



CAFNEWS

July 2007

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2. Report from the Chairperson

2007 looms as a very important year for child and family welfare in Australia. In releasing a '*Call to Action for Australia's Children*' at the national symposium in Brisbane in May, CAFWAA has thrown down the challenge to the Australian Government to take leadership in turning around the crisis in child protection across Australia.

Peddalling stories of doom and gloom in child and family welfare is all too easy. The statistics on child protection substantiation rates and numbers of children and young people entering care speak for themselves. These are further fuelled by State and Territory Inquiries into child abuse. The most recent of these, the Northern Territory inquiry into the protection of Aboriginal children from sexual abuse, '*Little Children are Sacred*', adds to a long list of such damning reports.

However, CAFWAA's objective is not to talk up problems, but rather to focus on practical solutions. *Call to Action for Australia's Children* focuses squarely on how the Australian Government can play an active and effective role in reducing child abuse and neglect across the nation as well as assist the States and Territories in their responsibilities in the provision of quality out of home care. These have sadly not been traditional priorities for Australian Governments despite the overwhelming evidence that investments in prevention programs will make a significant difference to the wellbeing of vulnerable Australian families and children.

Over the coming months, in the lead up to the Federal election I would urge all CAFWAA members and supporters to take the messages in '*Call to Action*' to Federal members and prospective members of the Australian Parliament. Like climate change and industrial relations, child and family welfare deserves to be a topic of political debate and action. However, it will only be if we make it one. Lets see what we can do collectively to ensure the Australian Government becomes a leader in child and family welfare.



Simon Schrapel
Chair, June 2007

2. AROUND THE STATES

Victoria

New Legislation

In April two new Acts were proclaimed. The *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* exists to ensure that the principles of safety and wellbeing of all children are paramount. The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* provides for the protection of all children and to ensure that community services are able to support children and families.

At the launch there was a feeling that all players were together in this new reform agenda and looking forward to implementation with a will to make it work but also to critique it as necessary and to gather information to inform the roll-out and improvement of the system. The big challenge now is to achieve the practice change necessary for good results for families and their children.

ChildFIRST (community based child and family services which provide an entry point into a local network of services that can be readily accessed by families in need, and allows for early intervention to support families and children)

All 9 stage one Child FIRST sites are up and running. All sites provide an integrated regional entry point into family services. However, there is considerable variation in the structure of the Child FIRST services, and the models of service delivery. Some Child FIRST services for example, are single organisation services; in contrast, other sites operate with up to 9 partner organisations. These variations reflect regional and local variations in the service system.

Child FIRST providers have reported significant levels of referrals to date, and it's expected that demand will grow over time as the community and key stakeholders become more familiar with the changes in their local areas.

The "Child FIRST and family services – transitional arrangements" fact sheet produced by DHS provides information on the Child FIRST sites, together with Family Services Innovations Projects. This and other fact sheets are available through the 'every child every chance' website at http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/ecec/library/publications2/publications2/fact_sheets

Stage two Child FIRST sites will be rolled out through 2008, with the final Child FIRST sites to begin in 2009. By 2009 there will be a total of 25 Child FIRST sites covering all of Victoria.

New Council Established Under The *Child Wellbeing And Safety Act 2005*

The Victorian Children's Council has now been expanded by five members, one of whom will be the President of the Centre for Excellence.

Victoria's Statewide Plan For Children

This plan has been launched under the reform agenda and is now connected in with the national agenda of COAG. The Centre for Excellence welcomes the release of the plan and particularly congratulates DHS on the excellent work on Early Years.

We recognise, however, that there are on-going challenges and discussions to be had on the middle years, transition points and the needs of youth.

Handling Allegations Of Abuse In Care

DHS has engaged Allen Consulting to review existing home-based care guidelines and develop new guidelines for handling allegations of abuse in residential care and kinship care. An Advisory Group and three Working Groups covering the three out-of-home care areas have been convened to provide input into this process.

The first draft of the guidelines was presented to the members of the Advisory and Working Groups at a half-day workshop on 17 April 2007. The feedback provided at the workshop and in writing is now being considered in developing the second draft of the guidelines which will go out for further feedback and discussion before being finalised.

Out-Of-Home Care Policy/Program Development

Leaving Care:

DHS is currently working on:

- finalising the preparation for the Leaving Care Toolkit to assist workers in preparing young people for leaving care:
- developing a model for leaving care support services in Victoria to meet the requirements of the new legislation.

This work is supported by a Reference Group comprising members from DHS, CSOs, Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, and CREATE Foundation.

Kinship Care:

After consultations with various stakeholder groups through March-April 2007, the Department is now developing principles and policies in relation to kinship care. The Department is supported in this work by an Advisory Group comprising representatives from the sector, carers groups, the Centre for Excellence, and DHS representatives.

Entry into Care Assessment:

To gain a full understanding of a child's developmental needs and provide advice to carers, parents and workers on promoting healthy lifestyle, managing health risks and behavioural management issues, the Department is developing a service that will provide all children and young people entering care for the first time, with a comprehensive health and clinical assessment. This work is guided by a Reference Group comprising representatives from the medical profession, Take Two, CSOs, Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, the Centre for Excellence, and DHS.

The Circle Program (Therapeutic Foster Care)

The Department has developed a therapeutic model of foster care called 'the Circle Program', which is being trialled in four regions across Victoria. The Circle Program aims to give children in out-of-home care every chance to achieve the things we want for all children. The Program uses everything we have learned about what children need when they are in care and how to provide high quality care. It builds on regular foster care by giving agencies and carers the resources and supports they need to focus comprehensively on each child.

State Budget

The 2007/08 Budget has not made any significant allocation to build on the investment (\$151M) made in last year's Budget. Areas where new money has been allocated are:

- \$14M to continue the roll out of the residential care capital upgrade program. This will provide 43 client beds through construction of new and refurbished facilities and support the extension of the Young Women's Secure Welfare Services.
- \$17M over 4 years to provide additional funding for the carer reimbursement program for foster, kinship and permanent carers.

Total funding for Child Protection and Family Services: \$468.4M (up from \$456.5M in 2006/07). This represents an overall increase of 2.6% over the previous year, but a decrease of -1.21% in real terms after factoring in population growth and CPI.

Review Of Regulatory And Administrative Burden In The Not For Profit (Nfp) Sector

Under the *Reducing the Regulatory Burden* initiative the Victorian Premier and the Treasurer have asked the State Services Authority (SSA) to undertake a Review of NFP Regulation. The Review has involved consultation with NFP peak bodies and organisations, experts and academics. Submissions to the review were due on 18th May 2007, and the SSA needs to report back to the Treasurer by the end of September 2007.

Reducing the Regulatory Burden commits Government to reduce the administrative and compliance burden for business and NFPs. The Government has adopted a three-pronged approach to this through:

- committing to cut the existing administrative burden of regulation by 15% over three years and 25% over the next five years;
- ensuring the administrative burden of any new regulation is met by an 'offsetting simplification' in the same or related area; and
- undertaking a program of reviews to identify the necessary actions to reduce compliance burdens.

Victorian Community Sector Sustainability Project

The Victorian Community Sector Sustainability Project commenced in December last year, being facilitated by Swinburne University. Representatives of 22 Victorian Peaks participated in the Project, and agreed to the following principal aims:

1. Create shared understanding of the Sector's situation: why is this the Sector's situation?
2. Create shared vision of a preferred future for the Sector.
3. Propose shared actions for navigating between the present situation and the future vision.
4. Create a culture of shared agency: committed to working towards the envisioned future together, regardless of internal differences and external constraints.
5. Contribute to the development of a shared sense of responsibility for shaping better futures for the Sector, through introducing futures processes and methodologies into the Sector's operating culture.

The vision as developed via three workshops conducted during February, March and April consists of three themes -
Collaboration, Partnership, Integration;
Access to Services; and
Role in Civil Society – the Bigger Picture.

A final outcome report will be prepared during June which will set the scene for commencing the engagement process with Sector leaders, and others with whom Sector organisations work, to take forward a vision for the Victorian Community Sector in 2027.

Provided by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

New South Wales

Out-Of-Home Care Expressions of Interest

Current and prospective providers of out-of-home care services in NSW are now fully occupied in trying to get their heads around the issues in the call for Expressions Of Interest (EOI) that closes on July 30. It is a challenging but exciting time and one when services can do some blue sky thinking about the future shape of their services. Identifying potential partners and considering where they might seek to expand, in geographical area, services type, service size and target group, are just some of the things that need to be taken on board.

The NSW Department of Community Services has completed a round of EOI information sessions and ACWA staff, as part of our DoCS funded project, were present at them all. We have also been talking to many agencies as they seek to think through the decisions they have to make. DoCS has been responding to queries by way of FAQs on their website and members are encouraged to read and digest all of these. At time of going to print there were over 150 FAQs on the web. http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/html/comm_partners/oohc_EOI_resources.htm

While not able to write the EOIs for agencies or make decisions for them, the ACWA team has been taking a supportive role. We know that many are struggling to cope with the complexities of the paper work and the planning. This seems to be especially the case for current OOHC placement and/or support service providers who are carrying on with their usual service delivery, developing service plans for different funded projects and developing EOI proposals.

There are several new items of interest on the [DoCS website](#). There is the latest Data Set (July 2005 - December 2006), a list of Frequently Asked Questions on Allowances and Contingencies and the latest copy of the *Research to Practice* newsletter. This is in addition to the regular postings of information on the Out-Of-Home Care EOI process mentioned above. see <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/>

Data Collection

ACWA/CCWT has prepared a train-the-trainer package to support implementation of a new Minimum Data Set reporting process that is being presented at 10 workshops around the state. All current OOHC placement providers are expected to participate in the training and the aim is to improve the comprehensiveness and quality of data about children and young people in care of NGOs and to attempt to gain information

on some indicators on the outcomes for clients.

Workforce Development

At the February meeting of the Forum of Non Government Agencies (FONGA), the development of a paper on models of workforce development was discussed. It is now available on the NCOSS website <http://www.ncoss.org.au/workforce/index.html>

This is a critical issue for the sector, not least because of the staffing needs that flow from the expansion in Early Intervention and Out-Of-Home Care funding. ACWA and CCWT staff will be discussing strategies and NCOSS will be convening a Sector Development Forum in late June. This is expected to be an on-going forum to focus on a range of sector development issues, including workforce issue.

Forgotten Australians

Past Providers' in NSW meet regularly with CLAN to work for better services for those in care in the past, to support CLAN and to discuss issues such as reparations and memorials.

ACWA Conference

The 2008 ACWA Conference will be held from 18 - 20 August at the Darling Harbour Convention Centre. Put the dates in your diary NOW and watch this space for dates and details.

Provided by the Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies

South Australia

In September 2006 the South Australian Government launched the 'Keeping Them Safe – In Our Care' document which outlined the government's vision for the future of alternative care in South Australia. On invitation the member organizations of CAFWA (SA), amongst other stakeholders, were invited to provide comment on the document and its strategies to deliver better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

While members of CAFWA (SA) generally were supportive of the strategies outlined, especially in relation to the implementation of a continuum of placement options, greater acknowledgement and support of foster parents, importance of early intervention and specialized services for children and young people in crisis, they were also critical of some gaps in the Action Plan.

The most consistent comment was that extra resources were required to ensure that the actions were successfully implemented – especially in relation to early intervention, placement options and therapeutic support. In addition, concerns were raised in relation to workforce development and sector viability. Most organizations were experiencing difficulties attracting and retaining qualified staff to work in the sector. The importance of ongoing research was also highlighted.

The consultation process has now concluded and the State Government in May 2007 has released the implementation priorities for 'Keeping Them Safe – In Our Care'. Recruitment and training of foster parents, plus a review of carer payments [immediate 5% increase from 1st July], increased support to families as a strategy to prevent the need for children to enter care, greater participation by foster parents in decision making about care options, development of more intensive family-based placement options and additional supports for young people exiting the care system.

CAFWA (SA) members will now be considering their role in the implementation of the Action Plan. Concerns still exist in relation to the funding of strategies. The 2007/08 State budget announced \$103.0 million over 4 years to resource Keeping Them Safe – In Our Care. A significant question remains over how much of this is new money as opposed to refocusing existing resources, including previous unbudgeted expenditure on interim accommodation for children and young people with complex needs?

Linked with the Action Plan is the “refocusing” of current Family Support Service funding to provide support and services to families with high needs, so more children and young people can stay with their families safely. CAFWA (SA) is currently being consulted, together with other state peak bodies, on this strategy, as well as examining referral processes and partnerships between Families SA District Centres and NGOs.

As an association representing the needs of Family Support Workers, CAFWA (SA) facilitated its annual 2 day training workshop for practitioners. Positive feedback from all those involved served to highlight the important role that CAFWA undertakes in the training of Family Support Workers.

The next 6 months should be challenging for CAFWA (SA) members, in the task of both working with the Government in ensuring that our alternative care system delivers better outcomes for children, young people and their families, and also that the Family Support sector is strengthened and resourced to deliver a more comprehensive early intervention service.

Provided by the Child, Adolescent And Family Welfare Association Of South Association

Queensland

The main news from Queensland in recent months was the very successful **National Symposium** - see page XX

The **licensing process** is proving to be problematic and may be driving bad practice underground. There is a great deal of confusion about the role of quality improvement in the licensing process because the Licensing procedure mixes the two concepts. PeakCare is involved with the sector and the DChS in trying to amend the implementation of the policy to ensure that licensing promotes good practice and achieves a high standard of care for children.

There is a new funding round for the provision of **out-of-home care services**. Each zone has a different amount of money to be allocated. This is designed to reflect need and services already on the ground in local areas.

Foster care payments increased in January 2007 to take account of some of the complex needs of children entering the care system. There are now two types of foster carers – ordinary fostering and specialised foster care. The

latter is designed to take on high needs children and carers have access to extra support and services.

There is an absence of a child protection paradigm and a report by the Guardian has shown that the **well being of children in care** (health, education, family contact etc) is fragile. See <http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/about/publications/childGuardian2006.html>
For more details.

The Department of Child Safety claims to have achieved all 110 recommendations from the CMC Inquiry (2004). We are still awaiting the second and final CMC review of the DChS achievements – this was due in March 2007 but appears to have been at the printers for a long time.

The Queensland Government has introduced a **Redress Scheme** to provide ex gratia payments to people who experienced abuse and neglect as children in Queensland institutions.

Up to \$100 million will be available for payments, legal and financial services to applicants and for practical assistance in completing applications.

Full details are at <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/redress-scheme/>

Provided by PeakCare

Northern Territory

The news from the Northern Territory is, not surprisingly, dominated by the aftermath of the "Little Children are Sacred" report commissioned by the NT government and now attracting comment, action and reaction across the nation. While there is no formal Peak in the territory associated with CAFWA we reproduce this media release from Tangentyere Council.

Work with us not against us

Tangentyere Council calls on the Australian Government to implement the first recommendation of the "Little Children are Sacred" report, and work in partnership with Indigenous people and organisations, not against them.

Executive Director of Tangentyere Council, William Tilmouth, commented,

"Without involving local indigenous people and organisations, current actions will be short lived and ineffective.

"If you take all control away from people, and you also eliminate all opportunities for them to take responsibility for their own lives, then you will create the worst welfare state yet.

"You have to empower people through proper consultation and make room for them at the table, with the governments," he said. "If you can't have a say in your own life, it makes you feel like sitting down and doing nothing. I thought that this was what the government was trying to change".

Tangentyere Council will continue to work closely with all levels of government to provide and expand critical services related to the welfare of children and families as recommended by the “Little Children are Sacred” report.

Tangentyere operates effective community based programs, such as:
Working with children at risk, including the best practice Safe Families program
Youth activities, including access to sporting competitions and the high profile Drum Atweme and Circus programs
Inhalant substance abuse programs, including the nationally recognised CAYLUS program

- Night , day and youth patrols
- Support for remote area night patrols
- Family well being programs
- Community centre hubs on two town camps that facilitate delivery of health and education services to residents
- A playgroup / early childhood development program for pre school aged children
- A food voucher system, currently used voluntarily by 800 people
- Financial management assistance, advocacy and counselling.

“These programs make a difference to the lives of children, young people and families, as do the health and education programs run by the government and other organisations. But we need to do more and to have long term planning and resourcing to ensure that these sorts of programs and services have the long lasting impact that is needed.

The current visits to five remote communities “to assess infrastructure” are not the way to undertake long term planning. There are already many reports identifying the comprehensive needs in health, education, social programs and housing, so why is the government sending in the army and bureaucrats from Canberra to assess the needs – in a day or two?

Why doesn't the government act to meet the long term needs of indigenous communities, as identified many times by Indigenous people themselves, including in the “Little Children and Sacred” report, the recommendations of which the government appears to be completely ignoring. Instead we have ideology compared with evidence based information.

Tangentyere Council will be very disappointed if this opportunity to seriously address the problems highlighted in the report is wasted through lack of long term planning and lack of involvement of Indigenous people themselves.

ACT

Not available at this time

Western Australia

Not available at this time

Tasmania

Not available at this time

3. Open Letter to Mal Brough



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STATE MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

- Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (NSW)
- Child & Family Welfare Association of South Australia
- Child & Family Welfare Association of Tasmania
- Child, Youth & Family Agencies of the ACT
- Centre for Excellence in Children & Family Welfare, Victoria
- Children's Youth & Family Agencies Association (WA)
- PeakCare (Qld)

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OPEN LETTER TO THE HON. MAL BROUGH MP

3 July 2007

Open letter to The Hon. Mal Brough MP
Minister for Families, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Brough

The Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia (CAFWAA) has long called for child protection to be on the agenda of the Commonwealth Government. This was most recently articulated in the release in May of CAFWAA's policy paper, 'Call to Action for Australia's Children'. The paper highlighted the growing national crisis resulting from the increasing number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and young people being subject to child abuse. In this context CAFWAA commends the Government on its recognition of the needs of children living in unsafe environment and its willingness to act. Child protection is a national issue requiring national leadership and action which can not be left for States and Territories to address alone.

CAFWAA members have a long history of working successfully with children in need of protection and care, with many CAFWAA members already working in partnership with Indigenous agencies and communities in their service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. We urge the Commonwealth Government to consider the long term issues that are required to assist Northern Territory communities in achieving change.

As the National Peak body for child welfare we are committed to examining ways that we can support this process to building solutions. CAFWAA members are some of the leading operators of child protection and family support services within Australia and therefore have much knowledge in providing services within community contexts that have been successful in both the treatment and prevention of child abuse. Therefore we offer the following points for the Government's consideration drawn from our expertise and experience.

- Change is only possible through the development of relationships and engagement of the community, without this we have seen many good programs fail to make any difference and ultimately waste tax payer dollars. Solutions must belong to the community, employ local Indigenous people and be based on culturally appropriate practice. We commend the report 'Little Children are Sacred' and its 97 recommendations as a good way of honouring the many Aboriginal community members who participated in the consultation and offered solutions and urge governments to work to implement these recommendations as rapidly as possible.
- Aboriginal communities must be consulted and brought on board to 'own' the strategies that are implemented. This needs to be undertaken in a collaborative and culturally sensitive manner without coercion or fear. The elders in communities must be engaged as true partners in the process and negotiate the solutions that will work for them. A 'one size fits all' option is not a sustainable solution.

- The displacement of the roles of Aboriginal men within society needs to be given greater recognition. Community interventions must include meaningful roles for men that incorporate a sense of purpose and pride. The rollback of CDEP will potentially leave many communities without the infrastructure to provide work that can give men some direction and offer positive modelling to their children for the future. Long term solutions to abuse perpetuated by men will not be found through stronger policing and security measures alone. It must be based on helping to find a renewed sense of purpose and dignity for men struggling with dispossession, powerlessness and unemployment.
- Children who have been abused or have witnessed abuse/violence have been traumatised and care needs to be taken to address this. Removing children from their homes is not always the best solution, particularly if they are placed in kinship care where the same patterns may also be evident. Building resilience, addressing trauma and providing a safe and caring environment are important factors in promoting healing and must be done in a sensitive and appropriate manner. We do not want to add to the trauma by adding further abuse and harm to those who are hurting and vulnerable. This will require significant investment in infrastructure, programs and treatment services that provide opportunities for healing and change.

Taking a whole of community approach that values children, grows capacity and ensures basic infrastructure needs such as housing and health care are met is paramount to eliminating abuse. If this means changing society's thinking about what constitutes a viable community, more innovative ways of service delivery and how to deliver cost effective infrastructure then we need to commit to this and give appropriate value to a group of people that has been dispossessed for too long.

CAFWAA and our national membership look forward to being a partner with the Government in assisting communities to develop their responses to this national issue. We will be producing a discussion paper based on our experience of providing child protection services that will seek to provide input and guidance to the types of service delivery responses that are needed and have been proven to be effective in addressing these very complex issues for our community.

We look forward to working with the Government not only in the response to child abuse in the Northern Territory but to also address the alarming increases in notifications across the country so that every child in Australia has the opportunity to be safe within the context of their family and community.

Simon Schrapel
Chair

4. 2007 CAFWAA/PeakCare Symposium

Their Lives, Our Work: Building hope through practice excellence 2007 National Symposium

The Their Lives, Our Work National Symposium, concluded on the 17th May with much successful feedback flowing in. CAFWAA (The Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia) and PeakCare Queensland should be proud of the results of this years Symposium. Delegates were invigorated over three full days of Keynote Speakers, workshop presenters and a Panel Discussion. Delegates commented that the presentations delivered at the Symposium were impressive and have added to their work practice and knowledge of complex issues surrounding Child Protection.

In Excess of 300 delegates attended the Symposium at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre for three days to listen to an exciting program of national and International speakers and to participate in stream sessions such as; Early Intervention, Substance Abuse, Mental Health, Domestic and Family Violence and Loss and Grief, along with many networking and discussion opportunities.



Lauren Porter presents a hard-hitting session on Substance Abuse and Attachment

Some conference highlights include Professor James Anglin, University of Victoria, Canada. James Anglin presented a paper on Residential Care and Grant Sarra delivered a very invigorating Keynote on the final morning, which was focussed on 'An Indigenous Perspective on Management and Leadership in Human Services and Child Protection'.



A Dancer performs to conference delegates as part of the Nunukul Yuggera Aboriginal Dance Troupe.

Complementing the traditional sit down conference program, there was a great variety of Organisations represented by Trade Displays at the venue. PeakCare also hosted a networking night on the Tuesday with a Hypothetical Scenario showcasing some of the Conference's undiscovered performance talent.

A beneficial and enjoyable time was had by all and we look forward to the next opportunity to gather together such a wonderful group of professionals who through their day to day work practice inspire hope in the lives of others.



Grant Sarra embarrasses audience members as part of his entertaining and enlightening Keynote on Indigenous Issues.

We would like to thank the Planning Committee, Staff and delegates who attended this years Symposium.

5. 2006/2007 CAFWAA Board Members

At the 2006 AGM the following people were elected or nominated to the CAFWAA Board to serve until the 2007 AGM:

Chairperson: Simon Schrapel, Anglicare, SA

Vice Chairperson: Lisa Hillan, Save the Children Fund QLD

Treasurer: Tricia Lee, Wanslea W.A.

Secretary: Sandie de Wolf, Berry St, VIC

Nominated State Representatives

Paul Everall, Mercy Family Services WA

Daryl Lamb, CFWAT TAS

John Dalgleish, BoysTown QLD

Annette Kelly-Egerton, CYFAACT, ACT

Judy Wookey, Glastonbury Child & Family Services. VIC

Michael Tizzard, Benevolent Society, NSW

Ordinary Members (Elected):

Sue Tregeagle, Barnardos ACT

Sue Sarlos, Wesley Dalmar NSW

CREATE nominated member: Ric Hubbard

SNAICC nominated member: Steve Larkins

Co-opted member Bev Orr

Representatives of funded state peaks:

Coleen Clare, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, VIC

Gail Slocombe, PeakCare, QLD

Andrew McCallum, ACWA, NSW

The Board comprises up to a total of eighteen members