



monaro **family**  
**support** service

# ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

**Our VISION: To support children, young people and families  
to achieve their full potential.**

Our MISSION: Working together with families  
for positive growth and change.

**MFSS SERVICE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Identify pathways to support children, young people and families.
2. Ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
3. Increase individual agency.
4. Strengthen family relationships.
5. Improve parenting capacity.
6. Promote individual, family and community connectedness.



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# CONTENTS

SECTION 1: About Us	Page 4
Overview of Programs and Services	Page 5
Our People	Page 6
Voices from Families	Page 7
President's Report	Page 8
Manager's Report	Page 9
SECTION 2: Our Programs and Services	Page 14
Outreach and Individual Support	Page 14
Parenting Programs	Page 16
Supported Playgroups and Programs for Parents of Children 0-3	Page 20
Social Emotional Wellbeing Programs for Children and Youth	Page 23
Other Programs and Groups	Page 27
SECTION 3 – Our Finances	Page 31
Auditors Report	Page 31

# ABOUT US

Monaro Family Support Service (MFSS) is a community-managed, not-for-profit organisation that has been operating in the Snowy Monaro region since 1978.

MFSS delivers support, programs and other early intervention work to ensure the wellbeing of children, youth and families across the Snowy Monaro region.

We are a small but vital organisation, able to reach individuals and families in the rural and remote communities of the region who would not otherwise be able to access support services and interventions.

*Our vision is to create opportunities for children, young people and families to reach their full potential. We work with all families, including those who are vulnerable and at-risk, and who may be experiencing adversity and disadvantage, to achieve positive growth and change.*

We aim to support nurturing family relationships, to promote social connectedness, and to build individual and community resilience.

MFSS programs and services are responsive and flexible, and use client-centred and strengths-based approaches to collaborate with families to address their needs and goals. We are able to deliver a multiplicity of integrated services in a number of different ways. These include individual and family support work, group programs, and community development work. MFSS has a proud history of providing outreach to bring these services directly to families, in their own homes, so that the barriers in having to seek out and travel to services in regional centres are diminished. Examples of the services we provide are:

- One-on-one counselling, therapy and support to individuals and families.
- Evidence-based parenting programs such as 'Triple P', '123 Magic' and 'Tuning into Teens', which aim to teach parenting skills, foster connections between parents and children, and teach strategies which help prevent the emergence of problem behaviours.
- 'Little Mountaineer's Supported Playgroup', aimed at increasing social connectedness and supporting attachment-based parenting skills. Also other attachment-based programs such as Parent Child Mother Goose and Infant Massage.
- A Koori after-school homework and wellbeing program for Indigenous children and youth.
- Social emotional learning programs for children and young people such as 'Drumbeat' which is aimed at developing coping skills and resilience through rhythm, and 'Secret Agent Society' – an innovative social skills program which works with children aged 8-12 years with social and emotional challenges such as autism.
- Community events and education about challenges facing families, such as how to implement healthy digital media habits and achieve a balanced use of technology at home, and our annual 'Sensory Fix' day with speakers and resources for children with autism and other sensory needs.

MFSS is part of a network of Family Support Services in NSW and is a member of NSW FamS (peak body). MFSS services and programs during the 2016-2017 financial year were provided under FACS NSW funding (Child, Youth and Family Support Program), the federal Department of Social Services (Children and Parenting Support Program), and Coordinare (Southern NSW PHN) for family counselling and support.

# OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Evidence-based Group Programs	Special Groups	1:1 Case Work
<p><b>Social Emotional Wellbeing Programs for Children and Young People:</b></p> <p>Drumbeat</p> <p>Secret Agent Society</p> <p><b>Parenting Programs:</b></p> <p>Tuning into Teens</p> <p>Seasons for Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult</li> <li>• Parents after Separation</li> </ul> <p>Parent Child Mother Goose (<i>weekly during school terms</i>)</p> <p>Triple P Positive Parenting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level 4 Group</li> <li>• Level 5 Enhanced and Pathways</li> <li>• Stepping Stones</li> </ul> <p>123 Magic</p> <p>Infant Massage (<i>weekly during school terms</i>)</p> <p>Engaging Adolescents</p> <p>Bringing up Great Kids</p>	<p>Little Mountaineers Supported Playgroup</p> <p>KASH (Koori After School Homework Program)</p> <p>MAD (young Mums and Dads group)</p> <p>Sallywags Bombala – for carers and siblings of children with special needs</p> <p>Families NSW Regional Network</p> <p><b>Special Events:</b></p> <p>Sensory Fix Day with Monaro Parents and Carers of Children with Autism</p> <p>Project Wild Thing Film Screening and Discussion Panel about healthy screen habits for families during National Families Week</p>	<p><b>DSS CPS (Children and Parenting Support):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home visiting</li> <li>• Case Management (Bombala and Cooma-Monaro)</li> </ul> <p><i>Negotiated for change to Service Area from Nov 2017 to reflect Snowy-Monaro LGA region</i></p> <p><b>Coordinare (Southern NSW PHN):</b></p> <p>Family counselling and support in remote and rural areas of Bombala and Snowy River Shires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primarily home visiting</li> <li>• focus on Mental Health issues.</li> </ul> <p><i>Funding ceased June 2017</i></p> <p><b>FACS NSW:</b></p> <p><b>Child, Youth and Family Support:</b></p> <p>Early Intervention :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information, advice, referral</li> <li>• Case management</li> <li>• Client-focussed casework</li> <li>• Home visiting</li> <li>• counselling.</li> </ul> <p>Mainly Cooma-Monaro (Bombala: 1 hr Advice and referral only and Snowy River: Limited Advice and referral)</p> <p><i>Negotiated for change to Service Area from July 2017 to reflect Snowy-Monaro LGA region</i></p>

# OUR PEOPLE

## BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Name	Position
Mark Williams	President
Cathy Guion	Vice President
Kirsty Salvestro	Secretary
Margaret Hillman	Treasurer
Peter Duncan	Public Officer
Fay Fox	Member
Alison Howell	Member
Dinah Coleman (to May 2017)	Member
Sue McPhie	Member
James Sullivan	Member
Elizabeth Laught	Member

## STAFF

Name	Position
Pauline Cook	Manager
Elizabeth Maxwell	Senior Caseworker
Snigdha Choudhury (Luki)	Office Manager/Finance
Kath Farrell	Family Support Worker Bombala
Yvi Henderson	Family Support Worker
Heather van der Plaats	Family Support Worker
Paul Mackay	Family Support Worker
Jakob Stewart	KASH Support Worker
Sharon Whitney	Bookkeeper

# VOICES FROM FAMILIES

*“The staff have supported my family and me through a critical time. I was able to participate in interactive parenting courses which have helped my family. I liked how I came in myself for help, and have been offered a plan of individual support, parenting programs, a program for my son, all of which have helped and led me to the healthy relationship my family now enjoy”.*

*“The saying that it takes a community to raise a child is still very valid. The pressures on families can be really quite burdensome, and needing to talk about it only makes you stronger, and recognising that you could do it better. MFSS has provided me with an avenue for shared empathy and outpouring of ideas”.*

*“Twelve months ago I wasn’t even aware of this service but you are making yourselves more prominent in the community. My circumstances have changes and you filled the gap in a particularly traumatic time in our lives and I have been really grateful to use a number of courses and classes and I hope to continue. As much as you can offer, people will come. To have a safe environment where we can share ideas and experiences.....you do feel empowered by that”.*

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It was again an extremely satisfying year for Monaro Family Support Service. Numbers increased all across the board. Staff continued to provide brilliant support to both new and existing clients.

Staff changes throughout the year were highlighted by the resignation of Sue-Anne Muggleton, manager for the last two years. Massive thanks to Sue-Anne for her contribution to our service. With Sue-Anne's resignation we welcomed Pauline Cook into the fold and her enthusiasm and dedication since January 2016 has been greatly appreciated by staff and clients alike.

Again great big thanks to staff and the committee members. Their tireless dedication is greatly appreciated by me but more importantly by our clients.

We look forward to the forthcoming year with a great deal of confidence.

Mark Williams





# MANAGERS REPORT

2016 – 2017 has been a time of transition and development for Monaro Family Support Service (MFSS), due to cessation of Federal government mental health funding, and a number of staff changes. Notwithstanding these challenges, the service has continued to provide much needed family counselling and support services to individuals and families in the Snowy Monaro region. This year we have improved and developed our data collection and measurement practices, which will enable us to more accurately, demonstrate the effectiveness of what we do. We have also implemented a new focus on revitalising our profile in the community including extending our reach in delivering programs in more locations within the region.

This report includes a summary of highlights of the last 12 months, as well as looking ahead to future opportunities for the Service to expand the vital work it does with families and communities of the Snowy Monaro region.

## **2016-2017 HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Increased Coverage and Profile**

As part of efforts to make our programs more direct and accessible, MFSS has increased its delivery of programs in different locations, including in smaller communities and those more remote parts of our region. This year we have delivered parenting programs in Bombala and Jindabyne, as well as taking programs directly to schools in a bid to reach more families. We also delivered two corresponding 10-week Drumbeat Programs for children and young people at school and from the home school community at Nimmitabel. As our group programs act as 'soft entry' points for other one-on-one family support work, this has increased our profile across communities in the region. Working directly with schools to deliver these programs has also strengthened our ability to engage and work with this sector.

### **Quality Improvement and Staff Capacity Building on Service Logics and Outcomes-based Evaluation**

In May 2017, all MFSS staff attended an in-house 2-day workshop with our Expert Panel partner - the Centre for Family Research and Evaluation (Deakin/Drummond St). Funding for this came through our Federal DSS agreement, to develop organisational capacity to undertake program planning and implementation tasks, to implement evidence-based practice (including outcomes measurement and evaluation planning) and to develop an implementation plan for organisational development in order to facilitate continuous quality improvement. This workshop was instrumental in building staff knowledge and buy-in about the importance and utility of outcomes-based program evaluation frameworks. It also helped to ensure a shared understanding of service goals and objectives. CFRE consultants are continuing to work with us to consolidate our service objectives, to develop a service logic, and to design a framework for evaluation, which includes moving towards outcomes measurement systems (such as SCORE). This form of data collection and analysis will assist us to articulate and establish clear program benefits (outcomes), identify ways to measure those program benefits (indicators), clarify the specific individuals or groups for which the program's benefits are intended (target audience), and design program services to reach that audience and achieve the desired results. Designing a service-wide logic model supports planning and decision making, as well

as evaluation of effectiveness, which links our service programs and activities to our service objectives.

### **Special Events**

Held in August 2016 was our second annual 'Sensory Fix' Day, organised and hosted by MFSS in conjunction with Monaro Parents and Carers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Sensory Fix Day features specialist speakers sharing information on sensory matters, and the opportunity for families to make and take-away a handpicked sensory- box of items suited to their child's individual sensory needs. It also facilitates networking, discussion, and sharing of ideas amongst families who share similar issues.

The 'Don't DISH my Disability Day' at Bombala High was also held in December 2016 in partnership with Cooma Challenge to celebrate and raise awareness of inclusive participation of students with a disability. MFSS Family Support Worker Kath Farrell organised two personal trainers to conduct exercise circuits for students, followed by a BBQ and ice creams.

Partially funded by Families NSW, MFSS ran a number of well-attended community education events across the region in May during *National Families Week*. The 'Project Wild Thing' free film screenings and discussion panels were aimed at providing information and advice about healthy screen habits in families, the importance of active unstructured outdoor play, and the benefits of encouraging a connection to the natural world. GPs, local educators and child health nurses as well representatives from local high schools participated in discussion panels held at Cooma, Jindabyne and Bombala. These discussion panels addressed the pressing challenges of getting the balance right for children who are growing up in the digital age.

### **New Programs**

#### **Extension of TRIPLE P Capacity (Enhanced, Pathways)**

During this year Kath Farrell, MFSS Family Support Worker, was selected by FACS NSW to become one of two (from Southern NSW) Triple P accredited Facilitators to be sponsored to receive Level 5 training. Level 5 includes specialised Triple P programs –Enhanced, which is for families where there is parental conflict in the home, and Pathways, which is for parents at risk of child maltreatment. Kath has been delivering these programs both in groups and integrated into one on one work with families since she completed the training in early 2017. Earlier there has been recognition of Kath's skill and experience as a Triple P facilitator through her selection to participate in a University of Sydney research project, a study of the evidence base for the **Stepping Stones** (primary care and seminar) Triple P Program. Kath's involvement in this research project, which began in 2015, continued throughout 2016-17.

#### **Secret Agent Society**

Families with children who have social and emotional challenges such as autism, anxiety and ADHD form a large part of our client group. Many of our families were seeking a more intensive program for use with their children than what was available locally.

Secret Agent Society is an evidence-based multi-component small group program that aims to teach children aged 8-12 years to recognise and manage their own feelings, cope with change, detect other people's emotions, develop and maintain friendships, manage social problems, and deal with

bullying. Based on integrated child, parent and teacher skills training sessions differs it from other programs so that the strategies and competencies are reinforced across the key domains of a child's life. One of our Family Support Workers completed the training to become an accredited SAS Small Group Facilitator, and immediately began delivering the program through Cooma Public School at the beginning of Term 2 2017.

Initial feedback from SAS indicates that the program is extremely effective in teaching new skills to children and families, as well as for the peer support opportunities it offers parents. There is substantial interest in the program from other schools and families in the area and the evidence suggests this program improves the social emotional skills of the children participating, as well as strengthen family functioning.

### **Little Mountaineer's Supported Playgroup**

The need for a Supported Playgroup arose in response to requests from a number of local services and families, who could not find (or were not confident/comfortable attending) a relevant local playgroup. MFSS has run a number of different Supported Playgroups in the past, however this year we became aware of many families experiencing social isolation who could benefit from the reinstatement of a Supported Playgroup in Cooma.

Little Mountaineer's Playgroup began during Term 2 2017 and is held at the premises of one of our key partner organisations – Monaro Early Intervention Service. The playgroup is held every week during school terms. The aim of 'Little Mountaineer's' is to provide a safe and supportive environment with facilitated activities, including opportunities to:

- Meet other people and increase social confidence
- Learn new parenting strategies
- Increase knowledge of children's early development
- Learn how to create positive routines at home
- Learn new ways to interact with and connect with children
- Learn new ideas for play to promote early learning and development
- Find out about other programs and services.

Little Mountaineer's is run by a Family Support Worker with many years' experience in the early childhood/pre-school setting.

### **Office Refurbishment**

There has been considerable enhancement of our office facilities and MFSS promotional material over the course of 2017. A grant from the Snowy Monaro Council Community Grants Scheme (\$8,093) for refurbishment of the very well-used furniture in our large group program room, as well as for the purchase of an electronic panaboard (for use in delivering programs and presentations), enabled us to refresh and update our office space. The Board also contributed to the new-look office space – donating three lovely Pauline Syron-Coxon artworks to hang on our walls.

### **New Logo and Promotional Material Design**

We also commissioned the design of a new logo, which we feel is a wonderful representation of the way in which we work (the supportive hand), with families from across the Snowy Monaro (the rounded mountains and alternative view of the hand as a watercourse). Staff and the Board

participated in the design process, and a client was responsible for coming up with one of the crucial design elements. We are very proud of our new logo, which will also provide much needed consistency in our promotional and communication activities.

## **Future Directions**

### **1. Outreach/Home visiting Services**

Over its 39-year existence, our Service has provided invaluable family counselling, support and mental health services to individuals and families in the Snowy-Monaro region in their own homes. Funding has been continuous through State (FaCS) and Federal (DSS) programs. Other sources included the Medicare Local / Primary Health Network (Coordinare) funding. This funding ceased in June 2017.

In all areas, but particularly in the more remote parts of the Snowy-Monaro region, we are called on by families to fill the gaps between other occasional 'drive-in, drive-out' services. Historically we have been a go-to service in a crisis; a service to address many other concerns experienced by families because of our ability to respond quickly and flexibly to deliver services and support according to need. Leveraging our strong relationships and trusted status, our outreach services are able to access and engage families no one else can.

Many of the families to whom we provide outreach services to face complex issues such as mental health disorders, disability, domestic or family violence and substance misuse. Rates of hospitalisation for intentional self-harm, and premature mortality due to suicide are significantly higher for the population of the Snowy Monaro region than NSW state average figures (Coordinare, 2016).

The reduction in funding MFSS has recently experienced means that our ability to provide outreach and home visiting services to families in the many outlying areas of our region, has been substantially reduced. Some services must now be delivered by phone, and the frequency of appointments has in some cases been decreased. The scaling back of this service creates a much higher risk for the escalation of issues for many of our most vulnerable families.

MFSS is currently working hard to identify other ways of supporting our critical outreach services, such as partnerships with local businesses. We are also pursuing other relevant government funding and grant opportunities.

### **2. Regional Programs**

Feedback from families and the community has been extremely positive in relation to our approach of delivering programs in a range of other locations and towns. Taking the programs to where our families are boosts our coverage and reach. Over the next 12 months we intend to continue to deliver programs in this way in order to maximise uptake and accessibility of our services.

### 3. Outcomes-based reporting

Throughout 2017-2018 it is our intention to consolidate our outcomes-based reporting procedures. We are looking forward to working further with our expert panel partner – the CFRE - on how to more effectively analyse and use the data we collect, both in reporting and as a tool for advocating for the needs of families in our region.

#### Thankyou

MFSS would like to acknowledge and thank our partner organisations and community stakeholders who have worked with us and supported the work we do over the past year.

I would also like to extend a very heartfelt thankyou to the staff, and to the volunteer members of our Board, who have assisted me immensely in my first year in this role. There has been a lot to learn and I have asked many questions. They have offered their knowledge, support and friendship with generosity and sincerity, making the task of learning the ropes enjoyable and constructive. It is a privilege to work alongside those who are so deeply committed to making a contribution to the lives of families in our community.

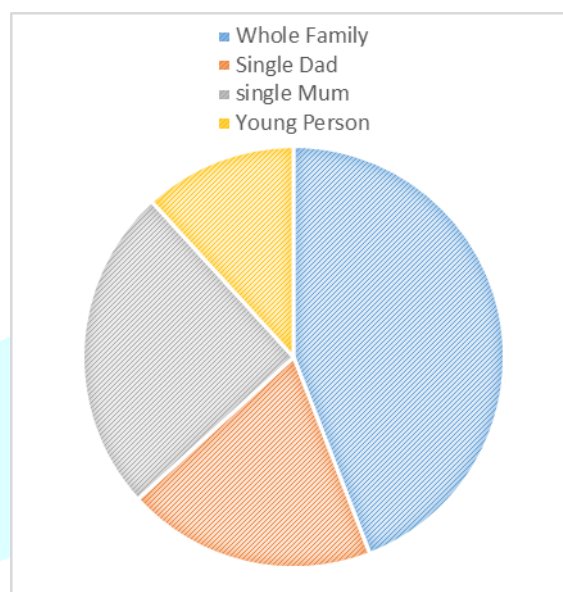


# OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

## OUTREACH and INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

MFSS Outreach and Individual Support services are offered across the entire Snowy Monaro LGA. Our families are from larger towns, small villages, isolated communities and rural properties.

Over 2016-2017, the programs offered to clients ranged from intensive individual support for complex families, to one-off consultations requiring referral to other services.



Profile of Outreach/Individual Support Clients

Issues included:

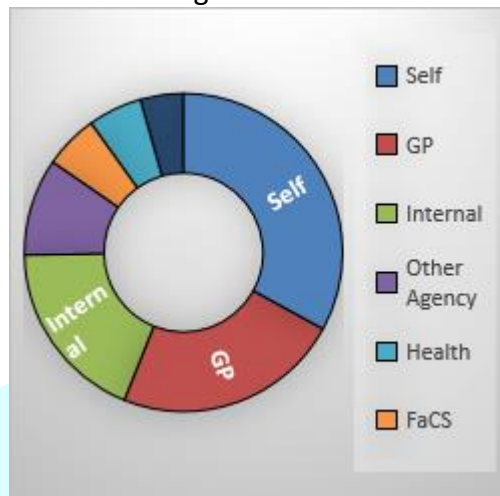
- Parenting younger children (general)
- Internet use/ gaming/on-line bullying \*
- Parenting adolescents (general)
- relationships
- Family breakdown
- Relationship with extended family
- Dual diagnosis-support – difficulty managing everyday life
- AOD
- Social isolation
- Geographic isolation
- legal
- Lack of transport
- Inability to source local services
- MH –Adult

- MH-adolescents and children
- Family Health
- Co parenting (specific)
- Separation/divorce
- Step parenting(specific)

\*Internet usage was noted first as an issue in 2012. This concern has increased and is now predominately the number one issue brought by parents and YP for advice

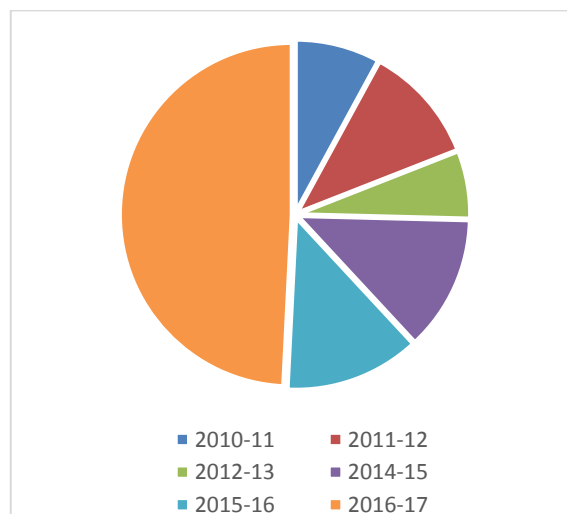
**Referrals**

Outreach and 1:1 FAMILY WORK support individuals and families. These clients have accessed the service through self-referrals, internal referrals from MFSS other programs, referral from GPs, Community Services and other Government agencies.



The referrals seeking support for clients ranged from intensive individual support for complex families to one-off consultations requiring referral to more appropriate services through a variety of programs

An interesting note is that since our Coordinare funding has ceased, the loss of ADHC services for children with disability and the NDIS roll out the increase of referrals to MFSS from GPs has increased considerably. Below is chart of the referrals received over the past six years from the local GPs



# PARENTING PROGRAMS

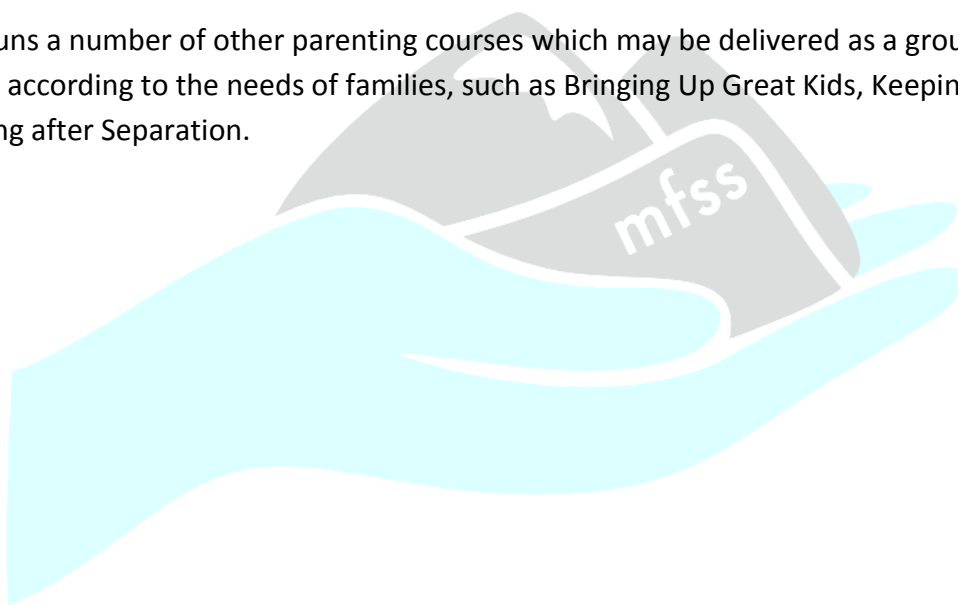
MFSS staff are accredited to deliver a range of evidence-based parenting programs, such as Triple P, 123 Magic, and Tuning into Teens, which aim to teach parenting skills, foster connections between parents and children, and teach strategies which help prevent and manage problem behaviours.

Due to requests from families, this year we have delivered a number of programs aimed at parents of adolescents, such as Engaging Adolescents – which focuses on effective communication strategies for parents of teenagers, and the emotion coaching program Tuning in to Teens.

Our programs for parents of very young children, such as Infant Massage and Parent Child Mother Goose, focus on building attachment and understanding how to optimise positive development of their children.

## SEASONS

MFSS also runs a number of other parenting courses which may be delivered as a group program or individually, according to the needs of families, such as Bringing Up Great Kids, Keeping Children Safe, and Fathering after Separation.





# TRIPLE P POSITIVE PARENTING

Triple P Positive Parenting Program is an internationally recognised program that gives parents the skills they need to build strong family relationships, manage misbehaviour and prevent problems happening. MFSS staff deliver Triple P modules in groups, and in one-on-one work with individuals and families.

## Level 4 Triple P Group

- Set rules and routines that everyone respects and follows
- Feel confident you are doing the right thing
- Raise happy confident kids
- Manage misbehaviour so everyone in the family enjoys life
- Encourage behaviours you like
- Look after yourself as a parent



## TRIPLE P LEVEL 5 – ENHANCED and PATHWAYS

### Intensive support for families with complex concerns

- Cognitive behavioural strategies to increase parent's ability to cope with raising children
- Avoiding parenting traps
- Managing parental conflict
- Coping with Anger
- Relaxation exercises for parents

## STEPPING STONES TRIPLE P

### For families with a child who has a disability

#### Seminars- Primary Care

- ✓ Explore causes underlying your child's behavior
- ✓ Strategies for promoting children's development
- ✓ Teach your child new skills
- ✓ Positive strategies for managing misbehavior
- ✓ Skills for parents to develop planned activity routines
- ✓ Look after yourself as a parent

# 123 MAGIC and EMOTION COACHING

A tool-box of easy-to-use parenting techniques that help children to develop self-control and respond with flexibility to frustration

- Explore the difference in cognitive abilities for adults and children
- Sorting of behaviours to determine your action
- Common parenting errors- 'too much talk' 'too much emotion'
- How behaviour patterns form and how to interrupt the pattern
- Strategies to "STOP" behaviours
- Strategies to encourage 'START' behaviours
- Emotion coaching



# PROGRAMS FOR PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS

MFSS has run the emotion coaching program Tuning in to Teens in Jindabyne, and Engaging Adolescents in Cooma.

## TUNING IN TO TEENS

### Emotionally intelligent parenting of teens

- Explore the developmental stage of teens
- What is emotional intelligence
- Why is emotional intelligence important
- How parents can influence their teens emotional competence
- Skills to enable parents to emotion coach
- Looking after yourself as a parent

What parents said after attending our course:

*'This course has greatly assisted me with relating to my teen + his emotions'*

*'I've been aware to talk less & listen more & just let my teen express himself- he opens up more'*

*'I am definitely tuning into their emotions better and this is helping to improve family dynamics'*

## ENGAGING ADOLESCENTS

**Building a relationship with adolescents *before* problem behaviour emerges AND how to hold the tough conversations when issues do arise.**

- Parents' role in the life of their adolescent
- Understanding adolescence: a time of great physical, emotional, intellectual and social change
- Adolescent brains under construction – the evidence from neuroscience
- Connecting emotionally with your adolescent
- Assisting your adolescent to identify and manage their feelings
- Tips for encouraging healthy habits for teens – sleep, technology, and physical health
- Effective strategies for communicating with adolescents
- Tools to proactively resolve problems

What parents said after attending our course:

*I attended this program as I was often feeling overwhelmed and anxious about the way we interacted. It was valuable to identify current mistakes or ways I can improve interactions with my kids.*

# SUPPORTED PLAYGROUPS and PROGRAMS for PARENTS of CHILDREN 0-3

The reinstatement of a Supported Playgroup is in response to requests from a number of local services and families. There were a number of mothers who had attended our Infant Massage group but whose babies had grown too old for this group, or who felt they had nowhere else to go. In order to support the connections in this group, Little Mountaineer's was established. Our popular Infant Massage and Parent Child Mother Goose Programs run throughout the year during school terms and are designed to encourage attachment-based routines and rhythms into parenting of very young children.

## LITTLE MOUNTAINEER'S PLAYGROUP

- Caters for families with children aged 0-5 years old
- Develops skills and confidence in parenting
- It offers supported and facilitated activities
- Increases social connectedness
- Supports attachment-based parenting skills



## PARENT CHILD MOTHER GOOSE

- ✓ Promote attachment between parents and their young children
- ✓ Aid the language development of young children
- ✓ Help to reduce stress associated with being a parent or care of a young child
- ✓ Put parents in touch with other parents (thus helping them to form new friendships)
- ✓ Connect parents and carers with useful resources in their own community



# MAD Young Mum and Dad Playgroup

'MAD' known as Mum and Dad play group continued through 2016 – 2017. The MAD playgroup is funded by FACS Families NSW and auspiced by Monaro Family Support Service. The MAD playgroup is held fortnightly and is based at The HUB Youth Centre.

During 2016 – 2017 the MAD playgroup celebrated some highlights:

- Toddler and Baby Expo held at the Cooma Markets
- Simultaneous Story time read by Bronnie Taylor
- National Families Day
- Fitness step challenge

Throughout the year MAD group enjoyed visits from Ability Links, ROMPS, MEIS, and had lots of fun with craft activities and cooking sessions. Each playgroup the children and their parents prepare and share healthy snacks and lunch. Christmas, Easter, Mothers and Father's Day were also great celebrations, visits from Santa and presents for all the children. Christmas family photographs are taken and all of the families appreciate this opportunity. Plans for the next year include more fitness step challenge with a view to promoting a more active lifestyle. The iMAD project should be completed by December 2017 and has potential for a 2018 launch and a peer young parent- high school rollout.

MAD playgroup also supported and volunteered at community activities including Youth Homeless Matters Day, NAIDOC Day celebration, Mental Health Month, Youth week and the Relay for life team.



A special thank you to MAD families, Families NSW, Monaro Family Support, Cathy Guion and Mel Sass @ The HUB, Kath Farrell (ROMPS), Heather ( ROMPS and Mother Goose)

*Nikki Rabbitte (MAD Playgroup facilitator) Grand Pacific Health*



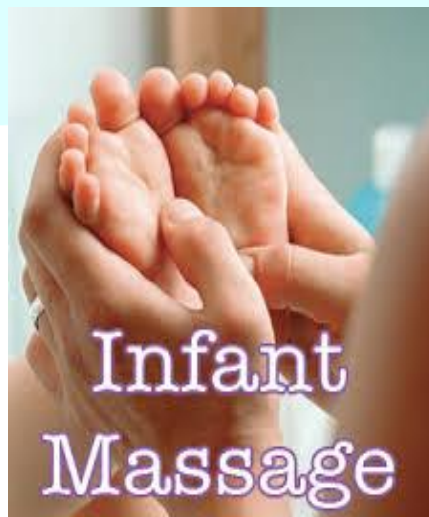
# “BABY IN MIND” – FIRST TOUCH PROGRAM (INFANT MASSAGE)

MFSS delivers Infant Massage Programs at Community Health throughout the year.

Touch is the first and most vital sensory experience. Research shows that our earliest experiences with touch can affect every aspect of our lives. Nurturing touch (or the lack of it) can impact the way we think, feel and relate to others.

## BENEFITS OF INFANT MASSAGE:

- ✓ Improves communication between you and baby
- ✓ Enhances bonding
- ✓ Relaxes and soothes
- ✓ Helps relieve colic and tummy discomfort
- ✓ Stimulates physiological development
- ✓ Promote neurological development and sensory integration



# SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELLBEING PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH



MFSS has run numerous Drumbeat programs over 2016-2017, including at Bombala, Cooma, Nimmitabel and Berridale. We have delivered programs at primary and high schools, as well as for groups of home schooled children and young people. These programs culminate in a performance for families. MFSS also uses Drumbeat as an activity component during other programs, such as the Scallywags Bombala group or during KASH. During Mental Health Day at Monaro High we ran therapeutic sessions for students throughout the day. We have also run programs at our Cooma offices

for children and young people referred to us with mental health concerns.

More than just fun drumming, DRUMBEAT is the world's first structured learning program using music, psychology and neurobiology to reconnect with ourselves and others.

The name DRUMBEAT is an acronym for **Discovering Relationships Using Music, Beliefs, Emotions, Attitudes, and Thoughts.**

**DRUMBEAT** incorporates:

- hand drumming
- behavioural therapeutic principles
- cognitive and dialectical elements to achieve positive outcomes

## Proven outcomes:

- Increased mental wellbeing
- Increased knowledge and understanding of relationship issues
- Reduction in psychological distress
- Reduction in antisocial behaviour
- Reduction in school absenteeism
- Reduction in reportable school based behavioural incidences
- Improved self-regulation
- Increased social and emotional learning
- Increased empathy

Drumbeat facilitates the social and emotional skills for healthy relationships and values.





# SECRET AGENT SOCIETY

## Solving the Mystery of Social Encounters



Our newest program for children is Secret Agent Society (SAS), begun in collaboration with Cooma Public School in Term 2 2017. The SAS Small Group Program is a breakthrough social skills program for 8-to-12-year-old children with social and emotional challenges, including those with Autism. The program consists of small-group child sessions, parent and teacher information sessions and resources, real-life practice missions and a system to monitor and reward skill development at home and at school.

In 2014, SAS was awarded the Autism Spectrum Australia National Recognition Award for advancement to acknowledge the significant, positive impact the program has on children's and families' lives.

### **SAS teaches children how to:**

- Recognise simple and complex emotions in themselves and others
- Express their feelings in appropriate ways
- Cope with feelings of anger and anxiety
- Communicate and play with others
- Understanding levels of friendship
- Cope with team work, games and 'losing'
- Cope with mistakes and transitions
- Build and maintain friendships
- Solve social problems
- Detect the different between accidents, jokes and nasty deeds
- Detect and understanding bullying
- Prevent and manage bullying and teasing
- Acknowledging personal strengths and goals

**A revolutionary program  
for children 8-12 years  
with social and a  
emotional challenges**



# KASH (KOORI AFTER SCHOOL HOMEWORK CLUB)

The **KASH** program provides additional tutorial support to Aboriginal primary and early secondary students and is conducted each Thursday after school in school term in the Aboriginal Resource Room at Monaro High School.

- Tutorial support
- Literacy, Numeracy and IT Skills
- Cultural sharing
- Art and Craft
- Music
- Outdoor activities
- Afternoon tea
- Excursions



KASH was established in 2006 by MFSS in response to suggestions from local Koori

families. KASH is aimed at supporting the development of confident, strong and proud Koori kids. It is also aimed at supporting connections between families, school and the community.

This program is funded by FACS Families NSW funding, which is aimed at children 0-8 and their families. This funding area is currently undergoing reform under the TEI (Targeted Earlier Intervention) Reform Process. Though the broad target group for the TEI Program is vulnerable children, young people, families and their communities within NSW, one of the three **priority** target groups is Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities within NSW.

Through 2017, KASH has been adapting in order to better reflect the changing needs and concerns of local Koori families. These changes are also aimed at incorporating the objectives of the TEI Program framework. As a result, KASH has now expanded to include primary school age children and those transitioning to high school. It is hoped that the program will continue to develop to also cater to the needs of older high school students, who may be able to act in a mentoring capacity .

Trips on country are planned for late 2017.

# OTHER PROGRAMS and GROUPS

## SEASONS FOR GROWTH



**Seasons for Growth** is an innovative Australian small group Grief and Loss program that uses the imagery of the seasons to illustrate the experience of grief.

In 2016-2017 MFSS delivered the Adult Seasons Seminar and Group Program.

The program combines psychology, education and peer support, within a person centred learning approach to strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of adults by providing a space to:

- Learn about how different people respond to change, loss and grief
- Understand that it is normal to experience a range of grief reactions
- Explore new approaches to dealing with change, loss and grief in their lives
- Build communication, decision making and problem solving skills
- Participate in a supportive network of peers and adults
- Integrate their new learning into their relationships with family, friends and others

# SCALLYWAGS (BOMBALA)

**A peer support group for parents, carers,  
sibling's and children with additional needs**

Inclusive of

Physical activity

Recreational opportunities

Excursions

Art and craft

Board games

Cooking

Sharing of celebrations

A diverse range of indoor and outdoor activities aimed at increasing social skills, support and inclusion for all abilities



## Monaro Parents and Carers' of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

(a support group for parents and carers' of children with an ASD).

This support group originated after the 2014 Positive Partnership Workshop (Aspect /DET) where families identified a great lack of community support in their efforts to raise their children with additional needs. Since 2014 Monaro Family Support Service has managed a Facebook page for the group for the purpose of promoting local parenting and autism related events and additionally regularly updated postings of reliable autism related information and resources. Positive growth of the group has seen Monaro Family Support Service host activities such as lunches, small workshops and our annual "Sensory Fix " session. The Sensory Fix session involves professional speakers sharing information on sensory matters, and families making and taking home hand -picked sensory items suited to their child's individual sensory needs.

## **MONARO FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE**

### **work within and endorse**

#### **10 PRINCIPLES**

#### **of family services work as developed by FaMs NSW:**

- 1) In family services projects, staff and families work together in relationships based on trust and respect.
- 2) Family services projects enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members; adults, young people and children.
- 3) Family services projects affirm and strengthen families' social, cultural, racial and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a pluralist society.
- 4) Family services projects are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process
- 5) Family services projects are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
- 6) The principles of family service are modelled in all aspects of a project, including planning, service delivery, management and administration
- 7) All members of a family should be safe from violence.
- 8) Children should be provided with safe, quality alternatives if it is deemed they can never live with their birth family.
- 9) There is a recognition that families have multiple forms, not necessarily biologically based.

The priority at the heart of all our work with families is the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people. A focus on working alongside families acknowledges that family wellbeing is the essential foundation for child safety and wellbeing.

# STAFF TRAINING

All staff attended a range of training and professional development opportunities throughout the year.

# SUPERVISION

MFSS staff who conduct case work access regular external clinical supervision. Supervision is considered to be a critical component of quality case work and counselling carried out by our staff.

# LOCAL MEETINGS, INTERAGENCIES and NETWORKS

- MFSS facilitates the Cooma Families NSW Network (funded by FACS) meetings for agencies working with children 0-8 years.
- MFSS also auspices the Monaro Domestic Violence Committee

MFSS is also represented by staff at a range of relevant meetings, including:

- Family Case Management (FACS)
- Monaro Regional Interagency
- Child Protection and Youth Interagency
- Koori Interagency
- Mental Health Professionals Network