

SA Aboriginal Children's Services Meeting

29th March, 2008

Report by Tina Quitadamo

We met at The Parks Community Centre in Angle Park. The meeting was limited to one day only because most of us had also attended PARE training for 3 days that week. The meeting was attended by representatives from Minya Bunhii Inc., Port Lincoln Children's Centre, Tjitji Tjapu Tjuta (Umoona) Child Care Centre, Koonibba Child Care Centre, Kura Yerlo Children's Centre, Minya Porlar Creche, ARMSU/Network SA Staff and SA FaHCSIA Staff.

It was facilitated by Debbie Bond, ARMSU Coordinator. Debbie welcomed everyone to Kurna country and to the first SA Aboriginal Children's Services Meeting for 2008.

Update from Debbie on Network SA/ARMSU/IPSU:

Debbie reminded everyone that they can access and keep up to date with the organisation's programs happenings through accessing the websites and she encouraged all in attendance to read "Debbie's Blog". She informed services that the organisation is seeking to add to their websites pictures, photographs, moving footage of interesting and good news things from the services. She encouraged services to send these in if they were keen for this kind of promotion of their programs.

Departmental Update – Cathy Vockins and Kathy Priest

Cathy advised the services what the restructuring and name changes to the Department will look like and where they will be located. Presently, child care is still with FaHCSIA (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) however, in the very near future child care will move to DEEWR (Department Employment Education Workplace Relations).

She provided the services with a handout that identifies what the current Government cabinet looks like, informing that Maxine McKew MP is Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Child Care. She informed that Government has announced that there will be over 260 child care centres built (a process to occur over a number of years in a staged approach).

There appears to be an acknowledgement that 'children learn through play' by Government and in building these proposed new child care centres there is an emphasis on:

- Quality
- Affordability
- Accessibility

Cathy reiterated that with a new Government, there is always change and that the general feeling in the Department is a positive one. Cathy issued an updated list of personnel and their portfolios in our State Department.

Cathy is interested in gaining some written feedback from the SA Aboriginal Children's Services regarding the reporting proformas in relation to how services are finding these requirements, relevance, ideas etc.

Kathy Priest shared her feelings with the services regarding the recent National Apology with particular reference made to every Indigenous child to have access to early childhood opportunities.

FaHCSIA will be looking at negotiating contracts with MACS in May/June of 2008.

Indigenous Bicultural Support Program and ARMSU Resource Centre – Tina Quitadamo (Indigenous Inclusion Consultant)

Tina acknowledged the Kaurna people as the traditional and living custodians of the land that she was meeting on. She informed all of her new employment and diverse roles within this at Network SA/ARMSU. Further to this, Tina announced that the Indigenous Bicultural Support Program was now based at Network SA/ARMSU.

She informed what the program is about and provided all services with some information to take away with them and sought the assistance of the services to help informally promote her work.

Tina advised the services of the reopening of the ARMSU Resource Centre (set for May) and informed of the review that is taking place of the existing Indigenous Resources. This process is supported through the development of a Resource Centre Review Committee who will assess resources using a Selection Criteria Checklist (researched and developed by Tina).

The services used the Checklist with some existing resources to help her to identify any gaps in this process. This proved to be of great assistance to her and she thanked the services for their participation, support and endorsement in adopting the checklist (with some minor changes).

Mini Sessions On Management Issues – Bev Pope (Senior Management Consultant) and Gail Gullickson (Management Consultant)

Gail acknowledged the Kaurna people as the traditional custodians of the land she was present on. Together Bev and Gail asked the services in addition to what was on the agenda, what else would they like some advice and information on and the following was contributed from the participants (& Bev, Gail and Debbie):

- Tax Invoices
- Annual Leave, Study Leave and Sick Leave (Entitlements and Obligations)
- Contracts
- Taking Annual Leave
- Clarification around qualifications (in relation to the Award), particularly if you become qualified and there are no qualified positions available in your service

Gail verbally went through what should and shouldn't be present on a **Tax Invoice**. It was decided that Gail would create some sample ones for the services (published in this edition of the ARMSU News).

Bev advised services of their obligations with **Record Keeping** and the connection of this with the Privacy Act. She recommended photocopying everything regarding employment papers if someone else requests their relocation in your service and you might be uncomfortable about the subsequent maintenance of this information. If they are taken over, get the body who requested them to sign an acknowledgement of receiving them. Employees can request certain financial information from their records for up to 6 years after they have left the service.

Attendance Records should be always kept for children and staff. They are legal requirements. In relation to **timesheets**, staff members must complete **their** own time books. The Director cannot complete these or amend these in any way. If they have only filled in 2 days when timesheets are due, you do have the right to only pay that particular staff member, 2 days. As the Director you should monitor this, ensuring that staff understand how to complete the timesheets. You should encourage and lead by example. Timesheets can also be a tool for revealing particular patterns about staff attendance (which may then need to be addressed).

Annual Leave must be taken. **Study Leave** is an entitlement in Child Care (see Award for interpretation). The current Award should always be available to your staff.

Gail recommended services check out the federal government website for wage rates (this is now www.oea.gov.au) and the Tax Office website (www.ato.gov.au) is also a useful resource.

Gail and Bev then took the participants through all the considerations in a child care budget highlighting the importance of children's attendance (numbers per day) and how this can affect the \$ aspect of running your service.

Services found this a very useful exercise as it demonstrated just how easily a service can run into deficit if the child care fee income was not being met each fortnight and the devastating effect this has over a longer period of time.

Writing Contracts information followed this exercise.

Bev brainstormed with the participants what should be in a contract. Together with Bev, the following was identified:

- Who the contract is between
- Type of contract e.g. for a fixed period, parenting leave replacement, permanent full time/part time/casual etc.
- Fixed term contract: identify an end date and either notify employee 1 week prior to end date whether they are extending or finishing (in which case offer an exit interview). If you do nothing the person's position will be an ongoing one (permanent).
- Award they are paid under
- Start date (and finishing date if appropriate)
- Level
- Current hourly rate
- Special conditions i.e. attendance at after hours meetings, training (first aid must be kept up to date), license to drive, transporting children in own car (need to have full comprehensive insurance)
- When the pay date is and how it's going to be paid (i.e. electronically)

Must get the employee and employer to sign the original and a copy by a given date (the copy is for the employee to keep)

A contract is an offer of employment. If it is not officially signed by a given date it may be seen as invalid by either party.

Ideas for Next Meeting

How to read and interpret the Award

Date and Location for Next Meeting

26th and 27th June, 2008 in Port Lincoln