax deductible donations.
- There are increased pressures on voluntary boards and committees to meet challenging fiduciary responsibilities.

Comments on these themes included:

*For a small organisation, quality assurance is a lot of work. It's difficult to remain accountable and meet the standards required.*

*Even though we are a large organisation, implementing quality assurance standards is a challenge; it's outgrowing our organisation in terms of our structure, and we're not funded specifically from government for it.*

*There has been little progress on confronting the complex and many layered accountability and reporting requirements of government which often attend even quite small funding agreements. This is a particular problem for Indigenous and remote providers who can find it difficult to record and report their activities in complex ways. One example here had over twenty separate reporting and accountability lines for a small remote organisation back to government, all requiring different reporting periods.*

### Workforce issues

- There is generally increased competition among community organisations for government and private sector financial support as well as for staff, and this encourages competition between organisations at local, State and national levels; many participants commented that this development can be unhelpful to the longer-term health of the sector.
- Workforce retention has become a greater challenge, due largely to higher salaries and superannuation entitlements paid in other sectors, especially by government.
- Recruiting and retaining staff, particularly in rural areas, has become increasingly problematic, given high rates of population mobility and shortages of skilled personnel.
- Some organisations report difficulty in employing Indigenous people due to a shortage of suitable candidates for positions and high demand for experienced Indigenous workers.

Comments on these themes included:

*There's a whole concept that if you put money into a [rural] area, that there'll be staff there [to manage it]. We have trouble in [a regional city] with getting staff...but to be able to attract workers in [more remote areas] is difficult.*

*Attracting Indigenous people to positions is a challenge in rural areas.*

*The general tightening of the labour market and retaining staff is an enormous challenge for us across the country. Sometimes even government funded positions take people away from the not-for-profit sector because government is able to pay more for people to overview the work we do than for us to pay people to deliver the work.*

*On funding cycles, if you give a 12 month contract, you run a program for three months and employ someone, then they get another job before the program is finished.*

*One of the big challenges for the future is attracting and recruiting the people we need without a big blow-out in the costs.*

#### 4.2 Suggested ways ahead

Participants were asked: What is needed to overcome these barriers? Specifically, what can governments and/or organisations themselves do? In Ballarat, participants were asked specifically about the challenges faced by being in a regional and rural location.

Participants made several suggestions for action:

##### Sector wide issues

- Additional information is required on the costs and implications for the sector of regulatory and compliance practices such as in insurance and taxation.
- Greater attention is required by governments on the particular issues faced by organisations in regional, rural and remote areas, especially in relation to compliance and staff recruitment, training and retention.
- Greater information sharing between organisations at all levels about issues affecting them and areas of commonality and duplication.
- Up-to-date data is required on the extent and contributions made by the not-for-profit community sector in Australia.

##### Funding

- Longer funding cycles are necessary to reflect long term need and to prevent vulnerable people with long-term needs receiving only short-term assistance.
- Greater effort should be made to ensure the indexation of government project funding and the application of indexation in order to help retain and motivate staff.
- There is a need to return to small-scale seed funding with less complex applications procedures and reporting.

- Project evaluation should occur at an appropriately early time to help to retain staff and provide greater certainty for organisations.
- Ideally, funding cycles should overlap to help prevent loss of staff and a reduction in the momentum of service delivery to vulnerable families.
- The idea should be examined of establishing a Charity Commission (like in the UK) to consolidate and coordinate reporting, regulation and capacity building for the sector. This could assist, for example, in improving the current situation in relation to fundraising where each State/Territory has separate and different fundraising regulations.

#### Accountability and reporting

- A uniform financial accounting and reporting package spanning all levels of government would assist in streamlining reporting and accountability requirements.
- Reporting to various government agencies should be simplified and made proportionate to the amount of funding.

#### Workforce issues

- The issues of staff recruitment, retention and training are a high priority and require a coherent national approach.
- Greater publicity should be given to the value of, and opportunities available in, the community sector, to attract staff and raise awareness across the general population and within the sector itself.
- Greater attention is needed in relation to the recruitment and support of governance bodies (boards and committees).
- A scheme under which long service and sick leave entitlements are transferable between employers within the community sector and between the government and community sectors should be examined. This could be instigated within the sector itself.
- Additional training opportunities, including in the area of business management, are needed, especially in rural areas.

Comments on these themes included:

*There are many opportunities for creative partnerships with private enterprise...there's a real incentive for private enterprise to provide a whole range of things [for families]...we need to be better at articulating to private enterprise the benefits that come to them [of engagement with the community sector].*

*You should have people funded in organisations that specifically have the role of facilitating relationships and partnerships, an educational role, that is specifically funded to help [other organisations] to do their job better.*

*We need to get really rigorous in articulating what it is about a healthy community sector that supports civic engagement...and the importance of government in that.*

*The peak organisations should collaborate more.*

*I've been pushing for the transfer of long service leave and sick leave entitlements so people could move around the sector without losing it. We could have a national superannuation scheme, and that would help to grow the expertise.*

*Federal and State/Territory government [social welfare] priorities and programs need to be integrated better.*

*Governments should be more relaxed in regard to funding advocacy...and see that good service delivery is informed by strong community engagement.*

*There should be different rules [for reporting and accountability] for different levels of community organisation.*

*The recruitment and support of governance bodies is challenging, especially in smaller communities where everyone with expertise is wanted for many tasks. Often the isolation makes the recruitment of high quality board members even more important.*

*The community sector needs to be far more savvy about thinking through the funding opportunities that government offers and identifying which bits of that funding an organisation can put its hand up for that will enhance the core business of the organisation and be prepared to say 'no' if funding redirects the organisation off the path it wants to be on.*

## **5. Conclusions**

The foregoing paper is a small snapshot of some of the issues facing the not-for-profit community sector, and further work is required, including of a qualitative nature, to confirm the themes and expand understandings on this issue.

With that caveat, however, there appear to be grounds for a comprehensive examination of the issues faced by the sector, including its relationship with governments in the task of helping the community. Accordingly, it is not unreasonable to suggest that a broader national-level examination, involving a wide range of stakeholders, be instigated into the capacities of the not-for-profit community sector to meet current and likely future challenges in service provision and representation of client interests within government.

Such an examination should base its work on a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analysis as well as existing national reports and surveys. It should, as a matter of priority, consider issues relating to: workforce training, retention and planning; reporting and accountability; relations with government at all levels, especially in planning and service delivery; legal and regulatory constraints on organisations; evaluation planning; funding cycles and the timely notification of projects' continuance; and constraints to funding and organisational sustainability in general.

To improve information about the sector and its contributions to society, it is important that the Australian Bureau of Statistics data from the next Community Services Survey (planned for the second half of 2009) contribute to an up-to-date ABS report on the community sector. The nature and scope of the sector should be more precisely defined. Relevant overseas models, such as the UK Social Economy initiatives, should also be carefully considered in the development of more coherent national approaches.

Families Australia believes that the not-for-profit community sector plays a vitally important role in enhancing the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the nation as a whole. We call for more work to be done to better understand, acknowledge and support the capabilities of this vital sector.

## **6. References**

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### **Families Australia's focus group method and standards: summary of main characteristics**

Families Australia is the national, independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the needs and interests of families. Families Australia's purpose is to represent the interests of families in Australia, working from a network of services, organisations, carers, consumers and communities, which takes in a rich diversity of families and communities.

Face-to-face consultation with individuals and families is one of the main ways in which Families Australia gathers information about contemporary family-related issues, so forming the basis for Families Australia's broader information and representation work.

Families Australia undertakes consultations, mainly in the form of focus groups, in accordance with a five stage cycle comprising: aims and methods, planning, implementation, reporting, and quality assurance.

Families Australia has devised a methodological framework, key standards and practice benchmarks for focus groups based on latest Australian and overseas academic and other research. Families Australia's *Consultation Method and Standards* report is available on the Families Australia website, [www.familiesaustralia.org.au](http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au).

Key practice *standards* for Families Australia's focus group work are:

- A written research plan is developed at the outset in consultation with the client.
- The client is provided with a written statement of aims and method setting out understandings of the issues to be raised in the consultation as well as information about the methods which Families Australia will employ in running the consultation process, including the likely limitations and benefits.
- The client is asked to formally agree or acknowledge this statement of aims and method as the basis for the professional conduct of work.
- If focus groups are to be used, participants are selected for their relevance to the topic, a suitable venue is selected, group size is optimal, and appropriate questions are developed and tested in advance of the session/s.
- The sessions are moderated in the utmost professional manner paying particular regard to duty of care and informed consent.
- Sessions are recorded both electronically and in writing and are observed by a moderator assistant.
- Families Australia operates from an ethical framework which gives utmost regard to the wellbeing of staff who undertake consultation work as well as to

the participants in those processes, and which protects the confidentiality and privacy of information.

- A written report is prepared by the moderator team based on the evidence from the consultation in accordance with protocols regarding data collection, analysis, review and consultation.
- Monitoring the quality of work takes place at every stage of the consultation cycle in accordance with specified standards and key practice benchmarks, but is also given importance as a major activity in its own right.
- Reporting and other consultation processes are subject to ongoing review and improvement based on feedback from clients, professional reviewers and other stakeholders.
- Families Australia reviews its overall consultation methodology and practices on a regular basis.

More information about Families Australia's focus group methodology can be found at [www.familiesaustralia.org.au](http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au) or by contacting Families Australia on 02 6273 4885.

## **Appendix B: questions and participating organisations**

### **Questions**

#### **Focus groups**

1. What new challenges/demands are your organisations being asked to respond to? (These might include: drive toward more integrated service delivery, or more clients with complex needs).
2. What main external and internal barriers does your organisation face in doing its job? (Externally, these might include: the length of funding cycles, changes in client issues, coordination/understanding what other organisations are doing. Internally, these might include: succession planning, recruitment, training.)
3. What is needed to overcome these barriers? (Specifically, what can governments and/or organisations themselves do?)

In Ballarat, we asked specifically about the challenges faced by being in a regional and rural location.

#### **Expert Forum questions**

1. What new challenges/demands are your organisations being asked to respond to? (These might include: drive toward more integrated service delivery, or more clients with complex needs).
2. What main external and internal barriers does your organisation face in doing its job? (Externally, these might include: the length of funding cycles, changes in client issues, coordination/understanding what other organisations are doing. Internally, these might include: succession planning, recruitment, training.)
3. What are the main challenges facing national vs State/Territory vs local/regional, rural and remote organisations?
4. What is needed to overcome all these barriers? (Specifically, what can governments and/or organisations themselves do?)

### **Participating organisations**

Families Australia wishes to thank the 18 organisations that participated in this research project. They brought a wide diversity of experience at national, State/Territory and local levels in the human services field.

Work undertaken by these organisations includes: counselling, disability support, childhood and family policy and practice research and development, parenting, relationships, Indigenous child care, residential care, child protection, foster care, community education and early intervention programs, grandparenting, children and youth services and women's support and referral.

The participating organisations were (head office location in brackets):

- Australian Foster Care Association (National)
- Berry Street Victoria (Melbourne)
- Catholic Social Services Australia (National)
- Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (Victoria)
- Communities @ Work (ACT)
- FaBRIC (ACT)
- Family Services Australia (National)
- Grandparents Australia (Melbourne)
- Lisa Lodge (Ballarat)
- Mackillop Family Services (Victoria)
- Marymead Family and Children's Centre (ACT)
- National Association of Community Based Childrens' Services (Melbourne)
- National Disability Services (Canberra)
- ParentLine ACT (Canberra)
- Relationships Australia (National, Canberra)
- Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (Melbourne)
- Women's Resource Support and Information Centre (Ballarat)
- YMCA National (Melbourne)

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