



ARMSU

## Deadly Director Series

### Tips for new Directors

#### Sharing wisdom and knowledge

*Every Director of a children's service was a beginner in the role sometime. It's a complex job and it takes time to learn what you need to know. Directors manage people, children's programs, finances, legal compliance, planning, information, resources, marketing, general business, networking, and more. Management is like a jigsaw puzzle with a lot of little pieces to put together before you see the whole picture. Over the years we have asked several Directors of Aboriginal children's services to share their tips for new Directors, based on their own experience. We also talked to our own staff about what they have observed. Here's what they had to say:*

#### Getting started

Be aware that you will be on a steep learning curve for a very long time, especially if you don't have a childcare background.

*Understand that you don't need to know everything immediately, although it would be easier if you did.*

Set up a network of support people that you can call on when you need it. If this is difficult, ARMSU can put you in touch with other directors who will support you.

*Personal support is a must for when you feel like it's all getting too much and you want to go back to a cosy place you have just come from.*

Get into a routine as soon as possible.

*Find a mentor - have someone to bounce things off, to listen to you, to support you to remain focussed on core business planning as well as maintaining a healthy perspective on things.*

#### You don't have to do it all on your own

Share the workload with your work colleagues.

*Seek help and advice as early as you can.*

Ask questions and use the services of support agencies, don't feel shame about not having all the answers. No-one has all the answers.

*Be willing to trust your staff and delegate some of the workload.*

Make links with other child care services for support, feedback, problem solving and to update information.

#### Working with a Management Committee

Make sure that both you and the Committee understand their role and your role and the responsibilities that go with each role.

*Support your Committee to make good decisions by keeping them informed.*

ARMSU and Network SA staff can help you set up a positive working relationship with your Committee.

## Time management

It's important to learn to manage time well. Learn the 4 D's of time management - delegate, dump, defer or do.

*Take time to listen even in times of personal stress. If 'now' is not a good time to talk, make an appointment for later and keep it.*

Take your time, don't panic. That's why we all have the ability to work as a team.

*Take time out for yourself; spend time with family, friends and those you care about.*

If something's not right, start working out how you will solve the problem before it gets worse. If you do nothing, it won't go away. It won't get better by itself. It will probably get bigger.

## Building relationships with staff

Be a very good listener. Listen carefully.

*Be clear and consistent about the standards you expect, but don't get bogged down in petty rules.*

Be encouraging.

*Notice your staff's achievements, big ones and small ones.*

Remember to celebrate the successes of the people around you.

*Be a good model for maintaining confidentiality.*

Take the time to say hello at least once to every staff member every day.

*Be prepared to 'say' the same thing in several different ways, because different staff will have different learning styles.*

Don't try to please everybody, do try to understand different views.

*Try not to take criticism personally, use it as a way to learn more about yourself and others.*

The Director can be a great support to staff and staff can be a great support to a Director.

Remember to SMILE because it can become infectious and you never know who might need to be infected by your contagious smile.



## Some days will be better than others ...

If you make mistakes, and you certainly will, rectify them as soon as possible.

*Remember, nobody is perfect! It's OK to make mistakes: these can be learning experiences. We constantly tell children who are in our care, 'Have a go!'. That's what we need to do too.*

Never forget to celebrate your successes (which can appear when you least expect them).

*Treat yourself! You deserve it.*

Thanks to Ada Sherry, Leona Smith, Tina Quitadamo, Laurel Glastonbury, Karen Sultan, Wendy Lord and Meri Daniels for their advice.