

27 – 29 March 2009, Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, WA

Friday 27th March 2009 – All Day Workshop: Response Ability Pathways (RAP), with Dr Larry Brendtro

Larry K. Brendtro, Ph.D., is a former president of Starr Commonwealth, an organisation serving troubled youth and families in Michigan and Ohio. He has been a Professor of Special Education/Behavioural Disorders at the University of Illinois, Ohio State University, and Augustana College. He is currently the president of Reclaiming Youth International, a non-profit organisation that offers networking to those serving children in conflict in family, school, and community settings. He has authored over 150 publications that are available in eight languages. Five of his books are currently in print, including his most recent Solution Tree publication (with co-author Scott Larson), *Reclaiming Our Prodigal Sons and Daughters*. Dr. Brendtro and Nicholas Long of American University edit the interdisciplinary journal *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, which puts them in contact with scholars and practitioners at the cutting edge of work with high-risk youth. Recent journal publications have featured topics such as alternative school programs for troubled youth, treatment of violent youth, resilience, and strength-based interventions. Larry has trained professionals in 16 countries including Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Russia. He draws on 35 years of experience with troubled youth and holds a Ph.D. in Education and Psychology from the University of Michigan.

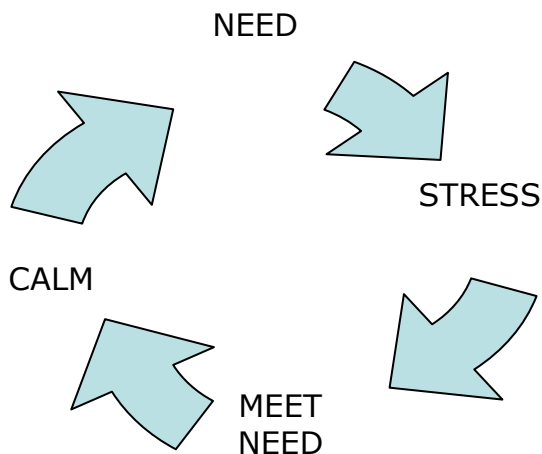
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This was a great day, and the information presented was very relevant and interesting. Full notes of the day can be found in the 'Australian Foster Care Conference – 2009' folder held in the office. The following is a summary of the key theories presented by Dr Brendtro, along with a list of relevant publications mentioned throughout the presentation.

The Outside Kid Vs the Inside Kid

- We need to ensure we look beyond the behaviours of the Outside Kid to see the realities and hurts of the Inside Kid.
- We often mirror behaviours – we respond with anger to the angry child, thus the process goes in a circle.
- The human brain has a 'pain centre' where all emotional, physical pain is recognised. The pain centre for the Inside Kid will be effected by the following external realities: poverty, privilege, cultural assault, racism, 'trained to hate' by others (particularly parents), home alone or 'latch key' existence, sexualised childhood, survival on the streets, betrayal, drugs, self-harm, internalised pain, acting-out pain, ending the pain, adult-wary, peers replace family, media vales reign, deviant peer influence or 'elder death disorder'.
- Buoyant Kids – rise to the surface; 'pop up'; thrive when given opportunity.
- Beset Kids – distrustful; misuse opportunities; tread water; too damaged – need more help.
- Trust or Trauma – a lack of one will inevitably lead to the other.
- Brains of children are designed to be dependant on other s for the first 20 years or so. In the past, children were cared for by parents and elders (grandparents, extended friends, etc), however increasingly this is no longer the case. Many children spend time after school with peers rather than in a home environment with a 'stay-at-home' parent, so the influences on the development of this child are very different.

The Attunement Cycle



"The repeated cycle of attunement calms the child's brain. This builds trust and the ability to calm one's own emotions".
- Louis Cozolino

If the parent doesn't provide the need, the child develops insecure attachments and becomes:

- Avoidant, resistant, anxious, ambivalent, disorganised, disoriented

Adapted by
Marv Ainsworth

Trauma

"Trauma: A psychologically distressing event involving intense fear, terror or helplessness".
- Bruce Perry

Relationship Trauma

I - Simple Trauma: One overwhelming traumatic event.

II - Complex Trauma: Ongoing exposure to fear and helplessness.

Relationship trauma can have many different and varied diagnoses, most of which can be traced back to the publication: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Edition IV (DSM - IV).

Children are labelled very quickly in order to explain away the behaviours, leaving carers feeling intimidated and helpless to assist the child. All of the following disorders relate back to Relationship Trauma:

- Anxiety Disorder
- Attachment Disorder
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Bipolar
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Conduct Disorder
- Depression
- Disruptive Behaviour Disorder
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Separation Anxiety Disorder

**DON'T BE
INTIMIDATED
BY THE LABELS!!**

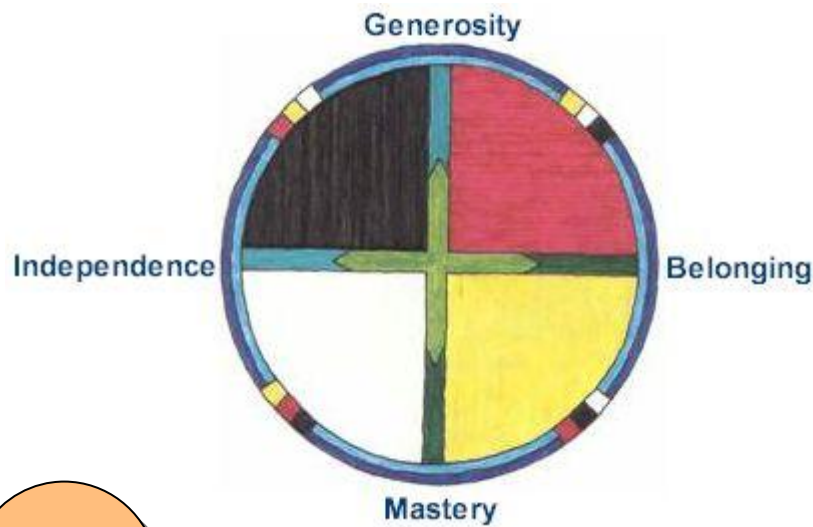
To combat these disorders we must build positive relationships with children.

The main impact of trauma is the inability to control emotions and impulsive behaviour. Traumatized children cannot control their emotions, and tend to display characteristics such as: hyper-vigilance, sense of betrayal, private logic of self blame (this is often due to a lack of available elders to reinforce actual truth and logic).

Normal brains screen out irrelevant information and focus on what is important. But, the overly sensitised amygdale of traumatized children loses the ability to discriminate between safety and danger. Instead, it falsely signals danger and hostility everywhere.

The Circle of Courage

Human beings of all races, creeds and cultures have 4 universal needs.
These needs make up The Circle of Courage



Trauma silences language
Traumatised children rarely discuss their fears. Secure children learn a complex vocabulary to describe how they feel.
Art can be a huge voice for traumatised children.
- Dr Larry Brendtro

"Faced with a range of challenging behaviours caregivers have a tendency to deal with their frustration by retaliating in ways that often uncannily repeat the children's early trauma".
- Dr Bessel van der Kolk

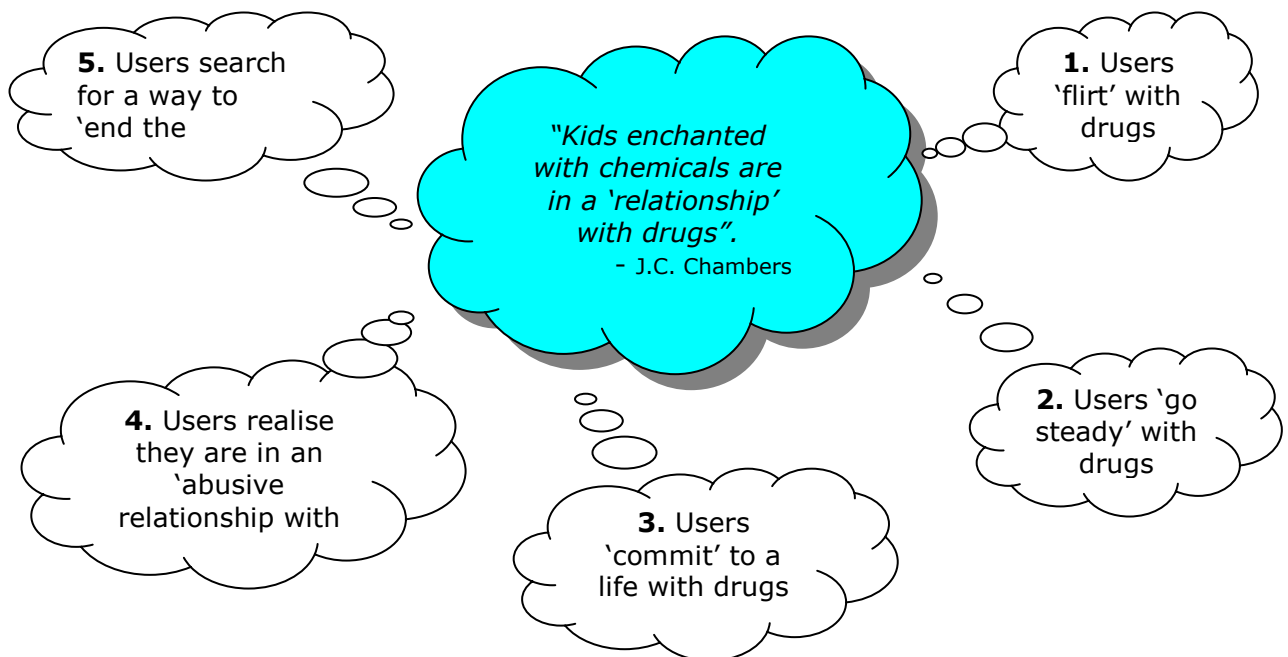
"Treatment for traumatised children must start by creating an atmosphere of safety. This is done in the context of a predictable, respectful relationship".
- Perry & Szalavitz

Restorative Attachments
"The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he will be to recover".
- Bruce Perry

Autism & Asberger's Syndrome

- Social difficulties such as: problems with peer relationships, social give and take, making eye contact, reading facial expressions, spontaneous sharing.
- Narrow interests (Autism)
- Stereotypes behaviours
- Confusion in language and thinking
- Lonely
- Many talents and interests (Asberger's), but not many friends. Kids and teachers need to understand Asberger's in order to support and help these kids.
- Gender differences – Boys are 4 times more likely to have Asberger's and 10 times more likely to be identified due to more aggressive behaviour. Girls are often overlooked as their social withdrawal may be seen as shyness.

Drugs



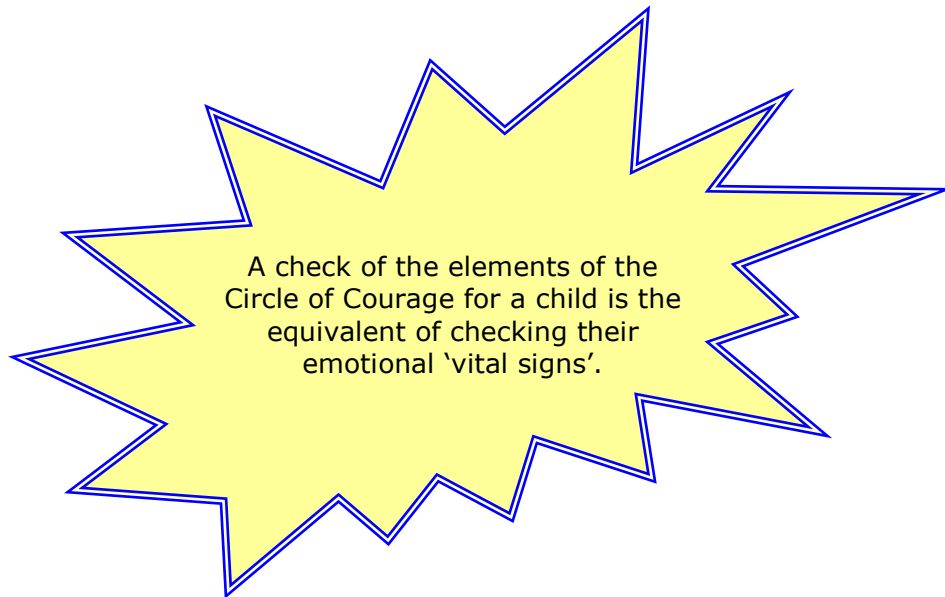
Depression

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Edition IV (DSM - IV) diagnosis of depression ignores normal sadness caused by upsetting life events. Genuine depression is sadness without a cause. Sadness is a normal part of human nature designed to cope with stress resulting from loss such as:

- Attachment – love and friendship
- Failure to achieve important goals
- Loss of power or prestige
- Loss of purpose to life

RAP – Response Ability Pathways

✓ **DO** **Respond to Needs** × **DON'T** **React to Problems**



Pathways to Responsibility

Foundations: **Connect**
 Clarify
 Restore

- You must connect with kids if they are going to hear you.
- 'Relationship' can be a very long process with these kids, but we can connect quite quickly if we know how.
- RAP training helps build strategies to connect with kids.

If you can be there to reinterpret the child's reality you can alter how they perceive the event in the long term, and, if you can effect this reality while it is still fresh, the child will not carry the false reality with them through life.

Example:

A 12 year old boy is with his grandmother in the supermarket when she collapses and dies moments later from a heart attack. Upon his arrival at the supermarket, the grandfather, in his grief remarks, "Why did you bring her out shopping? You know she was not well. The boy's internal reality now says – "You killed your grandmother – it is your fault she died".

When talking with the boy later Dr Brendtro asked about the grandmother and what her health had been like. The boy mentioned she often spoke of dying and remarked "I am not long for this world". In addition, the boy remarked that the grandmother went to the shops every day as she liked to talk with the store owner.

Dr Brendtro asked the boy what he did when his grandmother collapsed. The boy said he sat down beside his grandmother and held her hand. The boy said he told his grandmother that he loved her and then she died.

Dr Brendtro commented to the boy that his face was the last face his grandmother saw and that because of him she was not alone when she died, but rather, she was with someone she loved and that loved her.

In doing this, Dr Brendtro was able to alter the boy's reality. He no longer sees the death of his grandmother as his fault, but rather as an experience that he shared with someone important in his life – he is no longer responsible for her death in his mind.

Resilience

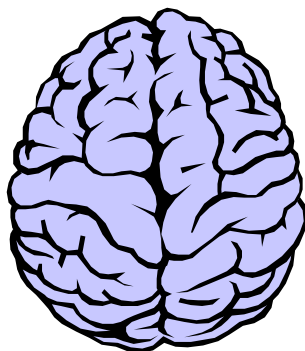
Children have very resilient brains, which are designed to overcome problems.

The Triune Brain

We have three 'different' brains for three different functions

→ The Logic Brain

This part of the brain handles ongoing learning. It allows us to learn and absorb new information.



→ The Survival Brain

This part of the brain develops very early. It manages breathing, fight/flight responses, etc. This brain is also known as the 'Reptile Brain'.

→ The Emotional Brain

This part of the brain identifies good experiences / options from bad ones and is then programmed to repeat good experiences.

This part of the brain takes 20 years to finish developing.

Altruism

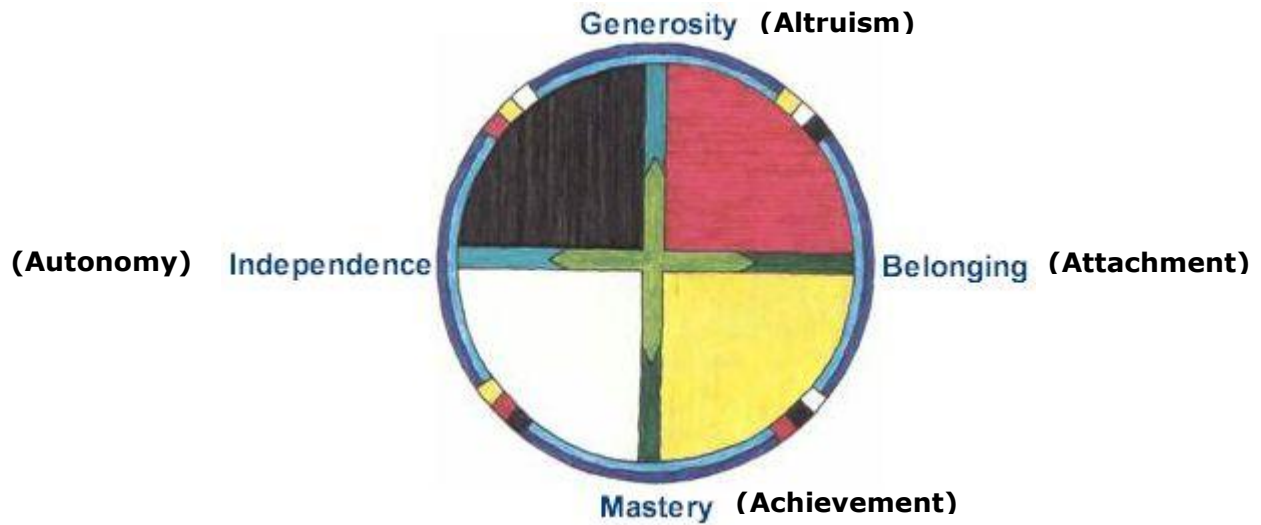
Altruism is inborn.

A German study of 18 month old children was conducted during which the children watched an adult drop a clothes peg on the ground. When the adult appeared upset at having dropped the clothes peg, every child responded by picking up the clothes peg and giving it back to the adult.

The study showed the children wanted to help.

The Resilience Code

The Resilience Code mirrors the Circle of Courage



It is our natural instinct to want to:

- Achieve
- Be independent
- To want to belong
- To help others

Belonging

No one is treated like a nobody

Mastery

Problems are opportunities

Independence

Only responsibility builds responsibility

Generosity

No one hurts and all try to help

Problems as Opportunity

"Punishment works best on the children who need it the least!"

There are four types of kids:

- | | | |
|---|----------------|---|
| → | Teacher's Joy | These two groups respond well to punishment |
| → | Pretty Good | |
| → | A little risky | These two groups don't respond to punishment at all |
| → | Clueless | |

Punishment needs to be painful without being abusive.

"If you don't like where you've been and don't like where you're going, choose a new pathway".

Publications referred to by Dr Larry Brendtro

Pain, Normality and the Struggle for Congruence
James P Anglin

Children Left Behind – The dark legacy of Indian mission boarding schools
Tim Giago

Creative Sanctuary
Sandra Bloom

The Loss of Sadness – How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sadness into Depressive Disorder
Allan V Horwitz & Jerome C Wakefield

Sexually Aggressive Children
Sharon K Araji

Driven to Distraction: Recognising and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood through Adulthood
Edward M Hallowell M.D. & John J Ratey M.D.

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder
Richard Lauv

Moral Minds
Marc D Hauser

Wayward Youth
August Aichhorn

The Aggressive Child
Fritz Redl & David Wineman

Narrative and Psychotherapy
John McLeod

Violentized Youth
Lonnie H Athens

Other publications referred to during the conference:

That's The Way It Is: A Story Of Acceptance
Patricia Walker OAM (founder of Foster Care Association of NSW)

It Is No Secret – The Story Of A Stolen Child
Donna Meehan

Article: 'Careful – Teenage brain on board'
Sydney Morning Herald, 25th March 2009 (copy available from FCAV)

Saturday 28th March 2009

Permanence Planning in the UK – Lessons for Australian Practice

Presenter: Renee Gioffre, Department of Child Protection, WA

A complete copy of the PowerPoint presentation from this session is available in the 'Australian Foster Care Conference – 2009' folder held in the office.

Comments:

This session was very interesting. The presentation, conducted by Renee Gioffre from the Department of Child Protection in WA, looked closely at the introduction of 'Special Guardianship' legislation in the UK and the resulting work practices adopted across the UK. Renee worked in the family welfare system in London at the time the new legislation was introduced, and spent a number of years working with families under the new system. Renee's first hand experience ensured that any questions or issues the workshop participants had were answered comprehensively and from a point of fact.

The presentation is inclusive of post-implementation research findings of the new legislation and its practice.

The presentation also focussed on the importance of contact with birth families for children under 'special guardianship' orders. Participants were provided with two additional information handouts relating to contact, these being:

- 'A Guide to the Islington Letterbox Service'
 - A guide for birth relatives, adopters and professionals

- 'Is all contact between children in care and their birth parents 'good' contact?'
 - Discussion Paper published by NSW Department of Community Services

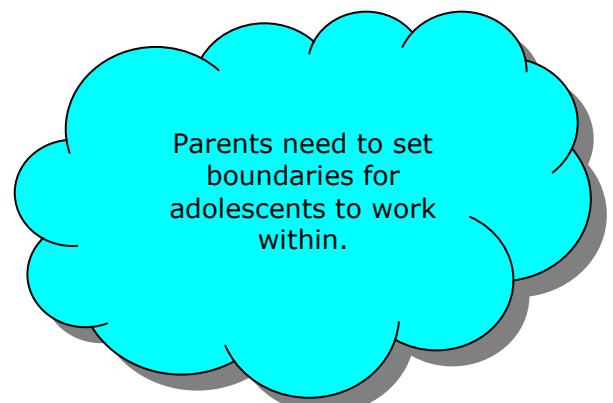
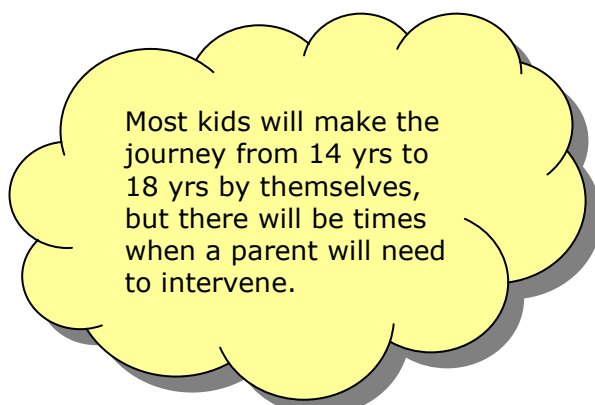
The Islington Letterbox Service is an arrangement through which birth relatives and adoptive parents can exchange information after adoption, usually once or twice a year, at a time agreed between those involved, and with confidentiality assured. Letterbox arrangements are always made between the birth relatives and the adoptive parents – the adults in the situation. Adopted children may write letters or draw pictures to send, if their adoptive parents agree.

Copies of these resources are available from the FCAV office.

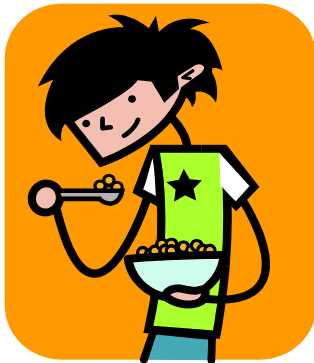
Engaging Adolescents – Holding Difficult Conversations With Teenagers

Presenter: Michael Hawton, ParentShop Pty Ltd

I was hoping to get a lot from this session, however I did not find the session particularly informative or useful. This being said, here's the highlights....



What kids want...



Michael spoke about the benefits of 'scripting' difficult conversations, thus allowing the parent to stay on track and not react to the hostilities possibly put forward by the teenager.

Michael detailed an 8 step plan to be used when preparing for conversations with teenagers. The acronym for the 8 step plan was PAKBOUDA, however I did not get the opportunity to record what this stood for beyond the following:

- P Plan
- A Appointment – book time with your teenager
- K Keep on track
- B
- O
- U
- D
- A

Michael also spoke about using the following table to help determine what you do and what you don't need to talk to your teenager about:

MBA's	Wanted	Unacceptable	Big 'WHAT'S'
(Things I am no longer going to worry about)	(What behaviours am I seeing that are 'wanted' behaviours?)	(What behaviours am I seeing that are unacceptable?)	(What needs to change – what behaviour do I need to 'make visible' so as the teenager will recognise the behaviour and adapt it?)
<i>Eg: Messy bedroom</i>	<i>Emptying dishwasher</i>	<i>Bullying younger brother</i>	<i>Explain bullying in terms of the effect on younger brother to encourage change. Listen to learn how teenager 'sees' the bullying.</i>

Sunday 29th March 2009

AIFS Clearing House – National Framework for Child Protection
Presenter: Dr Leah Bromfield

This was an interesting session, focussing on the research conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) as part of the development of the National Framework for Child Protection.

Leah also explained what the Clearing House does and the services available to the general public such as:

- Website: www.aifs.gov.au
- National Child Protection Clearing House site: www.aifs.gov.au/nch
- Information on the site is free
- The Clearing House holds both national and international research papers
- Research Help Desk is available if you need more targeted information
- There is a free 'discussion list' (currently 600 members)
- The National Child Protection Clearinghouse Library:
You are entitled to be a National Child Protection Clearinghouse library member, if:
 - ❖ You are a carer or a service provider in a field related to child abuse prevention, child protection or out-of-home care; and
 - ❖ You work for a not-for-profit, non-government organisation in Australia
- Library membership is free and entitles you to:
 - ❖ borrow books, reports and audio-visual materials from the Institute's Library collection; and
 - ❖ have up to 25 articles photocopied per year from journals held by the Institute's Library.
- Go to <http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/join/ngomembership.html> for more information on the Clearing House Library.

Unfortunately, the deferring of the last Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting has resulted in a delay of the release of the National Child Protection Framework. The next COAG meeting is scheduled for Thursday 30th April 2009 in Hobart, at which time it is expected the National Child Protection Framework will be unveiled.

I have requested a copy of Leah's presentation – this will be available from FCAV in due course.

Additional contacts to come out of the conference:

- Federal Minister for Swan, Mr Steve Irons MP