



Australian Government

Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

The Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP) 2006–07 National Report

A SNAPSHOT OF THE FRSP FROM A FUNDED
ORGANISATION PERSPECTIVE

Improving the lives of Australians



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Foreword

This is the fourth National Report on the Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP). The report highlights the operational environment of the FRSP services sector over 2006–07. In addition to reflecting on the year just past, the report provides a useful indicator of the opportunities and challenges ahead for service providers.

The report is a barometer by which service providers can assess their service environment and challenges, against the broader views of the national service provider network.

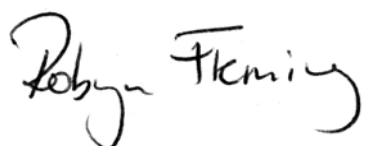
The increase in the number of service types and clients reflects increased investment in the program and the willingness of Australian families to seek help to improve their family relationships. The efforts of service providers to broaden the reach of services across their local communities are apparent through the increasing diversity of families accessing the services.

The dynamic and varied nature of Australian families and the challenges they face, continue to be reflected in the increasing number of complex cases service providers are assisting families to manage.

In the second of the third year of the major expansion of the New Family Law System, it is not surprising that many of the challenges identified by service providers relate directly to the new service environment. These challenges include staff recruitment and training, maintaining quality standards, and meeting new requirements on service providers such as the FRSP Online data collection system.

The report provides a platform for discussion with the sector via the FRSP Senior Executives' Forums, the Family Relationship Services Australia Board and the various, regular State and Territory Office meetings with providers.

We look forward to engaging with you on the developments and challenges ahead.



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A Snapshot of the Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP)

2006–07

Introduction

Welcome to the fourth National Report on the Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP).

This National Report presents data provided by FRSP funded organisations through the Status Report process, and FRSP Online, as a snapshot of the FRSP for the 2006–07 financial year. A copy of the 2006–07 Status Report template accompanies this Report.

Information provided within the 2006–07 National Report raises as many questions as it answers. Consequently, this Report creates a platform for ongoing, constructive discussion between the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), the Attorney-General's Department (AGD), Family Relationship Services Australia (FRSA) and the FRSP services sector.

Outcomes from these discussions will inform ongoing Program development and enhance the capability of the FRSP to respond effectively to client need.

The Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP)

The aim of the FRSP is to improve the wellbeing of families and children by supporting positive family relationships through the full range of early intervention and post separation services.

The FRSP is jointly funded by FaHCSIA and AGD and administered through FaHCSIA's network of State and Territory Offices (STOs).

Background

This year you will notice significant changes to the National Report's format. These changes reflect the incorporation of the Status Report into the overarching Performance Framework for the FRSP.

Changes to this year's National Report also seek to provide a more concise, user friendly snapshot of the capacity of funded organisations to meet their contractual obligations, principally through the Status Report process. While some data has been drawn from FRSP Online, this has been kept to a minimum because some data relating to unregistered clients has yet to be returned to the department by funded organisations. When the FRSP Online reporting portal becomes operational in the near future, funded organisations will be able to view and generate their own reports. Access to this portal will:

- enable authorised stakeholders to access a range of reports from their desktop PC via the internet. Authorised users will be able to run and print available reports with the ability to set a range of customisable filters and date ranges on each of the available reports
- make selected reports available to stakeholders of the FRSP to enable better monitoring of their progress against the desired Funding Agreement outputs
- reduce the time it takes to generate reports. The new reporting portal will be a very efficient process when compared to the current reporting process which is labour intensive and time consuming.

Report Structure

The 2006–07 National Report is divided into two sections. Section One sets the scene by providing a brief overview of the service delivery context from a funding and client profile perspective.

Section Two provides a summary of quantitative and qualitative data that has been drawn from the 123 Status Reports that were submitted by funded organisations as part of the overall FRSP performance reporting process.

Where specific questions within the Status Report template have not been addressed within this Report, reasons for omission include:

- information is only relevant to the individual service submitting the Status Report, for example Questions 2 and 21. Question 2 relates to the range of services being provided. Question 21 relates to the make-up of the organisation's Executive or Board/Management Committee
- responses were too broadly based to create a national trend, for example Questions 14, 15, 16 and 17
- information is not suitable for aggregation, for example Case Studies.

Methodology

Data presented in Section One has been drawn from FaHCSIA's Finance Section and FRSP Online.

Data presented in Section Two was developed by quantifying standard yes/no responses in the Status Report template and converting these to a percentage of the total number of responses.

It was not practical to apply this approach in respect of qualitative responses. Therefore qualitative responses were reviewed to identify the issues that were most frequently being reported against each question across the Status Report. Where a specific response became numerous enough to create a trend line, trend data was incorporated into the National Report.

When reviewing qualitative data presented in this way, it is important to note that no attempt has been made to present this information in any order of priority. The broad intention is to flag predominant issues and themes that are clearly evident across the FRSP and utilise this information as a basis for ongoing, more detailed discussion between key stakeholders at both national and state and territory levels.

Next Steps

The 2006–07 National Report will be made available to all funded organisations and its content and future direction in relation to format will be discussed with the FRSP services sector.

Other avenues open to the Departments and funded organisations to access data and share information about the FRSP's performance include:

- FRSP Online reporting portal once this becomes operational;
- Chief Executives' Forums
- Family Relationship Services Australia
- the FRSP's Biennial Conference
- regular meetings with staff from FaHCSIA's STOs and funded organisations.

Section 1

Service Delivery Context

Section One provides a brief overview of the FRSP service delivery context from a funding and client profile perspective. Data provided within this section has been drawn from FaHCSIA's Family Relationship Services Branch, Finance Section and FRSP Online.

1. Appropriations for the Financial Year 2006–07

Total Appropriation for 2006–07 \$113.56m (GST Exclusive)

Figure 1: FaHCSIA/AGD

Year	FaHCSIA	AGD
2005–06	\$39.555m	\$39.218m
2006–07	\$52.2m	\$61.36m

2. FaHCSIA Funding Allocations for Industry Representative Bodies

Figure 2: FaHCSIA Funding Allocations for IRBs

Year	Funding Allocation
2005–06	\$0.734m
2006–07	\$0.874m

3. Number of Funded Organisations by Service Type

Figure 3: Number of Funded Organisations by Service Type

No of Funded Organisations	Service Type
12	Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy (AMFT)
27	Children's Contact Services (CCS)
49	Family Counselling (Couns)
21	Drought Counselling (DC)
61	Education and Skills Training (EDST)
18	Family Dispute Resolution (FDR)
14	Family Relationship Centres (FRCs)
8	Family Relationship Services for Carers (FRSC)
6	Family Relationship Services for Humanitarian Entrants (FRSHE)
54	Men and Family Relationships (MFR)
11	Parenting Orders Program (POP)
26	Regional Family Dispute Resolution (RFDR)
24	Specialised Family Violence Service (SFVS)
6	Sugar Industry Reform Package (SIRP)
337	Total

4. Proportion of FRSP Funding by Service Type

Figure 4: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2006–07 Funding (\$m)

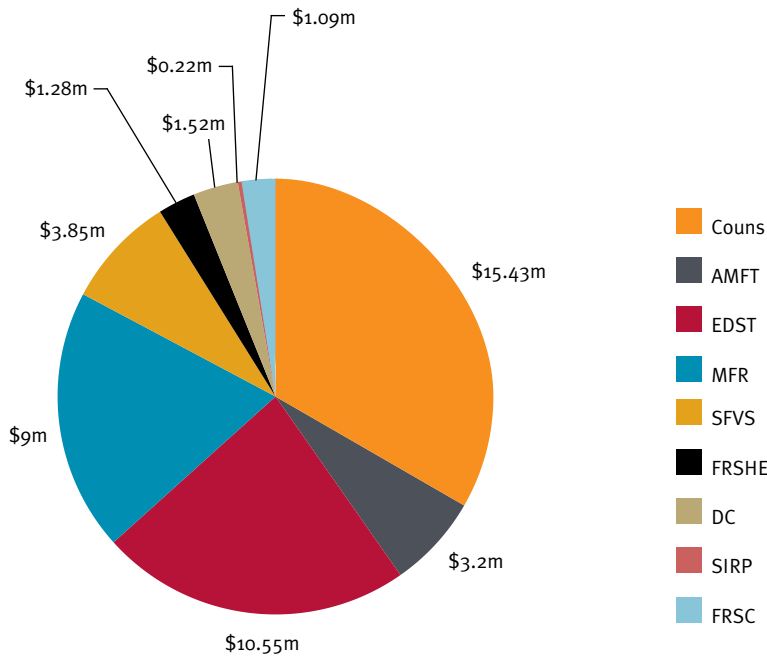
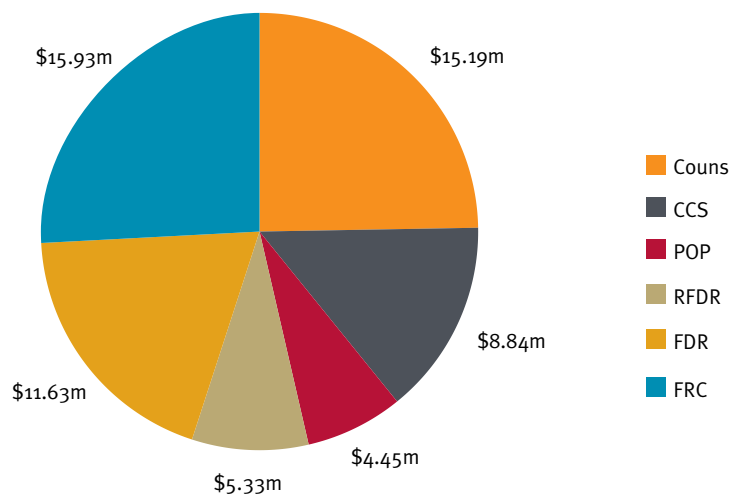


Figure 5: Attorney-General's Department 2006–07 Funding (\$m)



5. Client Profile

Registered Clients

Definition

A Registered Client is any person who receives a service from an organisation and whose demographic details have been entered into FRSP Online.

Number of Registered Clients entered into FRSP Online for the 2006–07 financial year as at 30 June 2007.

183,903

Unregistered Clients

Definition

An Unregistered Client is any person who receives a service from an organisation and whose demographic details have not been entered into FRSP Online.

An Unregistered Client is generally included as part of a one off Group. For example, an information session for a course, seminar or community education activity where collecting registered client information may not be appropriate.

Number of Unregistered Clients entered into FRSP Online for the 2006–07 financial year as at 30 June 2007.¹

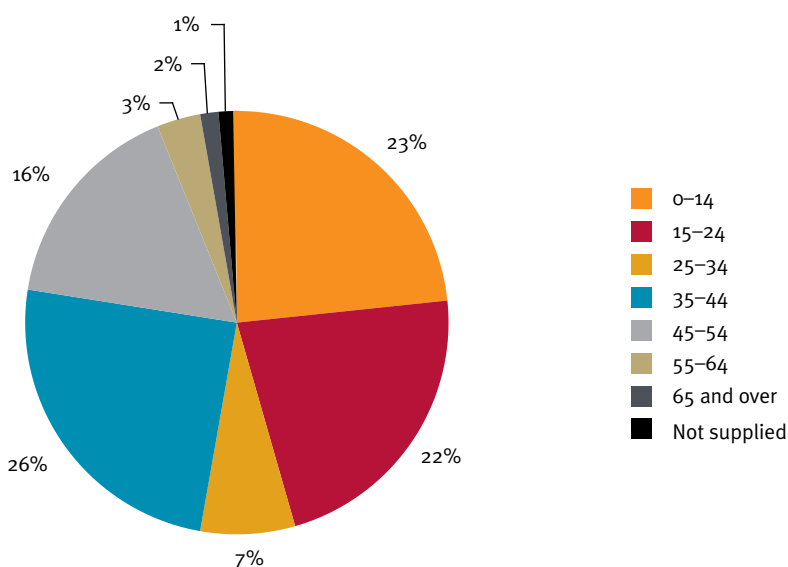
40,897

Walk-in Clients— Family Relationship Centres

Number of FRC walk-in clients for 2006–07

9,151

Figure 6: Registered Clients (183,903) Seen by Age Range



¹ Numbers of unregistered clients are incomplete as at 30 June 2007 because data has yet to be returned to the Department by some funded organisations.

Figure 7: Registered Clients (183,903) Seen by Marital Status

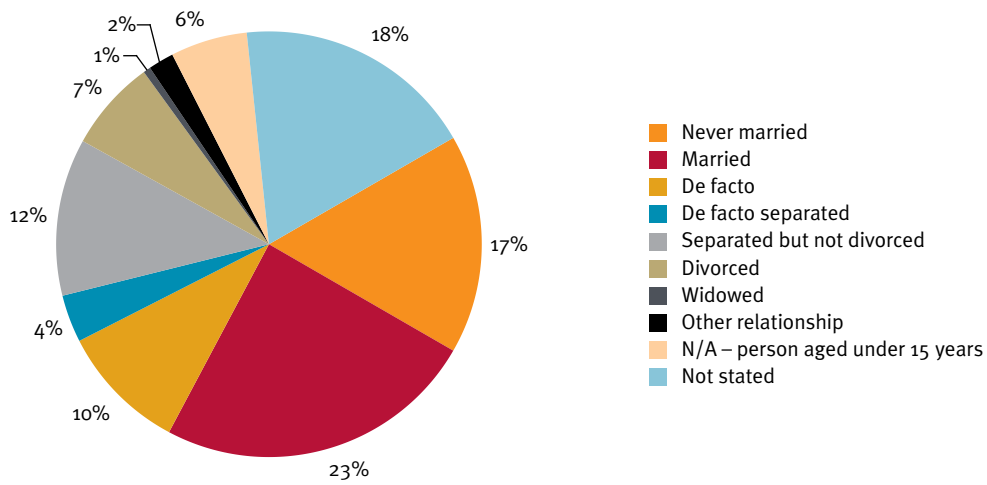


Figure 8: Registered Clients (183,903) Seen by Weekly Earnings

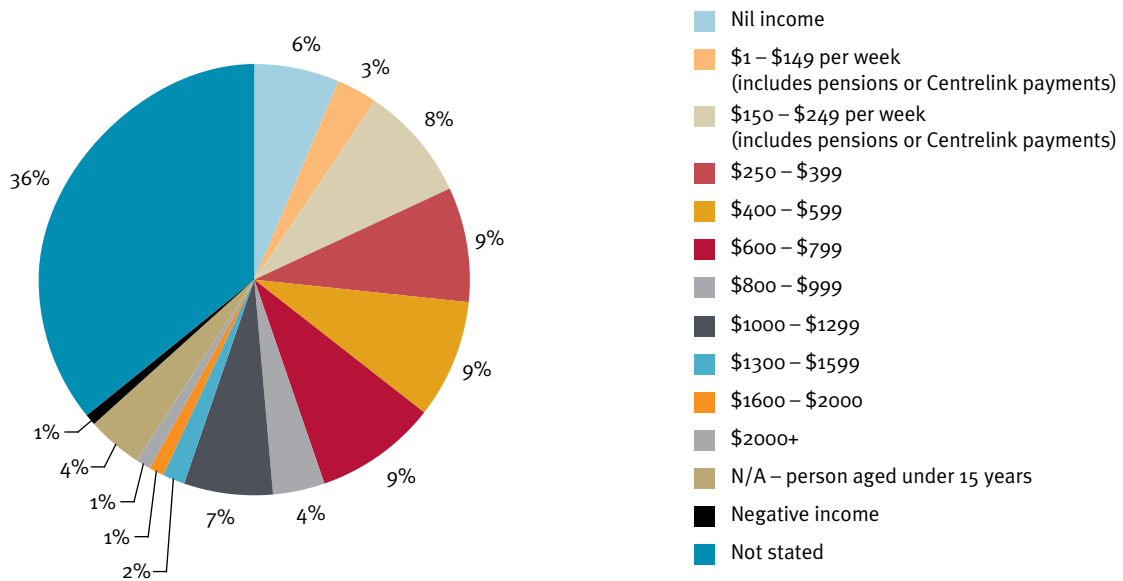


Figure 9: Registered Clients (183,903) Seen by ATSI Status

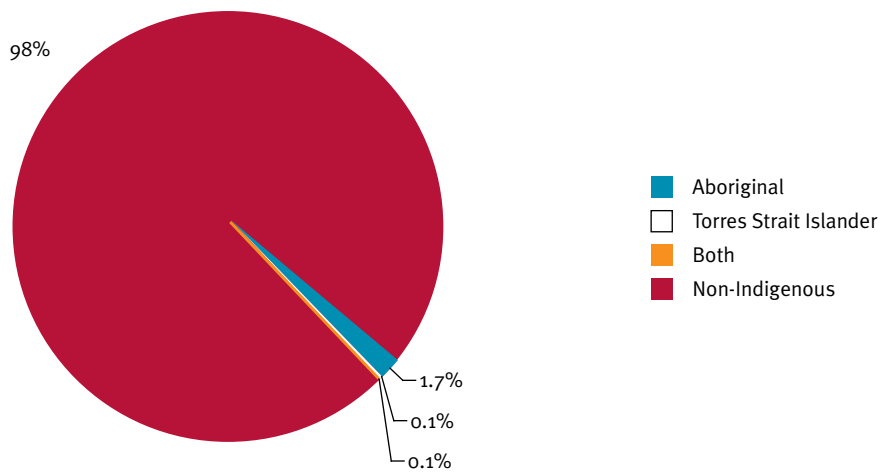
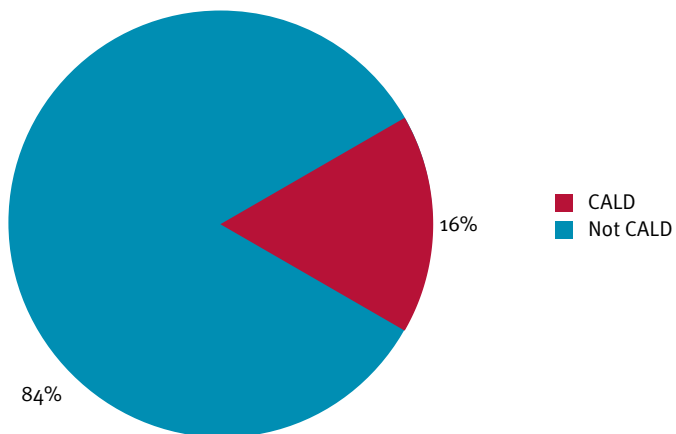


Figure 10: Registered Clients (183,903) Seen by CALD Status



Section Two

Status Reports—A Summary

Section Two provides a summary of quantitative and qualitative data that has been drawn from the 123 Status Reports that were submitted by funded organisations as part of the overall FRSP performance reporting process.

Data presented in this section of the Report is best reviewed alongside the 2006–07 Status Report template that accompanies this Report.

PART 1: Scope of Services

Question 2—Client Target Numbers

Proportion of funded organisations reporting difficulties meeting client target numbers for services 41%

Difficulties reported

1. Staff recruitment/retention
2. Accessing Indigenous/CALD communities/clients
3. Demonstrating that client target numbers have been met—data input/retrieval, FRSP Online
4. Case complexity
5. Introduction of the Medicare counselling rebate
6. Newly funded FRCs coming on line in local areas

Question 3—Client Target Numbers for Specific Client Groups

Proportion of funded organisations reporting difficulties meeting client target numbers for specific client groups 30%

Target groups identified

1. Indigenous
2. CALD
3. Children
4. Men
5. Clients with a disability

Difficulties reported

1. Staff recruitment/retention
2. Accessing Indigenous/CALD communities/clients
3. Lack of specialised support services, for example interpreter services
4. Historical reluctance by target client groups to seek help
5. Fee levels
6. Physical barriers to accessing services such as transport

Question 4—Strategies to Address the Needs of Specific Target Groups

Strategies developed by funded organisations to address the needs of specific target groups

1. Providing additional staff incentives such as:
 - Job sharing
 - Flexible working arrangements
 - Access to specialist training
 - Mentoring
2. Working collaboratively with CALD services/communities
3. Employing Indigenous/CALD staff
4. Employing Indigenous liaison staff
5. Networking/information sharing
6. Promoting services for specific target groups
7. Tailoring individual services and group work to better meet the needs of specific target groups
8. Restructuring fee schedules/reducing fees
9. Providing physical support such as meals, childcare, transport
10. Accommodating the needs of clients with a disability

Question 5—Flexible Models of Service Delivery

Proportion of funded organisations implementing flexible models of service delivery

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Child inclusive practice | 72% |
| 2. Outreach programs | 71% |
| 3. Programs targeting particular client groups | 76% |
| 4. Other | 36% |
| ▸ Father inclusive practice | |
| ▸ Home visiting | |
| ▸ Teleconferencing | |
| ▸ Providing services after hours/on weekends | |
| ▸ Telephone counselling/support | |

Question 6—Referral Process

Proportion of funded organisations reporting issues with the referral process

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Referrals have increased demand for services | 62% |
| 2. Referral agencies have limited understanding of services provided | 40% |
| 3. Difficulty accessing appropriate agencies to support clients | 36% |
| 4. Intensive resources to maintain referral contacts | 28% |
| 5. Client/s unwilling to accept referral | 26% |
| 6. Other—for example, fluctuating Court referral levels | 15% |

Action taken to address referral issues

1. Working collaboratively with other services to develop integrated service responses to client need
2. Networking/information sharing
3. Assisted referrals
4. Developing specialised responses to identified needs

Part 2: Service Delivery

Question 7—Events in the Community

Proportion of funded organisations reporting significant events in the community that have impacted on FRSP service delivery 71%

Types of events reported

1. Reform of the Family Law System and accompanying expansion of the FRSP service system
2. Decreased availability of skilled, experienced staff
3. Natural disasters, for example drought, flood and storms
4. Rising costs of, for example, housing, transport and food
5. Geographical shifts in employment opportunities associated with, for example, the mining boom
6. Introduction of the Medicare counselling rebate

Question 8—Organisational Events

Proportion of funded organisations reporting organisational events impacting on FRSP service delivery 66%

Types of events reported

1. Staff/management turnover
2. Unavailability of experienced, skilled staff
3. Organisational restructure
4. Review of service delivery and professional practice
5. Transitioning from FaCSLink to FRSP Online
6. Expanding service delivery capacity
7. Enhancing internet communication capability

Question 9—Significant Achievements

Significant achievements reported by funded organisations in FRSP service delivery

1. Expanded range and type of FRSP services being delivered
2. Increase in incoming/outgoing referrals
3. Working collaboratively with other organisations to meet specific client need
4. Delivering quality services/achieving positive client outcomes
5. Providing specialised staff training
6. Implementing child inclusive/father inclusive practice
7. Service promotion
8. Building community capacity
9. Enhancing internal information management systems
10. Enhancing internet communication capability

Question 10—Planned Priorities

Proportion of funded organisations reporting an inability to implement planned priorities 37%

Priorities not implemented

1. Staff recruitment/training
2. Enhancing service delivery for specific target client groups
3. Developing new programs/groups
4. Improved internet communication capability

Reasons why

1. Unavailability of skilled, experienced staff
2. Resource constraints—human and financial

Question 11—Barriers to Successful Service Delivery

Proportion of funded organisations reporting barriers to successful service delivery since their last report 53%

Barriers reported

1. FRSP Online—data input and retrieval
2. Client need for physical assistance to access services
3. Resource constraints, human and financial
4. Staff turnover
5. Large geographic catchment areas
6. Unavailability of specialist support services especially in regional and rural areas
7. Involuntary clients
8. Unavailability of interpreter services

Strategies planned to address reported barriers

1. Accessing FRSP Online Helpdesk
2. Providing clients with physical assistance where possible
3. Implementing targeted staff recruitment campaigns
4. Offering flexible staffing arrangements/staff incentives
5. Establishing outreach services
6. Re-allocating available resources in response to emerging priorities

Part 3: Funding**Question 12—Income from FRSP Funding Percentage**

Proportion of funded organisations reporting that the proportion of funds coming into the organisation from FRSP represents more than one third of total income 42%

Question 13—Income from Fees

Proportion of funded organisations collecting income from fees 77%
Proportion of funded organisations expending fee income in the following areas

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Service delivery | 63% |
| 2. Leasing of assets | 3% |
| 3. Purchase of assets | 7% |
| 4. Purchase of capital assets | 3% |
| 5. Increase in staff wages | 9% |
| 6. Staff training and development | 18% |
| 7. Travel | 7% |
| 8. Carried forward to current financial year | 5% |
| 9. Other | 5% |

Part 4: Staffing

Question 18 – Staff Vacancy Time

Proportion of funded organisations reporting no staff vacancy time 33%

Question 19 – Volunteer Numbers

Proportion of funded organisations employing volunteers 30%

Activities undertaken by volunteers

1. Service delivery	11%
2. Support and coordination	7%
3. Administration	11%
4. Fundraising	5%
5. Cleaning/maintenance	6%
6. Other	11%

Question 20 – Complaints Percentage

Proportion of funded organisations reporting complaints concerning FRSP Services 48%

Figure 11: Number of Complaints by Service Type (183,903 Registered Clients)

Service Type	Number of Complaints	Number Resolved	Number Outstanding
EDST	11	11	0
AMFT	4	4	0
FRSC			
MFR	13	13	0
SFVS	1	1	0
Couns	51	48	3
FRSHE			
FDR	21	21	0
RFDR	11	10	1
POP	9	9	0
CCS	49	42	7
FRCs	37	37	0
Administration	1	1	0
Other	3	3	0
Total	211	200	11

Part 5: Evaluation and Review

Question 22— Evaluation and Review

Evaluation or research activities undertaken by funded organisations

1. Client feedback
2. Case reviews
3. Staff reports
4. Audit of compliance against FRSP Approval Requirements
5. Action research
6. Stakeholder feedback
7. Program evaluation
8. Practice evaluation
 - Father inclusive practice
 - Child inclusive practice

Responses to evaluation or research outcomes

1. Conducting service/program/practice evaluation
2. Incorporating service/program/practice evaluation findings into organisational planning and ongoing service/program/practice development
3. Reviewing organisational policy and procedure
4. Implementing child/father inclusive practice
5. Implementing immediate remedial action as required
6. Working collaboratively with all stakeholders

Question 23— Issues Raised by Stakeholders other than Clients

1. The importance of gathering and sharing client outcome data
2. A need for information about FRSP services
3. Service gaps in the local area
4. Client demand/availability of existing services
5. Staff recruitment and retention

Organisational responses to issues raised

1. Service evaluation, sharing findings
2. Networking/information sharing
3. Developing new services/programs
4. Tailoring existing services/programs to respond to identified needs
5. Monitoring the effectiveness of waiting list management strategies

Question 24— Issues Raised by Clients

1. Delays in accessing needed services
2. Fee levels
3. A need for information
4. Ongoing client support
5. Flexible operating hours
6. Unavailability of experienced, skilled staff
7. Access difficulties, for example transport

Organisational responses to issues raised

1. Implementing waiting list management strategies/monitoring their effectiveness
2. Negotiating affordable fees
3. Implementing a client newsletter

4. Tailoring existing services/programs to respond to identified needs
5. Providing after hours/weekend services/programs/activities
6. Ongoing staff recruitment and training
7. Providing physical support such as transport where possible

Question 25— Significant Changes to Service Delivery

1. Enhanced networking/information sharing
2. Working collaboratively with related services
3. Implementing child inclusive practice
4. Improved service flexibility
5. Enhanced capability to respond to the needs of Indigenous clients
6. Implementing new services/programs
7. Inter-agency protocol development
8. Community development
9. Implementing waiting list management strategies

Question 26— Key Priorities for the Coming Year

1. Recruitment and retention of qualified/experienced staff
2. Staff training
3. Maintaining/enhancing service quality
4. Enhancing access to services by key target groups through:
 - networking/information sharing
 - liaison with Indigenous/CALD services and communities
 - working collaboratively with other services
 - developing new services/programs/groups
 - tailoring existing services/programs to respond to identified client needs and service gaps in the local area
 - improving service flexibility
 - expanding service delivery
5. Program review
6. Service promotion
7. Improving capability to respond to Family Law Reforms

Question 27— Issues about the FRSP

Issues raised by funded organisations about the FRSP

Staffing

Recruitment and retention of trained, experienced staff continues to be the most significant issue facing the FRSP services sector.

Relationships

The competitive tendering process has a significant impact on the capacity of organisations to develop and maintain collaborative working relationships.

FRSP Online

The transition from FaCSlink to FRSP Online created difficulties for funded organisations particularly in relation to data input and retrieval. These difficulties impacted negatively on the capacity of funded organisations to demonstrate, for example, that target client numbers were being achieved.

Assistance provided through the FRSP Online Helpdesk to support funded organisations through the transition phase has been invaluable.

Information Provision

Information provided by FaHCSIA, AGD and/or STOs needs to be more consistent.

Funding

Funding allocations for the full range of FRSP service types need to reflect increasing demand for services and complexity of client need.

Specific funding needs to be made available to formally evaluate the effectiveness of FRSP programs and professional practice in local areas.

Funding allocations need to accommodate the administrative burden that additional reporting requirements are placing on funded organisations.

Funding allocations need to accommodate costs associated with working collaboratively to provide an effective response to client need.

Capability to deliver an effective, equitable outreach service is dependent upon funding allocations that reflect geographical size, availability of related support services, population spread and diversity of client need.

Quality Compliance Checklist

The majority of funded organisations reported full compliance with FRSP Approval Requirements. Where partial compliance was identified, a number of organisations described strategies to address compliance gaps.

Case Studies

As mentioned in the section of this Report entitled Report Structure (Page 7), information provided as Case Studies is not suitable for aggregation. Nevertheless, preliminary reading clearly indicates that case studies are a rich source of evidence about “what works” for clients accessing the range of family relationship services that are currently being delivered by funded organisations.

Checklist for Consortium Members

The majority of funded organisations that provided a response to this section of the Status Report, reported full compliance.

Conclusion

The 2006–07 National Report presents data provided by FRSP funded organisations through the Status Report process, and FRSP Online, as a snapshot of the FRSP for the 2006–07 financial years.

This Report will be made available to all funded organisations and its content and future direction in relation to format will be discussed with the FRSP services sector.

Other avenues open to the Departments and funded organisations to access data and share information about the FRSP's performance include:

- FRSP Online reporting portal once this becomes operational
- Chief Executives' Forums
- Family Relationship Services Australia
- the FRSP's Biennial Conference
- regular meetings with staff from FaHCSIA's STOs and funded organisations.

Active participation by key stakeholders in these activities will support the achievement of the FRSP's primary aim—to improve the wellbeing of families and children by supporting positive family relationships through the full range of early intervention and post separation services.

