



CAFNEWS

April 2002

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1. WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

At the last CAFWAA Board meeting in December, it was agreed that it is no longer feasible for CAFWAA to produce three CAFN a year. This decision was taken with some regret, as our collective commitment to a high quality national journal focussed on practice remains strong.

A number of factors influenced this decision:

- the existence of ‘Children Australia’ and ACWA and the NSW Supporting Families Association’s excellent new initiative ‘Developing Practice’;
- the possibilities offered through the establishment of Families Australia;
- and our extreme lack of resources!

We approached ACWA and the NSW Supporting Families Association requesting their consideration to CAFWAA joining them as a partner in “Developing Practice”. Discussions will continue.

The Board was also very aware of the important role CAFNET played in sharing information about what is happening across the States and Territories. This is why we have agreed to distributing a CAFNEWS after each Board meeting and as necessary.

As this is the first edition of CAFNEWS, we would welcome your feedback. Please send this to sdewolf@berrystreet.org.au.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the central role played by Howard Bath in developing and managing CAFNEWS, for his excellent editorial work, hassling with printers and generally his determination to have a national journal. Many thanks Howard!

Simon Schrapel – Chair, CAFWAA

2. REPORT FROM THE NOVEMBER 2001 BOARD MEETING

Thirteen Board members met together on 23/11/01 and 24/11/01 in Melbourne, following the Child Abuse Conference. We also took the opportunity to hold our AGM and the Report for 2000/1 was circulated to you prior to Christmas.

Board Changes

We welcomed new member Graham Jackson, who is the NSW State Peak Representative. Graham works for Marist Youth Care in Seven Hills.

We also accepted (with regret) the resignation of Nova Fariss (from Mofflyn in WA) who did a fantastic job as Secretary for five years.

Issues Discussed

The main issues for discussion were:

1. Quality – what is or isn't happening;
2. CAFWAA's policy agenda.

In relation to Quality, it was agreed that we need to build on the work done at Face to Face. Sue Tregeagle offered to develop a framework (which includes initiatives required at Organization, State and National level) which each State and Territory would complete. This will then be discussed at the next CAFWAA meeting in March to decide next steps.

We also brainstormed areas where we wanted CAFWAA to develop policies. The priority areas identified were: quality; family support/early intervention; indigenous issues; the role of resi care; and foster care/permanency planning.

It was agreed that CAFWAA would seek funding from Families Australia to employ a consultant to develop a set of draft policies, part of which will then be used as a basis for consultation. A Steering Committee of Simon Schrapel, Jane Hague, Sue Tregeagle, Marg Matters and Marion Rainsford was formed to oversee the project.

Conferences

CAFWAA is supporting:

- the ACWA Conference, 2-4 September '02 in Sydney.
- the CWAV 90th Birthday Celebration & Conference, 29-30 October '02 in Melbourne.

An extra day is being considered by ACWA for the Research Institute or a Master Class and by CWAV for a seminar on 'Challenge and Innovation in Foster Care'.

Reports and Updates

Face to Face

The national Face to Face meeting was held in South Australia on 24-26 March 2002. For more information contact Michelle Townsend, Director, CREATE on michelletownsend@create.net.au, or your State rep.

Research Forum

1. Following the inaugural meeting in August in Sydney, some of this group met again in Melbourne during the Child Abuse Conference. Nigel Spence agreed to be the CAFWAA link with this group.
2. Coleen Clare reported that CWAV have obtained an Australian Research Council grant to look at how mainstream services deal with clients with substance use issues.

3. Carole Marsden advised of research being undertaken by Ros Thorp from James Cook University to look at the qualities that make good carers. Her email address: rosamund.thorp@jcu.edu.au.

Foster Care Reports

1. *The Costs of Care*. It is hoped that this Report will be available in April 2002. Nigel Spence advised that some additional money has been received by ACWA for a follow up project.
2. *Foster Care Support Needs of Carers*. This project was auspiced by the Australian Foster Care Association and funded by FaCS and it was hoped that at least a summary would be available in January.
3. *Comparison of Foster Care Rates*. This report, completed by Julie Bray from Qld, is available from Bev Orr, Chair AFCA, email orrfamily@bigpond.com.
4. *Foster Care – The State of the Art*. Simon Schrapel circulated copies of this recent report from the Australian Centre for Community Service Research (a partnership between Flinders University and Anglicare SA). Copies are available from Professor Jim Barber, phone (08) 8201 3013 or email: accsr@flinders.edu.au.

Community Services Training

Nigel Spence (NSW), Graham Jackson (NSW) and Carole Marsden (Qld) agreed to represent CAFWAA in meetings to develop key competencies in the youth area.

3. REPORT FROM THE MARCH 2002 BOARD MEETING

Fifteen Board members met on 24 and 25 March in Adelaide.

Board Changes

We welcomed new members – Sue Mickleburgh, who is the State Peak Rep. for ACT. Sue is the Executive Director of Marymead Child and Family Centre.

We were also delighted to welcome back Sue Ash, as an Organisation Rep. Sue is the CEO of Wanslea Family Services in W.A., the current Chair of ASSAF and an ASSAF representative on the Families Australia Board.

Jan Owen announced that she was leaving CREATE to take on the role of Executive Director with Comic Relief. The Board thanked Jan for her untiring efforts to promote partnerships in the sector and to advocate for young people in care.

Issues Discussed

1. **Policy Paper**

The main item of business was the draft policy paper, “A time to invest in Australia’s most disadvantaged children, young people and their families”, which had been written by consultant Sherrie Coote (through CWAV). This policy paper covers 11 areas, including:- permanency planning; investment in promotion and prevention programs; actively support Kinship Care; quality services to adolescents with challenging behaviours, including residential care; commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and foster care; Practice Standards, Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Systems; commitment to Sector Sustainability.

The Steering Group of Marion Rainsford, Jane Hague, Margaret Matters, Coleen Clare, Simon Schrapel and Sue Tregeagle will work with Sherrie to finalise the paper and look at how the policies should be promoted.

2. **Update on Families Australia**

Sandie de Wolf and Sue Tregeagle (CAFWAA’s representatives on Families Australia) spoke about the launch by Minister Vanstone on 21 March at Parliament House, the process of establishing Families Australia as a new national peak and the expansion in Board membership from the first AGM later this year.

In **relation to membership** of Families Australia, only national incorporated organisations are eligible to join at this stage. CAFWAA will continue to be represented on the Families Australia Board. State Peaks and their member organisations can receive information through CAFWAA. However, individual organisations will also be encouraged to join as Associate Members (annual fee of \$55.00).

For more information, contact Anne-Marie Mioche, Executive Director, on familiesaustralia@bigpond.com.

3. **Secretariat Role**

After 7 years of managing the Secretariat role for CAFWAA (5 years at no cost to CAFWAA), CWAV felt it was time for another group to take over. The Board expressed its gratitude to CWAV and to Ken Patterson in particular. It is anticipated that ACWA will take over the Secretariat role from July 2002.

4. **Information Sharing**

- The newly formed National Children and Family Welfare Research Coalition will run a workshop on “Out of Home Care – Building a National Research Agenda” on 3 September as part of the ACWA Conference.
For more information, contact Nigel Spence on nigel@acwa.asn.au
- In relation to refugee children, ACWA is doing a submission to HREOC and there is an article written by Chris Sidoti on the ACWA website www.acwa.asn.au.
- Planning is underway for a national seminar next year on “young people with complex needs”. For more information, contact Howard Bath on hbath@twi.org.au
- “At What Cost?” – Resourcing the Safety and Well-Being of Queensland’s Children and Young People in Care” (December 2001),

an initiative of the Churches Community Services Forum is available through PeakCare on www.peakcare.com.au

4. AROUND THE STATES

NEW SOUTH WALES

Legislative reform

On 15 February the NSW Minister for Community Services announced that implementation of the out of home care sections of the *Children and Young Persons (Care & Protection) Act 1998* would be put back by four months from March to July 2002. The reporting and investigation sections along with other provisions have been in place since December 2000.

The reasons given for the delay include the difficulties experienced by DoCS staff due to the increase in child protection reports, more time to be allowed for consultation on the Regulation and time for completion of training and policies and procedures.

Further concern and confusion about implementation has arisen due to a letter from DoCS Director-General sent to all Community Partner agencies advising that 155, 156 and 181 will commence later than July.

Sections 155 and 156 are crucial to the operation and monitoring of voluntary out of home care placements. Section 181 sets out the core functions of the Children's Guardian. Without proclamation of this section it is difficult to see how the Children's Guardian could operate or indeed how the out of home care sections of the Act could function at all.

Services await clarification of both the proclamation schedule and operational matters that affect non government agencies, and ACWA has voiced concern at the delays.

Kinship Care

The ACWA/UWS study is at the stage of writing up the analysis of the data. A report should be out by 30 June.

The legislative arrangements for kinship care remain unclear. While the Opposition successfully moved an amendment to the Permanency Planning Bill that changed the definition of out of home care to include some forms of kinship care, the Minister has said that it will not be proclaimed until the legal and resource issues are resolved. On the core parts of the Permanency Planning Bill we are waiting to see the practical effects.

Out of Home Care Funding

A dialogue process involving NGOs and DoCS (*Care 2001*) failed to achieve what was hoped when all the work done on funding models (largely by the NGO people) was left with DoCS for a response. It appears that lack of sound data systems in the department to be sure of the number of children and young people in care, along with a continued fiscal restraint from Treasury in the lead up to the 2003 State election, means that DoCS are not able to move to implement the recommended model.

Care & Protection

Getting up to date data is very hard and anecdotal information suggests there are still problems in reporting concerns to the over loaded *HelpLine* and in getting adequate follow up or information on follow up from the local offices. The figures for the 2000/2001 financial year were only released in mid February 2002. The state Opposition is running a strong campaign of media releases highlighting the high number of reports that it says are never investigated.

A Parliamentary Inquiry into the departmental handling of child abuse reports has been announced and this is to provide an interim report in September.

Independent Scrutiny

The ability of the Children's Guardian to undertake reviews of children in care is affected by the delays mentioned above.

The Community Services Commission was told around a year ago that it can only take complaints about 'services' and not the government's statutory work. There is a current proposal to bring the Commission into the office of the Ombudsman as a 'division'. While ACWA along with many agencies was against this it appears that the government is set on this path and we are discussing the process, the legislation and the powers to ensure that the public face of the commission and the independent path it trod are maintained within the new arrangements.

Aboriginal Services

ACWA has been heavily involved in supporting the development of a Secretariat of Aboriginal Childrens agencies and it is anticipated that incorporation will be achieved soon with transfer of funds made to allow them to operate from 1 July. The Aboriginal Foster Care Support project will transfer from ACWA to the Secretariat at that time.

Refugee Children

ACWA worked with the University of Western Sydney and DCI to put on a half day seminar on refugee children in detention and high quality speakers such as Chris Sidoti and Jackie Everett made it a powerful and successful session. ACWA will be making submissions to the HREOC

Inquiry and keeping the issue on the agenda with articles in our Journal and newsletter and news on our website.

For news about child and family welfare issues in NSW see www.acwa.asn.au and visit the News page

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Simon Schrapel – CAFWA-(SA)

Alternative Care is undergoing its first major review since the restructuring of the service system in 1997. Des and Wendy Semple were engaged in the middle of the year to undertake a broad based program review and production of a discussion paper which addresses everything from the respective roles of government and non-government providers to the range of care and accommodation services required to meet current and future placement needs. The review follows widespread concern about the lack of alternative options to home based foster care (South Australia remains more reliant on such care than any other State or Territory in Australia) and at times poor relationships amongst stakeholder groups (despite some positive examples of working together at a local level).

CAFWA(SA) members have provided considerable input and views to the review team through meetings and written submissions, including a debate about the locus of case management functions for children in care. The discussion paper was released in late November and is to be followed up by a period of further input from all stakeholders.

It is envisaged that the final report will be released and implementation of the recommendations commenced by the end of June 2002.

Likely recommendations of the Alternative Care Review include:

- Creation of an Advisory Body with membership including service providers, CREATE, S.A. Foster Care Association, Community Residential Care, Family and Youth Services and Department of Human Services. The role of the Advisory Body will primarily be to monitor the implementation of the Review recommendations, including determining priorities, timelines and evaluation.
- No wholesale changes to the current system and/or providers of current services.
- Strategies to be put in place aimed at improving the working relationship between the government department and the non-government service providers.
- Congregate care options, in both metropolitan and country regions for young people with complex needs and/or those not appropriate for family based care.
- Importance of early intervention to improve the likelihood of successful family preservation. Resources need to be guaranteed for this purpose.

- Implementation of strategies relating to the recruitment, training and peer support for carers.

In the meantime the Department of Human Services and its primary operational arm in child and family welfare, Family and Youth Services (FAYS), is also undergoing several changes. A separate, centralized Alternative Care Unit has been established outside of FAYS within the Department's Country and Disability Services Division. The new unit based on an earlier recommendation of the review 'team', has responsibility for overseeing and directing the Department's policy, purchasing and practice standards in Alternative Care.

At a broader level a general review of Family and Youth Services under the guise of the 'Social Welfare Services Planning Framework' is being undertaken by the Department. Its stated aim is to set key directions for the operation of FAYS over the next 3 years and advise on how the general business of FAYS could be better integrated and supported by other DHS functions and services. The process has been broadly consultative but runs the risk of only 'skimming the surface' of the myriad of issues and deep-seated concerns about both the ever-narrowing focus of FAYS and its capacity to respond to and connect with the community. Unfortunately there seems little likelihood that the framework will seriously address and establish a different and more functional relationship with the non-government sector. Amidst these processes FAYS is in the process of appointing a new Director after engaging Bill Budiselik from W.A. to undertake an acting role during the reviews.

Disappointingly the Department withdrew its support for the continuation of the longitudinal research study being undertaken by Flinders University in collaboration with non-government agencies. This research had produced a number of valuable research papers as well as tracking a large cohort of children in care since 1997. It is difficult not to see the decision as punitive action following some mildly critical media coverage around placement instability emanating from the study. Anglicare and Flinders University are currently undertaking a more limited research study of a 'therapeutic' care model with funds provided by a charitable trust.

In response to growing concerns about the inadequacy of both family based foster care and residential models for some young people with high and complex needs (including children with multiple disabilities), the Department have initiated individual care packages. These have the stated aim of not only establishing alternative models of individualized care, but of building a diversity of providers in the S.A. marketplace. This in part explains the reluctance of the Department over the past 18 months to accept proposals put forward by existing alternative care providers for options more suited to this group of children and young people.

A total of 25 – 30 'packages' will be purchased, from agencies selected to a pre-qualified provider panel. The Department is experiencing some difficulty and delay in establishing this panel and has needed to seek further information from some providers. The individual packages will be tendered in groups of 3 – 5 at prices ranging from \$25 – 60K per package. The advent of these packages is creating some concern in terms of its impact on the current pool of carers, and the potential to result in a two tiered care system if not managed carefully and sensitively.

VICTORIA

Coleen Clare – Children's Welfare Association of Victoria

Advocacy

CWAV and the sector have begun meeting the new Victorian Minister for Community Services, The Hon Bronwyn Pike about State budget priorities for 2002. The sector's priorities are money for family support services, home-based care including carer reimbursement payments, leaving care, the Looking After Children framework, quality improvement and industry planning.

Quality Improvement Process

CWAV has taken the initiative and developed a quality improvement process with Community Link Brisbane. Training has begun in the AQC Business Excellence Framework with two courses of training in 2001 and further courses underway in 2002. We have worked hard to develop a partnership with the Victorian Government on the development of a quality framework and accreditation process for the sector and are heartened by the interest being shown in our work. In 2002 there will be further opportunities for this training with CWAV.

Collaboration Research Project

The Collaboration Research Project is now completed and was launched at the CWAV Community Building and Collaboration Forum in March.

Governance

As part of the International Year of the Volunteer in Victoria, a Good Governance Kit for the community sector has been developed as a joint IYV/community sector project. We are hopeful that this kit will be of great use to all those sterling volunteer Boards of Management in our community care sector.

Training Activities

CWAV has developed a range of training services for members in 2002 at user-friendly prices. We are of course also seeking subsidised training from a variety of sources including government. The training schedule includes further Mediation and Advanced Family Work training for CSOs who receive SAAP funding. We have also registered an expression of interest to deliver training in management for supervisors.

DHS Residential Care Services Training

As part of its role of providing advice to the Government on training needs, CWAV has been meeting with departmental officers in relation to the development of a training strategy for residential care workers and we have represented the sector on the Residential Care Training Reference Group. CWAV has consistently argued that there needs to be a systemic approach to training for Residential Care. CWAV has presented a model for acquitting the training funds in the short term in ways that will fit with the long-term development of competency based training within the sector.

Community Services Training Package (CSTP) Review

Through CWAV's position on the Board of the State Community Services and Health Industry Training Board we are contributing to the national review of the CSTP. In particular, CWAV is arguing the case for a separate qualification for residential carers and home-based carers, distinct from the existing qualification for Juvenile Justice, Child Protection and Statutory Supervision.

Looking After Children

CWAV and Barnardos held a forum on Looking After Children last November and we will continue to host an information and support network throughout 2002. CWAV plans to offer LAC training to interested CSOs in 2002.

2002 and CWAV is 90!

The CWAV Board and Secretariat are underway in our 90th year and our planning calendar is nearly full when we pencil in all our ongoing advocacy, representation, projects, research, training, forums and add in some great events. We have leased extra accommodation to enable more training to occur and more meeting space for CREATE and us.

CWAV has begun a 90th Year Capital Fund for purchase of expanded CWAV facilities in order to avoid long-term leasing and provide a full range of innovative support services to the sector.

In this year, it will be our very great pleasure to invite our national colleagues, life members, members, stakeholders, colleagues, friends – indeed each and every one of you - to a Grand Celebratory Ball in July and a practice-centred Conference in late-October. So – as they say – watch this space as we move together to fulfil more of our strategic goals and celebrate 90 years of success.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Francis Lynch - CYFAA (WA)

This report represents a snap shot of the changes and happenings for CYFAA and our sector.

Change in Government

The new Labor Government is being far more consultative and is acting more like a partner than a dictator. Although they are in their early days, the new government has already accomplished a number of achievements. These being:

- A budget which has the Department for Community Development receiving a \$10 million increase in recurrent funding.
- A commitment to consultation and non-government involvement. CYFAA has met with the Minister and been successful in negotiating a planned six monthly meeting to inform and discuss the issues relevant of our membership.
- The implementation of the Department for Community Development

Change in CYFAA Operation

There is a commitment to the greater use of Working Parties to progress issues, particularly focussing on getting new people involved.

Care for Children Advisory Committee

This committee was due to cease in February 2001 but received an extension for another year. The committee has focused on many issues including the continuation of the Best Practice Forums, the implementation of the Improving Case Management training and the issues around Managing the Past. Research was funded during the year looking at how to better work with families where there is a drug use problem.

YACOMM

We continue to work closely with YACOMM (Youth Accommodation Coalition). In the last twelve months this increased relationship has seen CYFAA and YACOMM produce a joint response to the 'Hostels Report' and link into the 'State Homelessness Taskforce.'

Introduction of Looking After Children

DCD has finally implemented the LAC system. CYFAA was involved in the implementation team and some of the training. All our funded member agencies have been a part of the training.

Renegotiation Review and Steering Committee

The agencies providing Placement Services, Intensive Family Support Services and Keeping Families Together were offered contract extensions until September 2002 while the department reviews the current service provision and needs.

This review has been called the 'Renegotiation Project' and CYFAA was invited to nominate three representatives to be members on the Renegotiation Steering Committee.

This project, although limited in scope, offers an opportunity for our agencies to both identify concerns and raise solutions.

DCD are currently saying that there are no new resources available to the sector. We are meeting with the Minister in late November to ask for new resources to be considered and to specifically ask for a project to be funded investigating the real costs of placement service delivery.

Social Action Working Party - Legislation

A working party involving a wide range of staff from member agencies have met regularly over the last twelve months discussing issues to do with the need for new child welfare legislation in WA. We have made connections with the Legislation Project Team in DCD and conducted a seminar in April, attended by staff from DCD, agencies and others. We then met with the Minister who stated that the government will put new child welfare legislation to parliament in mid 2002, and committed to consultation leading up to this. The Minister has since confirmed this in the House and in a couple of media releases.

CYFAA was invited to participate in a WACOSS/DCD Consultation Group on the new Bill. This group is meeting for half a day a fortnight for the next three months to go through the current draft of the Bill.

TASMANIA

- The Strategic Framework for Out-of-home Services 2002 - 2004 has been released by the Minister of Health and Human Services. The framework identifies the need for a continuum of care with emphasis on out of home care services acting as an integral component of a service system that is supportive of families and children. It sets out the broad strategies that the Division of Child, Youth and Family and key stakeholders will pursue over the next three years to promote more responsive services in Tasmania.
- Barbara Baikie has recently resigned as Director of Child, Youth and Family support to take up a position in the ACT.
- Vicki Rundle has been appointed as the new director.
- There are plans to introduce Looking After Children model (LAC) beginning in the north and north-west of the state.

QUEENSLAND

To be provided next month.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

To be provided next month.

5. GENERAL INFORMATION

REPORT OF THE INQUIRY INTO THE DEFINITION OF CHARITIES AND RELATED ORGANISATIONS - JUNE 2001

CAFWAA made a submission to the Inquiry and the 450 page report is now available. The recommendations can be accessed through www.cdi.gov.au/report/cdi_summaryofrecs.htm and are of significant interest to the sector. In particular, Recommendation 3 states that a charity should have "a dominant purposes that are charitable, altruistic and for the public benefit". Recommendation 13 defines charitable purpose which would include the advancement of health, the advancement of education, the advancement of social and community welfare (which includes the care support and protection of children and young people), the advancement of religion, the advancement of culture, the advancement of the natural environment and other purposes beneficial to the community. They are also recommending a national definition or framework and an independent administrative body, similar to the Charities Commission in the UK.

6. CAFWAA BOARD CONTACT DETAILS

Chair Simon Schrapel	Anglicare SA	North Adelaide	SA	(08)8305-9210	sschrapel@anglicare-sa.org.au
Vice Chair Jane Hague	RAPT Program	Bardon	QLD	(07)3367 0394	janeh@ucaqld.com.au
Treasurer Francis Lynch	Mercy Community Services	Wembley	WA	(08)9442 3444	flynch@mcs.org.au
Secretary Sandie de Wolf	Berry Street Victoria	East Melbourne	VIC	(03)9429-9266	sdewolf@berrystreet.org.au
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Muriel Cadd	Secretariat National Aboriginal Islander Child Care	Preston	VIC	(03)9471-1855	mcadd@vacca.org
Sue Medson	Goulburn Valley Family Centre	Shepparton	VIC	(03)5831-1217	smedson@gvfc.org.au
Coleen Clare	Children's Welfare Assoc of Victoria	Melbourne	VIC	(03)9614-1577	coleen.clare@cwav.asn.au
Margaret Matters	Anglicare Victoria	West Melbourne	VIC	(03)9321-6133	servdevmgr@anglicarevic.org.au
Marion Rainsford	Clarendon Children & Family Services	Kingston Beach	TAS	(03)6229-5199	clarcare@netspace.net.au
Michelle Townsend	Create Foundation	Cooparoo BC	QLD	(07)3847-8880	michelletownsend@create.org.au
Carole Marsden	PeakCare - QLD	Paddington	QLD	(07)3368-1050	cmarsden@peakcare.com.au
David Connell	St Mary's Family Services	Alice Springs	NT	(08)8952-2833	snrprogmgr.stmarys@octa4.net.au
Graham Jackson	Marist Youth Care	Seven Hills	NSW	(02)9671-7688	grahami@maristcs.com.au
Nigel Spence	Association of Children's Welfare Agencies	Sydney	NSW	(02)9281-8822	nigel@acwa.asn.au
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Sue Mickelburgh	Marymead Child & Family Centre	Kingston	ACT	(02)6295-2755	director@marymead.org.au

Susan Tregea gle	Barnados Australia	Manuka	ACT	(02)6281-5284	suetreg@barnardos.org.au
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Media Release
Monday 8 April 2002

TELSTRA LAUNCHES PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATION

Telstra Chief Executive Officer Ziggy Switkowski today announced the formation of the Telstra Foundation, a philanthropic initiative that will strive to improve the lives of Australia's children and young people. The Telstra Foundation will be chaired by Olympic track and field legend and business leader Herb Elliott MBE.

Dr Switkowski said the Telstra Foundation would enhance Telstra's strong history of community participation through its mission, which is to make a positive and lasting difference to the lives of Australian children and young people. In its first year \$5m will be allocated to the Telstra Foundation by Telstra Corporation, making it one of the largest grant giving programs for children and young people in Australia.

"The Foundation will focus on issues and programs where we believe we can make the greatest impact by supporting children and young people and, through them, the wider community," Dr Switkowski said. "Our young people are our future." Foundation Chairman Mr Herb Elliott endorsed the initiative. "In a perfect world every person would live to their full potential," Mr Elliott said. "This is what the Telstra Foundation is really about for me – helping children and young people to reach their full potential."

The Foundation has been under development for nearly a year and will operate independently of the Telstra Corporation. It includes two main grant giving programs:

1. Telstra Community Development Fund.
2. Telstra's Kids Fund.

The Community Development Fund supports not-for-profit charitable organisations that focus on helping Australian children or young people to overcome challenges and make the most of their lives. The fund will support cultural, health, education, research and disability programs and address important social issues affecting young people.

"The Telstra's Kids Fund provides smaller grants to support local organisations and activities in which the children of Telstra staff are involved, providing further recognition for the work of Telstra people and the close links of local Telstra people and their families within their communities," Dr Switkowski said. This fund provides grants for recreational, education, sporting, cultural, social and environmental projects.

"We recognise and understand the importance of our social responsibility. We want to build and strengthen our communities, support leading-edge research and help to address the root causes of many of the social issues our children and young people face, for example youth homelessness and substance abuse," said Dr Switkowski.

The Telstra Foundation's Community Development Fund will be accepting grant applications twice this year with the closing date for applications 31 May for a decision by the end of August and 27 September for a decision made by early December. The Telstra's Kids Fund will also accept grant applications twice this year with the closing date for applications 31 May with a decision made by the end of July and 13 September with a decision made by mid November.

For more information about the Foundation, look at our website www.telstrafoundation.com or call 1800 208 378.