

Family Relationships Services Program

The Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) is responsible for the Family Relationships Services Program (FRSP), which provides around \$26 million annually to fund community organisations¹ to provide family relationship services to men, women and children across Australia, using education, mediation, therapy, skills training and counselling.

The purpose of the FRSP is to contribute to the development of an Australia in which:

- children, young people and adults in all their diversity are enabled to develop and sustain safe, supportive and nurturing family relationships; and
- the emotional, social and economic costs associated with disruption to family relationships are minimised.

Results from the FRSP Client Input Consultancy², identified the importance of establishing and promoting close links and networks across FRSP as well as between FRSP and other professional organisations. Enhancing the way services are currently linking and referring clients to other services and information is essential to improving FRSP service delivery to clients affected by mental illness, as a family member with a mental illness can trigger or create the relationship dysfunction or inflame the issue.

FRSP service providers have reported increasing demand for provision of services to clients with high and complex needs, including clients with alcohol or drug dependency and mental health problems or mental illness³. The Family Relationships Services Program Strategic Plan 2005–2008 identifies, as a priority, FRSP service delivery to people with a mental illness and their families.

¹ Organisations delivering FRSP programs are required to meet approval requirements. The approval requirements are the base on which organisations will be approved for funding under the FRSP, and providing family relationships services under the *Family Law Act 1975* and *Marriage Act 1961*. All organisations seeking approval are required to demonstrate compliance with steps, such as leadership and innovation, strategy and planning procedures, client focus and organisational performance.

² The Client Input Consultancy applied qualitative methods to the outcomes of national focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with users and non-users of the FRSP sub-programs.

³ Review of FRSP and Preliminary National Report of the FRSP—compiled from information provided through FRSP service providers' Status or Appraisal Reports and intended to reflect summaries of each service provider's service delivery for the period July 2003–June 2004.