

How will the Unit work with ACWA Members?



A State-wide Reference Group of practitioners from the sector has been established to provide advice on current practice, practice gaps, models as well as preferred approaches to training and practice development. The Statewide Reference Group will have a crucial role in advising the Unit's priorities, its approach to dissemination and the implementation of support.

Working Groups will also be established around specific areas of work where specialist knowledge is required from the sector.

The NGO sector is increasingly responsible for a growing proportion and range of service delivery in the child and family welfare area. ACWA's role is to support the sector's capacity to provide high quality services that result in good outcomes for children, young people and families.



The NGO sector has a history of commitment and leadership in the area of quality assurance. The Best Practice Unit (BPU) builds on this history and the expertise already developed by ACWA members across training, practice and research. The BPU will seek to underpin the sector's current growth by developing a workforce building



strategy and developing accessible pathways for professional development for staff within the sector. It will also work with members in identifying best practice models and the

development of an outcomes based evidence based capturing the effectiveness of their work.

Best Practice Unit

How can I be involved?

- Do you have staff with specific expertise in any of these areas?
- Does your agency have tools, resources or policies in this area that you are able to share with the sector?

If so, please contact Dr Wendy Foote, Deputy CEO, on 02 9281 8822 or email wendy@acwa.asn.au

Also, look on our website for the latest Best Practice and Research Forums being held by the Best Practice Unit throughout the year.

For more information about upcoming events and forums, visit the ACWA website.



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Association of Children's Welfare Agencies



Best Practice Unit



About ACWA

The Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) is the NSW non-government peak body representing the voice of community organisations working with vulnerable children, young people and their families. We work with our members, partners, government and non-government agencies and other peak bodies to bring about positive systemic reform that will deliver better outcomes to the lives of children and young people, including those living in out-of-home care.



What is the Best Practice Unit?

The Best Practice Unit (BPU) is distinctive and innovative in that it is based in an NGO peak body and seeks to integrate our research, practice and training capacities to promote best practice. The primary objective of the BPU is to influence practice, focusing its contribution on addressing the practice problems and gaps that are current in the field, based on the advice of our membership. We assume that well-informed member networks provided with relevant training packages, policy advice and active involvement in research represent an optimum way both to spread evidence-based practices and to help foster local knowledge creation and innovation by our member agencies.



How does the Unit align with ACWA's other work?

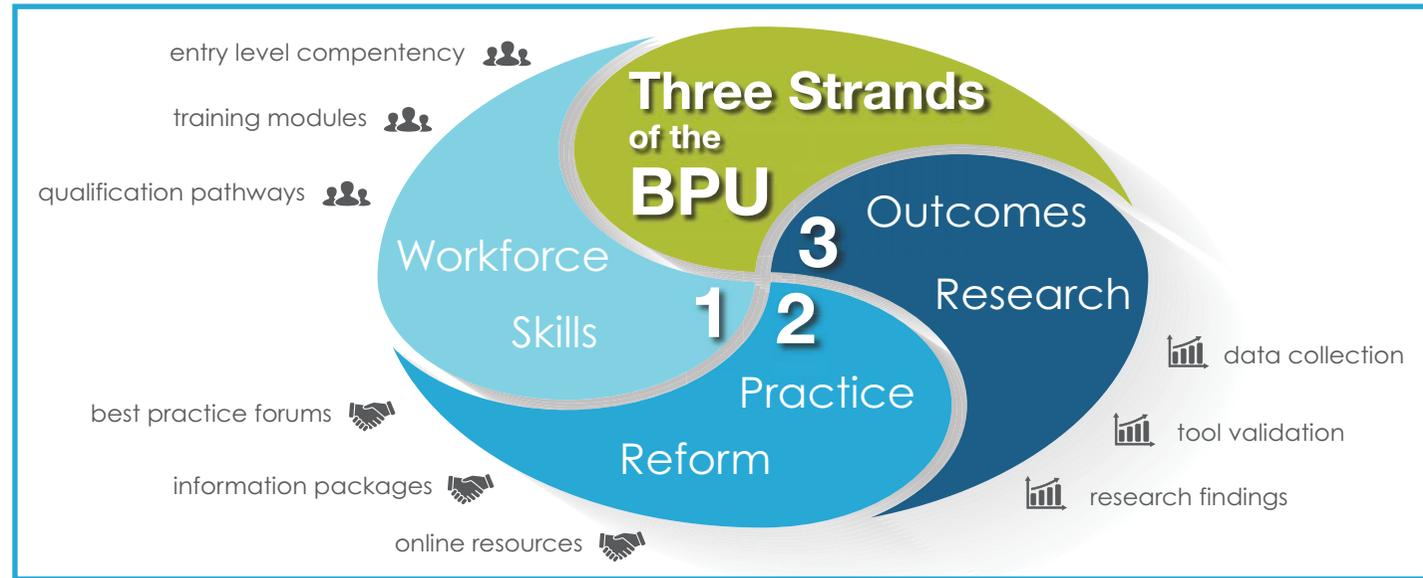
ACWA's Strategic Directions Implementation Plan 2014- 2016 provides an integrated blue print for systems advocacy, policy development, capacity building and member support.

The three tiers of work that have been established for the Unit bring together ACWA's policy and membership, research, and learning and development expertise to support practice within the sector. The first tier will focus on the development of workforce capacity, the second tier will establish practice guidelines and resources focused on the areas of practice impacted on by the Safe Home for Life Reforms. The third tier will build on the current work undertaken within the residential network, as a research project into Therapeutic Residential Care, focused on outcomes for children and young people.



Evidence-based practice

Child protection reform has been based on the premise that the structures, management and approach to delivering frontline services of non-government child welfare agencies can be drivers to innovation in practice (McBeath et al., 2014).



Horwitz et al note that non-government child welfare agencies often introduce new programs or practices but these are rarely evidence-based (2014). Typically agencies rely on knowledge from other child welfare agencies, the advice of expert consultants, what is found in training curricula or the requirements of state funding contracts to generate new programs and practice.

Repeated practice in the field, where there is a rigour in testing, reviewing and refining the practice and its outcomes can result in 'new knowledge' and make a valuable contribution to our knowledge base. (This is sometimes called 'practice wisdom'.)

While there is no consensus on what it meant by best practice, ACWA believes that the adoption of an evidence-based practice approach can lead to the improvement of outcomes for children and their families who live their lives in the child protection system (Kessler, Gira & Poertner, 2005). Evidence-based practices can impact on positive outcomes in safety, permanency and wellbeing for children.



Policy, research and training all have a role to play in identifying and implementing evidence-based practices that will shape the future directions of the child welfare system.