



The Practice and Policy Unit became a formal reality in April 2002 when Dr John Honner was appointed as its first Director. Prior to this appointment John had been MacKillop Family Services' Co-ordinator of Mission and Social Policy.

The Unit was established to:

- lead practice based research and evaluation;
- implement quality improvement processes;
- promote reflection and learning among staff;
- increase MacKillop Family Services' advocacy and contributions to public debate; and
- develop our capacity to assist in community building projects.

When at full capacity, the Practice and Policy Unit will be linked with the Heritage and Information Service and include a Co-ordinator of Research and Policy, a Co-ordinator of Practice Development, a MacKillop Family Services' practitioner on secondment, and a student on placement.

Several policy papers were prepared, most notably a submission to the Victorian Parliament's Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee on the problems of chronic and young people in care. MacKillop Family Services has also been committed to pilot projects in community building and public housing redevelopment through the Maribyrnong Community Building Advisory Group and the Kensington Estate Community Liaison Committee. MacKillop Family Services continues to be represented in various public advocacy campaigns, including Sorry Day events and the Palm Sunday March for refugees and asylum seekers. The organisation is involved in peak representative bodies like the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria and the Victorian Council for Social Service, and it works together with other agencies and government representatives on many committees aimed at improving the quality of services to the most needy in our community.

A highlight of the year has been the development of closer relations with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) culminating in two representatives of VACCA giving the keynote address at the MacKillop Family Services Gathering in May 2001.

One of the key needs of our staff is to have time and resources to evaluate what they do and to create better services. One of the key roles of agencies like MacKillop Family Services, in terms of policy and advocacy, is to provide an early warning system to governments about needs in the community. Hopefully, the new Practice and Policy Unit will play a significant role in meeting these needs - both in the next year and well into the future.

Staff:

1 Full time

Volunteers

3 students on research and policy internships



John Honner
*Director
Practice and
Policy*