



The Family Inclusion Network of WA



We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather, the Whadjuk people of Noongar Boodjar.

We recognise their continued connection to the land and culture and acknowledged that sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders, Ancestors, and First Nations Peoples here today.

Fin WA wishes to acknowledge the impacts of the Stolen Generation and the deep inter-generational wounds felt to this day.

Ngala kaaditj Whadjuk Noongar
moort, keyen kaadak nidja boodja.

What is FinWA?



- FinWA is an advocacy agency that formed in 2008 from a support group with parents who had children in the out-of-home care system.
- FinWA is a not-for-profit organisation primarily funded by the Department of Communities
- FinWA provides professional advocacy, information and advice.
- FinWA provides peer support

What do we do?



- Fin WA is a dedicated service which provides professional advocacy to families who intersect the child protection system. Our office is based in North Perth however we work across the state, including regional areas
- Our primary role is to assist individual families to participate more meaningfully in the child protection system
- We work hard to ensure the voice of family is elevated through:
 - Systemic Advocacy.
 - Individual case management
 - Peer Work
 - Community development



The child protection system is complex, adversarial, and poorly understood by many services.

Fin WA recognises that advocacy and support offered at the right time, in the right way, can prevent children from entering out-of-home care, and can assist in the reunification of those already in care.

Our Values



Mission:

✨ To have a child protection system that is respectful and inclusive of parents, family and community as key stakeholders ✨

Values:

- Inclusion
- Equity
- Transparency
- Diversity
- Independence
- Partnership

Why the need?



- It isn't possible to separate the parent-child relationship
- Parents and families are the experts in their own lives.
- Families are connected for life – well beyond the time a child spends in care.
- Because parents are central and integral to their children's lives, they need to fully participate in making decisions and finding solutions.
- All parties need to be treated with dignity.
- To participate equally (or at least more fully) parents need timely information, support and advocacy.
- Parents need to be supported to have their voice heard in a system that is complex, overwhelming, legalistic and rooted in power imbalances.



Receive

Receive Requests for Assistance, self-referrals and inter-agency referrals

Wait

Wait list management
Add new cases to wait list based on priority criteria:
Pre-Births
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families
Raised in Care

Provide

Provide advice over the phone – initial steps families can take in consultation with Advocates

Present

Present new cases to Advocates in allocations meetings. Highlighting cases that are high priority

Social Work: Advocate



- Provide one-to-one professional advocacy support and information to parents and families involved with the child protection system.
- Assist parents in working effectively with child protection workers i.e. improve communication between all parties.
- Assist parents to develop the skills and confidence needed to partake equally in the child protection process.
- Aims to help parents to be informed, child focused and maintain meaningful connections with their children.

Social Work: Advocate



Service Provision: Case management

- Assist in the development of:
 - Safety Plans and Identifying Safety Networks
 - Responding Affidavits
 - Complaints (Writing and sending)
- Attend Statutory meetings including:
 - Pre-Birth
 - Stability and Connection
 - Care Plan meetings/reviews
 - Child Protection Mediation Style Conferences
 - Perth Children's Court (Protection & Care matters)

Social Work: Advocate



Service Provision: Case management

- Meeting preparation- explaining how the process looks e.g. pre-birth process
- Informing parents of their rights
- Managing emotions- Providing strategies for managing emotionally difficult situations with the Department
- Brief interventions:
 - One off advice and information about how to navigate the Child Protection System
 - Next Steps – Getting cases moving
 - Understanding and explaining the Department's concerns and how families can address them

Respected and Connected



Fin WA's Family Partner (Peer Work) Program

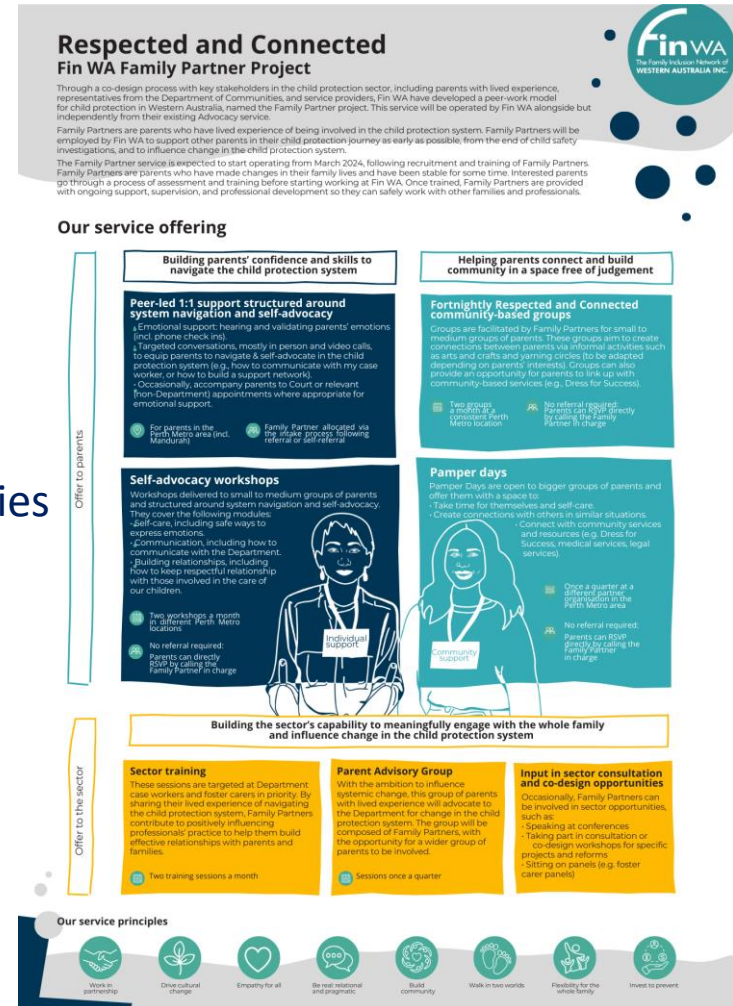
Family Partners (peer workers) in different variations of roles since 2020
2023 – Lotteries West Grant for dedicated design of Peer program

- Research
- Sector forums
- Consultation: Parents, peer worker, DoC & community

2024 Launch of Respected and Connected

Family Partner Role provides support, information & skill building for parents and families
& works towards systems & sector change
Community Support Arm & Individual Support Arm
Both Roles;

- Systems advocacy and change
- Parent Advisory Group
- Consultation and change within the organisation
- Resource development



Community Support- Family Partners



- Fortnightly Respected and Connected community-based groups- specifically for parents involved with child protection
- Training to sector to increase understanding about CP system and effective support of parents
- Training to Department and Foster Carers
- Quarterly Pamper Days for parents
- Resource Development

Individual Support -Family Partners



Emotional and practical support to keep going in the often long and deeply painful Journey within the Child protection system

- Skill Building activities, Information and tips about common issues:
 - Preparing for Department meetings, court, contact visits etc
 - Effective ways to communicate with department & others
 - Assistance to write an emails/letters, complete a complaint, engage with appeal processes
 - Informing of Rights and Responsibilities of parents and families, avenues for participation and appeal
 -
- Support at Children's Court, including:
 - Providing Parent Pack's designed by parents for parents
 - Providing emotional support
 - Informing about CP processes and helpful services
- Self-Advocacy Workshops and sessions

Family Partners Experience of the Role



Positives

- Supportive team, valued for lived experience and knowledge, shaping the program
- Actively challenging stigma in role
- Ripple effect of helping a family for generations
- Ripple effect in own family
- Engaging in and creating opportunities for positive change
- Confidence

Motivations

- Contribute to change on individual and systemic level
- Knowledge is power
- Sense of purpose
- Change social stigma & Break the cycle
- Help families have opportunities for self-determination

Challenges

- Self doubt
- Stigma
- Emotional load
- Self care, work/life balance

AOD misuse

Family violence

Mental health

Poorly
structured and
inadequate
service system

A care
experience

Inequality and
disproportionality

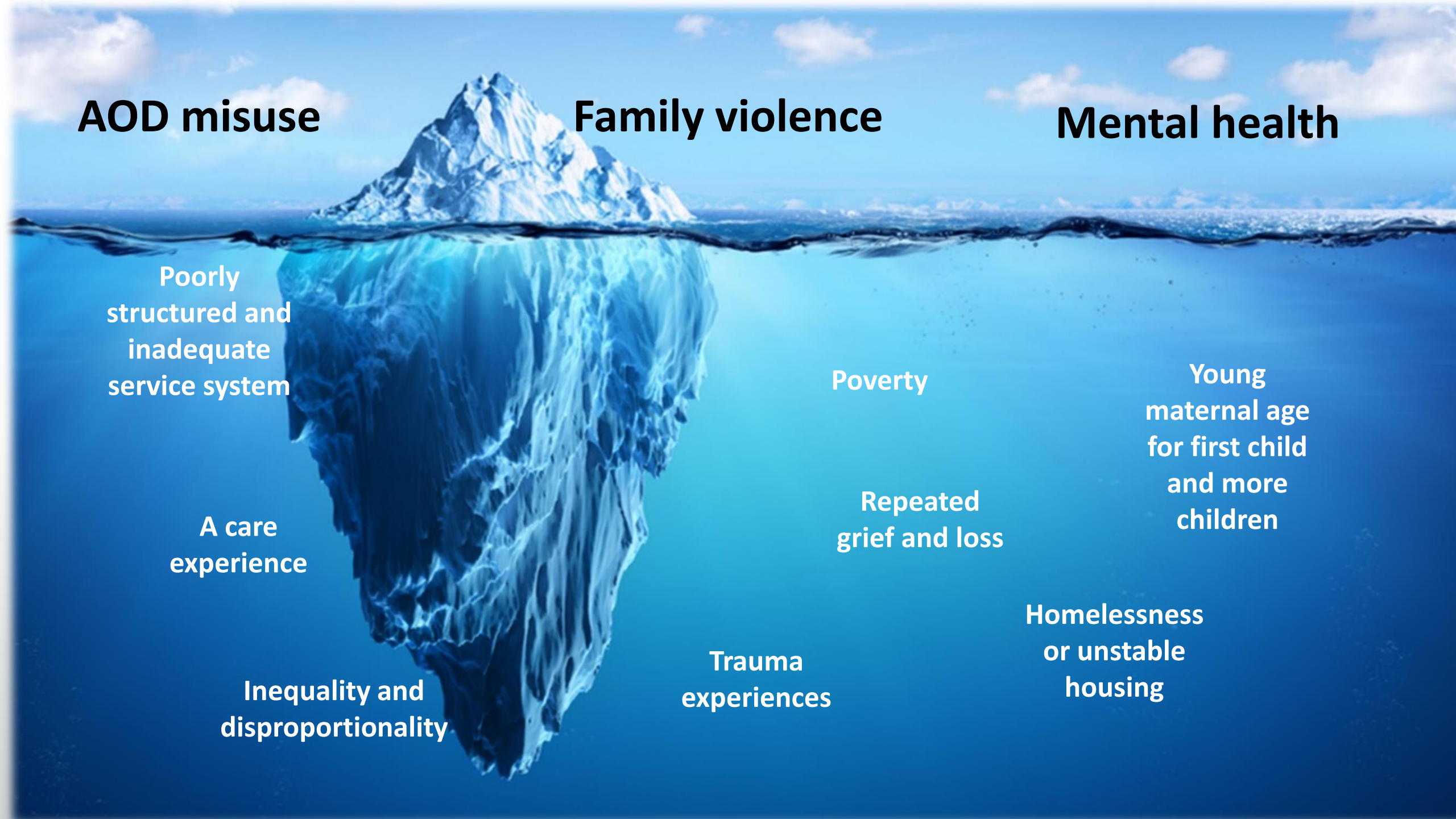
Poverty

Repeated
grief and loss

Trauma
experiences

Young
maternal age
for first child
and more
children

Homelessness
or unstable
housing



Collaboration and Relationships



Non-Adversarial Advocacy: Relational way of working is paramount to the way we operate.

Partnerships/Relationships:

- Department of Communities
- Sector Agencies/Services eg. Wungening, Centrecare, Luma, Cyrenian RUAH
- Legal bodies: Perth Children's Court, Legal Aid & Community Legal Centres
- Hospitals, Refuges and Prisons
- PCAN, CAFWA, WACOSS, FINA
- DDWA and COMWA
- Consultation

Challenges



- Advocacy – Not being adversarial, navigating relationships and communication breakdowns
- Funding – Limited Resources and funding structures rooted in a neo-liberal competitive market approach
- Navigating Systems – Red tape
- Intersectionality
- Case complexity
- Working within a broken system – Gaps in services; historical, political and post-colonial context and power structures
- Policy – Difference in how policy is enacted and ever changing

Family Experiences



Feelings of...

- Shock, anger, despair
- Shame and guilt
- Loss, grief and trauma
- Anguish and deep sadness
- Confusion and fear
- Hopelessness

Isolation:

- Loss of home, income, partner/family
- Sense of identity

Stigma

- Labels of “bad parent” & “bad person”
- Can trigger downward spiral
- Impact of MH and self-confidence

Family Partner Successes



- 2024 Launch of Respected and Connected
 - Co-designed Peer model to embed Peer Work into WA'S Child Protection system
- Charter of Rights for Parents and Families
- Resource Development
- Training to the sector and the Department
- Court Support

Questions

Do you have any questions for us?