

# Evaluation of the Counting the Kids Brokerage Fund

## Odyssey House Victoria

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*A report on data provided by Odyssey House Victoria  
Institute of Studies*

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*September, 2008.*

*This analysis was funded by Odyssey House Victoria Institute of Studies.*

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# Acknowledgements

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We would like to sincerely thank the following people for their help in facilitating this evaluation:

The staff at Odyssey House: Stefan Gruenert for giving us the opportunity to undertake this evaluation and Jordan Trew for his considerable help with the databases, feedback forms and interview transcripts.

Staff in the Australian Centre for Child Protection who assisted with the preparation of this report: particularly Edwina Farrell.

The workers and families who completed feedback forms, we appreciate the opportunity you have given us to gain insights into the brokerage fund – your views have reinforced the value of this initiative.

# Executive Summary

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## *i. Introduction*

The use of alcohol and drugs is widespread in Australia and across the world (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, 2004; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008; House Standing Committee on Family and Community Services, 2007; Scottish Executive, 2006; US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Even more disturbing is the increase in the number of children living in homes where one or both parents are substance dependent. According to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs in the United Kingdom (UK) (2004), approximately 2-3% of children under 16 years of age have a parent with a drug and alcohol problem. While the exact prevalence of substance misuse in Australian parents is difficult to determine, it has been estimated that approximately 60 000 Australians accessed some form of drug treatment service between 2001 and 2002 (Odyssey House Institute of Studies, 2004). It has also been estimated that 13% of children in Australia aged 12 years of less are exposed to an adult who is a regular binge drinker (Dawe, Harnett, & Frye, 2008). Although not the sole driving factor, parental drug and alcohol abuse is a major contributing factor to notifications and substantiations of child abuse and neglect or child maltreatment (House Standing Committee on Family and Community Services, 2007; Johnson & Leff, 1999; US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999; Walsh, Macmillan, & Jamieson, 2007). As a result, there are deleterious effects on children's lives and their physical, intellectual, social and emotional growth and development are seriously compromised (Vimpani & Spooner, 2003; Walsh et al., 2007, p. 1410). Given the complex lives of these families, simply ameliorating drug and alcohol use does not guarantee a healthy and nurturing environment for children (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999; Vimpani & Spooner, 2003). The importance of working holistically with families in order to address family and parenting issues has therefore been recognised as paramount in the treatment of people who are substance dependent.

Based in Victoria, Odyssey House is a specialist drug and alcohol agency that provides opportunities for positive change and personal growth by reducing the use of drugs and alcohol and reconnecting people to their family and the community. The Counting the Kids (CTKs) Program is delivered by Odyssey House and is a child, family and parenting support program for families where a parent has a drug or alcohol problem. Services for families include counselling and mediation; home based parenting education and support; school holiday activities; recreational and therapeutic support for groups of children; and also the provision of brokerage funds for children. Funded through the Commonwealth's National Illicit Drug Strategy (NIDS) – Strengthening and Supporting Families Coping with Illicit Drug Use (Strengthening Families) Measure, Odyssey House initiated the Counting the Kids brokerage fund in 2006. Initially the fund was offered within Victoria, and subsequently Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. In 2007 and 2008, additional funds were also distributed in Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. The aim of the Counting the Kids brokerage fund is to provide direct assistance to children whose parents are undergoing treatment for illicit drug use and substance abuse. The funds are directed towards resources and opportunities the children would not otherwise have access to.

In March 2008 the Odyssey House Victoria Institute of Studies requested the Australian Centre for Child Protection undertake an analysis of evaluation data regarding the Counting the Kids brokerage fund. The present report describes the results of analysis of the data provided by Odyssey House. Data included a comprehensive database containing information about all applications made to the fund. Data also included 155 evaluation questionnaires (feedback forms from workers and families) describing experiences with the fund, six in-depth interviews with workers, and surveys of four panel members.

## *ii. Key findings from analysis of data provided by Odyssey House*

### *Databases describing details of applications 2006-Round 1, 2008*

The databases made available for the present evaluation were a rich source of information enabling exploration of the characteristics of the workers and agencies making applications to the fund, and the families and children on whose behalf applications were made. The information from the database provided an interesting and valuable story of how the fund developed and changed across the three years of the fund.

There were 428 applications made to the fund over the three years of the evaluation. The number of applications increased substantially from 2007, with the total number of applications received in Round 1 of 2008 amounting to more than all applications in 2006. The increase in the total number of applications was mirrored by the rapid increase in the number of organisations and workers “new” to the fund in 2007 and 2008. The largest number of applications across the three years continued to be from agencies based in Victoria, however, the relative percentage of applications from Victoria was dropping as more applications were received from other states. Applications from Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia showed a steady growth from 2007 to 2008, while applications from Tasmania and the ACT dropped slightly.

Changes in the characteristics of organisations and workers during the three years of the fund included by the present evaluation reflected changes made to eligibility criteria as the fund developed. In particular, the change that made the biggest impact was the decision in 2007 to broaden eligibility criteria to include applications from children residing with family members other than biological parents (e.g. grandparents). Thus, in 2007/8 there were fewer applications from organisations offering drug and alcohol services over the three years, and an increasing number of services offering “other” generic services. As well, fewer workers identified themselves as providing drug and alcohol and “professional” services, with a larger number identifying themselves as providing family support or educational services in 2008. The reasons identified by workers for making applications to the fund also changed, with more applications citing “improving children’s self-esteem” in Round 1, 2008 with correspondingly fewer workers identifying all other types of reasons.

Characteristics of families and children on whose behalf applications to the fund were made also changed over the period of the evaluation. In all years, most children were residing with in single carer households, but many more children were living with their grandmothers, rather than mothers, in 2007 and 2008. Families were somewhat bigger and children a bit older, on average, in 2007/8, than in 2006. Heroin was the most frequently identified type of drug problem for caregivers in 2006, while workers more frequently reported alcohol to be the *primary* problem in 2007/ 2008. Though in all years, alcohol was reported as being misused by more parents than any other substance. Similarly, in 2006 carers were most frequently reported to be receiving drug and alcohol specific services while in 2007/2008 there was more of an even spread of treatment types, with individual services being most frequently recorded, followed by family services. Examination of the index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (a SEIFA Index) showed families from Tasmania and South Australia lived in areas of greatest relative disadvantage, in comparison to families from other states.

The total amount requested from the Counting the Kids brokerage fund increased substantially in 2007, and continued this growth in Round 1, 2008. The total amount *requested* in Round 1 2008 (\$427,902) almost equalled the total amount of funds *granted* in 2007 (\$467,531). The median sum requested for applications also grew in this time (from \$1,564 in 2006 to \$2,700 in 2008). The rapid increase in applications to the fund led to a decision to cap the amount of funds available for applications in 2008 to prevent funds becoming unavailable later in the year. In consequence, the percentage of funds requested that were granted dropped markedly (62% in 2006, 78% in 2007 to 18% in 2008).

Information relating to the types of items requested in applications, and the types of item being granted shows some changes across the three years in which data was collected. Items relating to children's recreational and social activities were more frequently requested in 2006, while homewares and basic needs were more frequently requested in 2007/8. Items relating to health, and education/ learning, were more likely to benefit one child while items relating to family needs, and electronic goods, were more likely to benefit more than one child. The largest amount of funds requested in 2006 were for items relating to recreational and social activities, while in 2007 and 2008 the item category for which most funds were **requested** related to children's education and learning needs. The item category for which most funds were **granted** in 2006 was recreation and social activities. In 2007 the category receiving the largest amount of funds was "educational and learning needs" while in 2008 items relating to children's recreational and social activities again received the most funding. This pattern reflects changing funding priorities, depending upon availability of funds. Greater availability in 2007 enabled grants to be made for the "larger ticket" items such as fees for tutoring. When fewer funds were available, comparatively larger amounts were directed towards items encouraging access to recreational and social activities. This pattern is also reflected in the types of items most likely to be granted or declined across the three years. In 2007 all categories of items were likely to be successful, while in 2008 all were more likely to be unsuccessful.

## *Feedback forms*

Sixty six forms completed by workers who had previously made applications to the CTKs brokerage fund, provided feedback about experiences with the application process. In general, feedback from workers was very positive. Eighty seven percent were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience of applying for a grant. Over 90% felt the support they had been given to make an application was adequate, or more than adequate. Many workers commented upon the ease and clarity of the application process, and were appreciative of the amount of support given by the fund administrator, and other Odyssey House staff. Feedback about barriers or difficulties encountered when completing the fund showed two main area of concern for workers. The first area of concern related to the length of time between making an application and receiving notification of the success of the grant, and also the time between notification and receiving funds. The second area of concern related to the amount of worker time and effort required by the application. When asked to consider the impact of the CTKs brokerage fund, workers suggested the process of application was valuable in facilitating or reinforcing a holistic or “whole of family” focus. The process of making an application process also contributed to closer relationships with clients, and to improved service provision.

Eighty nine feedback forms provided information about the impact of the fund for workers, families and children. Qualitative analysis found workers felt the process of applying to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund had substantially improved their understanding and knowledge of family, carer and child circumstance. Workers also observed how the grant had strengthened bonds between carer and children and led to greater trust and stronger relationships between families, service providers and the community. Many references were made to how the support from CTKs brokerage fund had reduced carer stress and relieved financial strain. Several parents described how this had led them to reduce their use of cannabis and alcohol. Most impacts, however, related to children and in particular to improvements in children’s self-esteem, self-confidence and happiness as a consequence of being able to participate in activities, or of receiving new goods. Feedback suggested the fund gave children opportunities to make new friendships, to receive help with learning issues, and helped children to feel like they “fit in” and have experiences in common with their peers .

## *Worker interviews*

Results of analysis of six in-depth worker interviews supplemented information from the Worker Feedback and Family Feedback forms. All interview participants saw a high need for the fund and were unaware of alternative sources of funding that were equivalent to that offered by the Counting the Kids brokerage fund. The fund was seen to be extremely valuable for families, fostering positive relationships with each other and the wider community. The value of the fund in focusing parental attention on the needs of children was highlighted. The long time taken to complete applications was considered to be a negative consequence for workers, while negative consequences for families related to the time taken to hear about the outcome of their applications, or not receiving the amount of funding that was expected.

## *Online surveys completed by panel members*

Four panel members gave feedback about the panel process (27% of the total number of panel members). Panel members were generally positive about the current panel process, considering that it to be to be constructive and efficient. Some of those who responded to the survey, however, felt that the process of decision-making could be made easier if there was more information relating to the priorities of the fund. Panel members also considered that it was important to workers making applications to consult directly with children and to prepare families for the possibility that not all funds would be granted. Finally, panel members were appreciative of the ability to request more information from workers to assist in understanding family circumstances and to assist in the decision-making process.

### *iii. Conclusions and recommendations*

The analysis of the evaluation findings presented in this report reflects the very high demand for and perceived benefits of the Counting the Kids Brokerage Fund. As the awareness of the fund grows and as a result, the number of applications continues to rise (e.g., applications for the first round of funding in 2008 almost totalling requests for all rounds of funding in 2007) there is also a need for the amounts to be distributed by the fund to increase accordingly, or for eligibility criteria to be tightened. The latter option could serve to disillusion applicants who had previously been able to provide resources for their clients that are not available under any other scheme. The ability of the fund to increase the awareness of practitioners to the needs of children in families in which a parent has a drug or alcohol problem and to address such needs in creative, flexible and holistic ways is of enormous benefit to the field. Any increases in the monetary resources supplied to the fund should be matched by a concurrent increase in personnel to administer the fund – the personalised support provided by Odyssey House staff was highly valued by applicants, and it could be argued, is one of the factors contributing to the culture shift taking place in organisations as they move towards more child-inclusive practice. Future research regarding the Brokerage Fund could examine this and other factors involved in promoting or hampering such cultural shift, and, as identified above, should include outcomes data where appropriate. Disseminating details about the fund and its perceived benefits in the form of research papers, reports and conference presentations is a crucial step in sharing details of promising practices in this field.

Specific recommendations regarding the brokerage fund include:

- Explore ways to reduce the time frame for applications to be assessed (e.g., ongoing assessment processes) and determine the administrative consequences of such a move;
- Consider making a range of payment options available to workers and organisations (including electronic funds transfer options);
- Consider supplementing the evaluation questionnaire with standardised outcome measures (e.g., of measures of child self-esteem; caregiver stress and mental health (i.e. depression), and measures of the quality of the child-parent relationship) as applicable;
- Providing applicants with:
  - examples of previous successful applications,



- access to networks of workers from similar organisations that could consult regarding the process of applications;
- email updates informing of changes to the application process, funding amounts and eligibility criteria; and
- details of alternate contact person if the fund administrator is unavailable;
- Incorporating in the guidelines information about:
  - ways in which clients could become closely involved in the application process,
  - providing families with realistic expectations about the timing and likelihood of receiving funding, and
  - the need to consider the relative stability in clients' lives before applying for funds;
- In the absence of additional resources being made available to the fund, consider prioritising items requested by families; and
- If more funds become available, considering a separate fund for electronic items such as computers and other electronic equipment because of the potential social and educational benefits of these for older children.

# Purpose of the report

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In March 2008 the Odyssey House Victoria Institute of Studies requested the Australian Centre for Child Protection undertake an analysis of evaluation data regarding the Counting the Kids brokerage fund. The brokerage fund aims to provide assistance to children whose parents have experienced, or are experiencing, problems with illicit drug use and substance abuse. The funds assist children to have access to resources and opportunities that might otherwise not be available to them. In addition, the brokerage fund also aims to promote practice and cultural change within drug and alcohol treatment services.

The present report describes the results of analysis of data provided by Odyssey House. Data included a comprehensive database containing information about all applications made to the fund. Data also included 155 evaluation questionnaires (feedback forms from workers and families) describing experiences with the fund, six in-depth interviews with workers, and surveys of four panel members. Results of data analysis will be used to make recommendations regarding the administration of the fund.

*..watching the clients and their kids get  
really good news at the end of years of really bad  
news is a great experience*

# Background

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## *i. Extent of drug and alcohol misuse*

The use of alcohol and drugs is widespread in Australia and across the world (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, 2004; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008; House Standing Committee on Family and Community Services, 2007; Scottish Executive, 2006; US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Even more disturbing is the increase in the number of children living in homes where one or both parents are substance dependent. According to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs in the United Kingdom (UK) (2004), approximately 2-3% of children under 16 years of age have a parent with a drug and alcohol problem. This equates to about 250 000 to 350 000 children. In the United States of America (US), 8.3 million children or 11% of children live with one or both parents who are considered alcohol dependent or in need of treatment for substance dependence (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). As for the UK, 1.3 million children currently reside with parents who engage in harmful drinking (people drinking above sensible levels and experiencing harm) and/or are considered dependent on alcohol (people drinking above sensible levels and experiencing harm and symptoms of alcohol dependence) (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2007).

While the exact prevalence of substance misuse in Australian parents is difficult to determine, it has been estimated that approximately 60 000 Australians accessed some form of drug treatment service between 2001 and 2002 (Odyssey House Institute of Studies, 2004). According to the Odyssey House Institute of Studies (2004, p. 5), “if each of these individuals is also responsible for one child, on average, at least 60 000 children in Australia may be affected by the problematic drug use of their parents” (1.5% of children under 15 years of age). Furthermore, analysis of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children by Dawe and colleagues (Dawe et al., 2006) encompassing over 10 000 children, revealed that 13% of mothers with babies and 19% of women with children aged 4-5 years reported binge drinking 2-3 times per month in 2004..

## *ii. Drug and alcohol abuse and child protection*

Although not the sole driving factor, parental drug and alcohol abuse is a major contributing factor to notifications and substantiations of child abuse and neglect or child maltreatment (House Standing Committee on Family and Community Services, 2007; Johnson & Leff, 1999; US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999; Walsh, Macmillan, & Jamieson, 2007). Families involved with child protection services face a myriad of social problems including mental health disorders, poverty and domestic violence. The interplay of these factors, including drug and alcohol misuse, significantly contributes to child maltreatment (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Among substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect in Australia, it has been revealed that in 50% of cases, one or both of the parents reported problems relating to the misuse of alcohol and drugs (Odyssey House Institute of Studies, 2004). Particularly, in New South Wales, reports to the

statutory child protection agency that involved drug and alcohol abuse concerns reached up to 80% (NSW Department of Community Services, 2005). Similarly, US data shows that the number of families involved with statutory child protection systems and services who have some form of alcohol and/or drug dependence ranged from 50 to 80% (Walsh et al., 2007)

### *iii. Impact on children*

Parental drug and alcohol misuse can negatively impact on children as it diminishes parenting capacity and/or responsibility (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, 2004; Australian National Council on Drugs, 2006; Barnard & McKeganey, 2004; Scottish Executive, 2006). As outlined by Dodd & Sagers (2006), parents who misuse drugs and alcohol may use inappropriate parenting skills, be parenting at a young age, have an undiagnosed mental or emotional illness, lack support, have an intellectual disability and experience family and domestic violence. Combined, these issues place children at risk of not being fully cared for and at risk of child maltreatment.

As a result, there are deleterious effects on children's lives and their physical, intellectual, social and emotional growth and development are seriously compromised (Vimpani & Spooner, 2003; Walsh et al., 2007). Children whose parents use and misuse drugs and alcohol are exposed to significant harm from conception through to their adulthood and are more likely to experience a range of problems. These include Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Foetal Alcohol Effects, abnormal growth and development, poor nutrition, viral infection and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) (Odyssey House, 2004).

Children of parents with substance abuse problems are also at higher risk of misusing drugs and alcohol themselves as adults. Walsh, Macmillan, & Jamieson (2007) highlight the intergenerational cycle of drug and alcohol abuse where children of parents who are substance dependent are placed at greater risk of developing their own drug, alcohol and other problems later on in life. This transmission can mainly be attributed to poor parenting practices including inconsistency, emotional detachment and neglect, lack of resources, mental health problems, family violence and chaotic lifestyles (House Standing Committee on Family and Community Services, 2007; Obot, Wagner, & Anthony, 2001; Odyssey House Institute of Studies, 2004).

Given the complex lives of these families, simply ameliorating drug and alcohol use does not guarantee a healthy and nurturing environment for children (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999; Vimpani & Spooner, 2003). The importance of working holistically with families in order to address family and parenting issues has therefore been recognised as paramount in the treatment of people who are substance dependent.

#### *iv. Working holistically with parents and children*

While many interventions and programs are being implemented which aim to reduce individual drug and alcohol use, much of the literature now recognises the importance of addressing social issues and supporting the wider family involved (Mitchell et al., 2001; US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Effective interventions for substance abusing families require the assessment of parent's capacity and the provision of intensive family support (Odyssey House Institute of Studies, 2004). This is because there are family factors that influence the use and misuse of drugs and alcohol indirectly such as poor parent/child relationships, family disorganisation, domestic violence, family isolation, poverty and poor parental mental health and self esteem (McKeganey, Barnard, & McIntosh, 2002; Mitchell et al., 2001). Therefore, eliminating the drug and alcohol problem alone does not address the other presenting family and social issues. Vimpani and Spooner (2003) highlight that by targeting the drug and alcohol problem of the parent, addressing the needs of the children and also dealing with the family and social issues, positive consequences are likely to follow. These include breaking the intergenerational cycle of drug dependence, poor parenting practices and children's and young people's involvement in harmful drug use. In taking this approach, parenting capacity can also be increased and outcomes for children improved, particularly if support is provided early on in children's lives (Odyssey House Institute of Studies, 2004).

#### *v. Rationale for the Counting the Kids brokerage fund*

The provision of support to families and children where a parent is undergoing treatment for drugs and alcohol is one of the main objectives of Odyssey House. Based in Victoria, Odyssey House is a specialist drug and alcohol agency that provides opportunities for positive change and personal growth by reducing the use of drugs and alcohol and reconnecting people to their family and the community. Odyssey also has an extensive research and training program encouraging child inclusive practise in AOD services including the "Nobody's Clients" project and the parenting toolkit for AOD workers. The Counting the Kids Program is delivered by Odyssey House and is a child, family and parenting support program for families where a parent has a drug or alcohol problem. Services for families include counselling and mediation; home based parenting education and support; school holiday activities; recreational and therapeutic support for groups of children; and also the provision of brokerage funds for children.

Funded through the Commonwealth's National Illicit Drug Strategy (NIDS) – Strengthening and Supporting Families Coping with Illicit Drug Use (Strengthening Families) Measure, Odyssey House initiated the Counting the Kids brokerage fund in 2006. Initially the fund was offered within Victoria, and subsequently Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. In 2007 and 2008, additional funds were also distributed in Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland.

The aim of the Counting the Kids brokerage fund is to provide direct assistance to children whose parents are undergoing treatment for illicit drug use and substance abuse. The funds are directed towards resources and opportunities the children would not otherwise have access to. Applications to the fund are assessed according to four criteria:

Criterion 1:

- the child's prospects of participating in pro-social activities,
- the child's health,
- the child's educational development or employment prospects,
- the child's connectedness to the community or their family,
- the child's self esteem and well-being.

Criterion 2: The grant will provide a sustainable, long-term benefit to the child.

Criterion 3: Other avenues of funding or services are unavailable, insufficient or otherwise inappropriate.

Criterion 4: The application demonstrates that the worker has invested substantial effort to ensure the application is appropriate for the individual children and family, in accordance with the guidelines available on the brokerage fund website.

In addition to providing assistance to children, the fund also aims to promote practice and cultural change within drug and alcohol treatment services. In particular, it encourages a greater awareness of the families' needs as a whole rather than just focusing on the person directly affected by drug and alcohol. The funds also provide an incentive for drug and alcohol treatment practitioners to better identify and respond to the needs of their client's children.

*(The fund) has helped broaden the focus on the needs of the family and heightened awareness of the economic impact on children of their parents' drug use.*

# Administration of the fund

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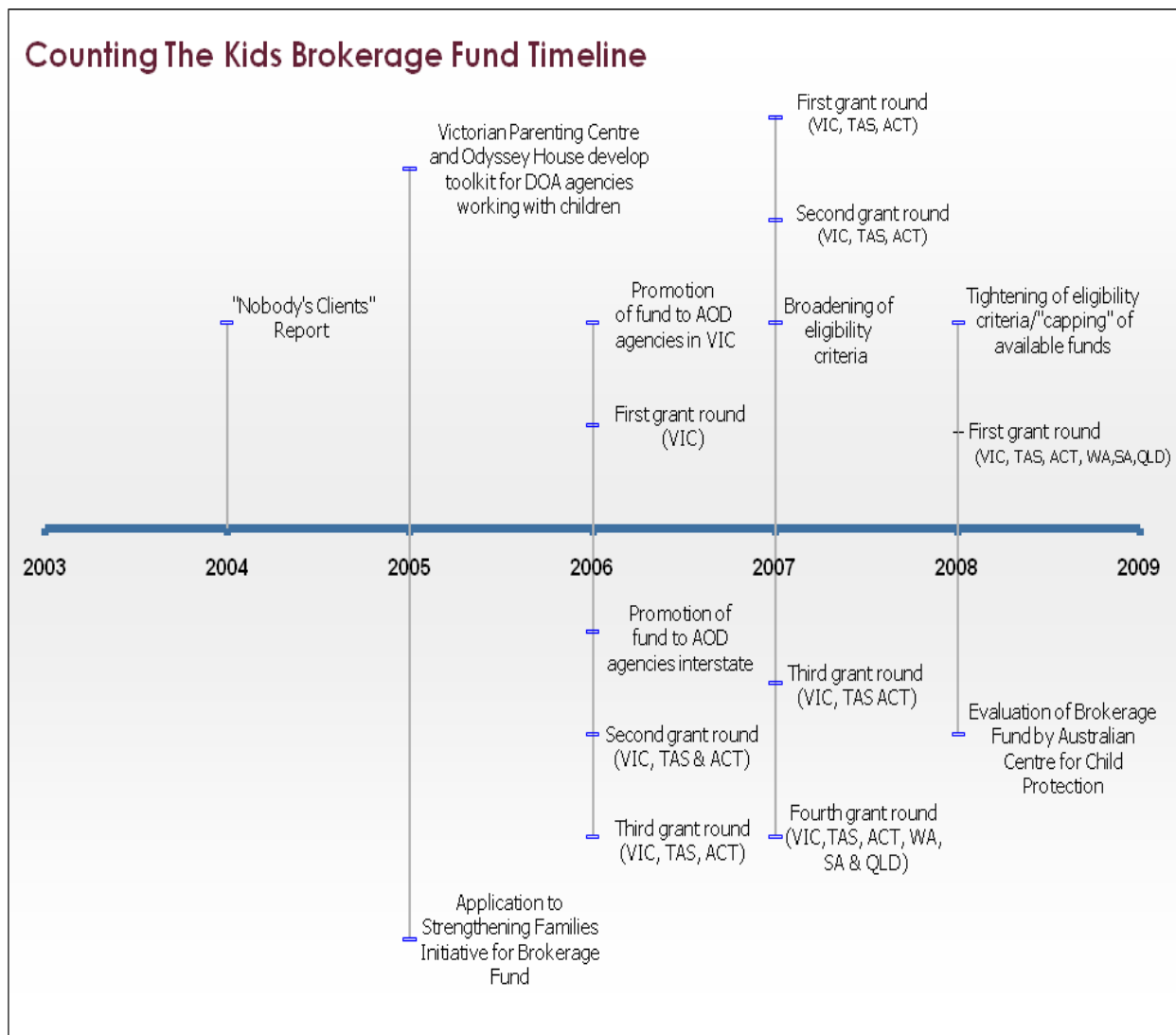
The brokerage fund has been promoted through site visits to alcohol and other drug (AOD) agencies, through broadcasts emailed to peak bodies and other distribution lists, postcards distributed at conferences, websites and visits to other sites and meetings. Word about the fund has spread from the initial promotion amongst the drug and alcohol sector. Applications to the fund were initially accepted from organisations based in Victoria, but over time the fund has been extended to other states. The first round of 2008 included applications from Victoria, ACT, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia.

The administration of the Counting the Kids (CTKs) brokerage fund has evolved since it was first created in 2006, with funding and guidelines being adapted in response to feedback from clients and workers making applications to the funds. In excess of \$600,000 in funds was disbursed through the fund during the period covered by the present evaluation (2006, 2007 and 2008). Three funding rounds were held in 2006 and four rounds were held in 2007. The evaluation also included results for the first round of funding carried out in 2008. Initially there was limited fund disbursement – in the first two years, 10-20% of the funds were used, and then 20-30% when restricting eligibility to families where an AOD worker was involved and where children were residing with a parent with an AOD issue. Subsequently the fund was opened up to include children residing with their grandparents, to other workers and to other states. An administration allowance was also incorporated into the funding to compensate agencies for some of the costs involved in applying for and administering the funds. Grants were initially limited to \$4,000 per child per year, but with the growing number of applications to the fund, maximum allocation amounts were lowered for the Round 1, 2008 and eligibility criteria were again restricted to applications made by AOD workers. Figure 1 presents a timeline showing the development of the fund.

Odyssey House administers the application and funding processes associated with the Fund, but funding decisions are made by small panels based in Victoria, Tasmania, the ACT and SA. Panel members were initially selected in consultation with staff from the Department of Families and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (currently FaHCSIA). Members included senior management from child and family health, welfare organisations, child protection, peak parenting organisations, education and academic institutions. It was intended that the panels should have a range of perspectives covering health, education and family support. Members were also chosen from outside of the drug and alcohol field to provide the least conflict of interest. Non-government panel members are paid a sitting fee of \$750 for each funding round. Panel members from Victoria met each round to assess applications. Panels from other states had an initial meeting and then assessed applications by mail or email. All applications were assessed in relation to the four selection criteria described above.

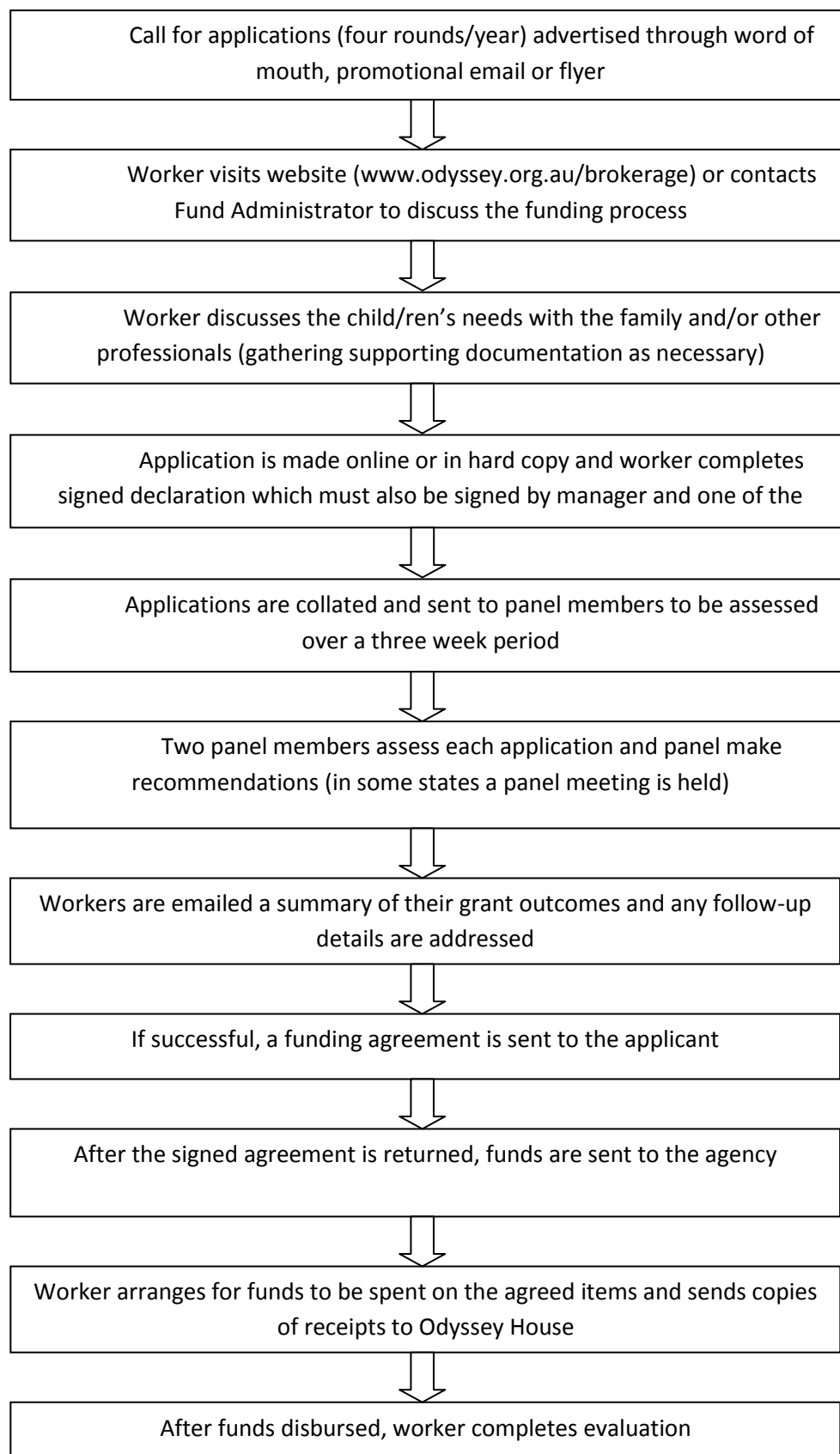
A diagram of the application and administration processes associated with the Fund can be seen in Figure 2. Application forms and guidelines are attached as Appendices A and B. Most applications

are completed online, resulting in costs savings to the fund. After the purchase of items for the family, each applicant is expected to complete an evaluation in which they reflect on the application process and the impact the funds have had for their client’s family as well as seeking feedback directly from the family themselves (see Appendix C for copies of the Worker Feedback form and the Family Feedback form).



**Figure 1. Timeline of changes to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund**





**Figure 2. Outline of application and funding process for the brokerage fund**

# Methodology

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## Data sources and analysis

The analysis was conducted on data provided by Odyssey House, Victoria. Data was de-identified prior to being received by the Australian Centre for Child Protection.

Data consisted of:

1. Two Microsoft Access databases containing information obtained from applications submitted to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund. Information included:
  - Details of the 428 applications made to the fund between 2007 and early 2008 (e.g. reasons for the application, amounts and items requested)
  - Details of workers and agencies making the applications (e.g. worker background and services provided by agencies)
  - Details of the children and families represented in the applications (e.g. gender and age of the child, relationship of caregiver to child, address, drug and alcohol issues of parents)
  - Results of the applications (e.g. whether items were granted and amounts granted).

Information from the database was analysed using Microsoft Access and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 12.0.1.

Items included in the applications were coded according to the type or category of item according to criteria identified with the help of Odyssey House staff. Coding criteria are included in Appendix D. Inter-rater reliability was identified by having a second researcher independently code items. Coders agreed on the coding of 1641 items (97% agreement rate). Items which were discrepant were subsequently resolved through discussion. In particular, items relating to family day care were moved from the “education” category” to the “family well-being” category.

2. Survey forms ( $n = 66$ ) completed by workers involved in making applications (**Worker Feedback forms**-see Appendix C). The forms were completed by workers after the grant process had been finalised and were intended to obtain evaluative feedback about the application process and the impact of the grants. Two questions required workers to use a 5 point rating scale. The first question asked workers to rate their overall experience of applying for the grant (1= very dissatisfactory to 5= very satisfactory). The second question asked workers to indicate the adequacy of the support in applying for the grant (1=not at all adequate to 5 = extremely adequate).

The remaining questions on the Worker Feedback form related to worker experience of the process of applying for the grant, and to perceived impact on agency/ worker practice.

Responses to these questions were open-ended, and responses were coded using the *QSR NVivo 8 software package*, designed to assist in qualitative data analysis. Responses to each of the questions were transcribed and then coded for common themes. Some responses were considered to illustrate more than one theme (or category of responses). Inter-rater reliability checks were undertaken to ensure coding was meaningful and consistent, and to also check that each response was appropriately coded. Results of inter-rater reliability found 97% agreement on the placement of responses within each of the themes. Disagreements about the placement of a response were subsequently resolved by discussion (three items remained unchanged; three items were coded for an additional theme; one item was “uncoded” from a theme).

3. Survey forms ( $n = 89$ ) completed by workers, but included feedback from caregivers and children (**Family Feedback forms**-see Appendix C). The first question on the Family Feedback form asked workers to comment on things they had learnt about the family during the application process. Remaining questions asked for worker, carer and child feedback about the perceived impacts of receiving the grant. Responses to these questions were free-form, and as before, responses were coded using the *QSR NVivo 8 software package*. Responses to each of the questions were transcribed and then coded for common themes (or categories of responses). Some responses were considered to illustrate more than one theme. Inter-rater reliability checks were again undertaken to ensure coding was meaningful and consistent, and to also check that each response was appropriately coded. Results of inter-rater reliability found 93% agreement on the placement of responses within each of the themes. Disagreements about the placement of a response were subsequently resolved by discussion (four items remained as is; 16 items were coded for additional themes; six items were removed from themes).
4. Transcripts of in-depth interviews held with workers ( $n = 6$ ) from a range of organisations that had made application to the CTKs brokerage fund. The interviews were intended to provide more detailed information about the application process and impacts of the grants. Workers were chosen on the basis of having made a number of applications to the fund, to ensure a breadth of experience with the process, and they had also expressed an interest to the CTKs fund administrator, in giving feedback.

Interviews were carried out by a researcher from Odyssey House, by telephone. Interviews took between 60-120 minutes. The interview schedule comprised 85 questions, organised around several key themes (see Appendix E). Themes related to: the need for the fund; consequences of the fund for workers and families; the application process; and suggestions for improvements to the fund. A copy of the interview schedule is included in Appendix E. Interviews were audio-recorded and yielded 108 pages of transcript. Content analysis of the transcripts was undertaken to summarise the main issues raised by respondents, around key themes.

5. Feedback from an online survey (Appendix F) sent to a selected number of panel members ( $n = 4$ ). The survey invited panel members to contribute feedback about the panel process,

and the administration of the fund. Content analysis of responses was undertaken to summarise the responses to questions.

6. A number of vignettes describing families who had been recipients of funding from the CTKs brokerage fund. Families were selected as being representative of the broader range of families who made applications to the fund during the period of evaluation. The vignettes illustrate the kind of issues facing parents who have drug or alcohol dependency, the difficulties this causes for children, and the consequences of receiving funds from the Counting the Kids brokerage.

Results of analyses will be presented in following sections, starting with results from the database; followed by the worker and family feedback questionnaires; the in-depth worker interviews; and finishing with information from the survey of panel members. Each section will conclude with a brief summary of key findings. The family vignettes will be included throughout the present report.

***The process of thinking through what needs exist and why is helpful, and if rewarded by funding is ideal.***

## Research Limitations

This report relies on data collected by Odyssey House Institute of Studies for the purposes of evaluating the CTKs brokerage fund. Because Odyssey House is also the administrator of the funds, it is possible that a positive response will have been obtained with those who were more satisfied with the funding process returning evaluation data or providing more positive feedback than they may otherwise have given to an independent evaluator. Also, applicants who had not had any successful funding applications were not required to complete the evaluation, and this means that there may be other views about the brokerage fund that are not represented in this report.

The timing of the evaluation also means that those who applied for funding in Round 1 2008 may be under-represented as successful applicants may not have had an opportunity to disburse funds from this round. This is of particular interest because applicants were more likely to only have partially funded applications in this period compared with previous rounds of funding.

The response rate for evaluation surveys is quite low, reflecting the time-pressured nature of the work of practitioners and the requirements that evaluations obtain data from family members. The low response rate means that the results may not be generalisable to all who received funding over the three years of the fund. The timing of the evaluation varied from practitioner to practitioner, meaning that some benefits of the fund may not have been observed at the time of the evaluation.

# Family Vignette 1

## The B Family

Ms B and Mr B have three children. Ms B also has two older children who reside with their father. Ms B and Mr B have both used illicit drugs. Ms B started using when she was first introduced to drugs by her father at the age of 12 years. Ms B changed her life when her eldest daughter became seriously ill. Mrs. B. moved into residential rehabilitation with her daughter and stayed in the centre for 12 months. Since this time both she and Mr B have continued on a methadone program. They have recently separated but share the care of their three children and are supporting each other following the loss of their daughter.

The Odyssey House fund made a significant difference to this family. The children all have adequate bedding, warm clothing, educational tools and storage. With the funding Mr B was able to purchase furniture so he could have the children visit at his new home. One child has a number of medical needs. The family are now able to access taxis and buses to attend these appointments.

# Results

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## *i. Counting the Kids brokerage fund database*

### *Overview*

Databases containing records for each application made to the Counting the Kids (CTKs) brokerage fund have been maintained by the fund administrator. The databases were made available for analysis, to contribute to the evaluation of the fund. One database included information for applications made in 2006, and the second database included applications made during 2007/8. The databases evolved over time so information for 2007/8 was most detailed. As well, some information in the 2006 data base, in particular, was missing due to technical shortcomings of the online application form which have since been rectified.

The databases were a rich source of information, providing a detailed description of all applications, the families and children for whom they were intended, the workers and agencies making the applications, and funds distributed.

The following is a summary of the analysis of the databases, covering:

- The number and characteristics of applications received by the brokerage fund;
- Characteristics of the agencies making applications;
- Characteristics of workers making applications;
- Characteristics of the families and children for whom applications were made; and
- Details of the amount of funds distributed by the fund.

## Number and characteristics of applications made to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund

A total of 428 applications were made to the between 2006 and the first round of applications assessed during 2008. The following shows the number of applications made for the years included in the evaluation, and for the different rounds included in each year:

**2006:** Total of 81 applications (some details missing for 4 applications)

Round 1	25
Round 2	26
Round 3	26

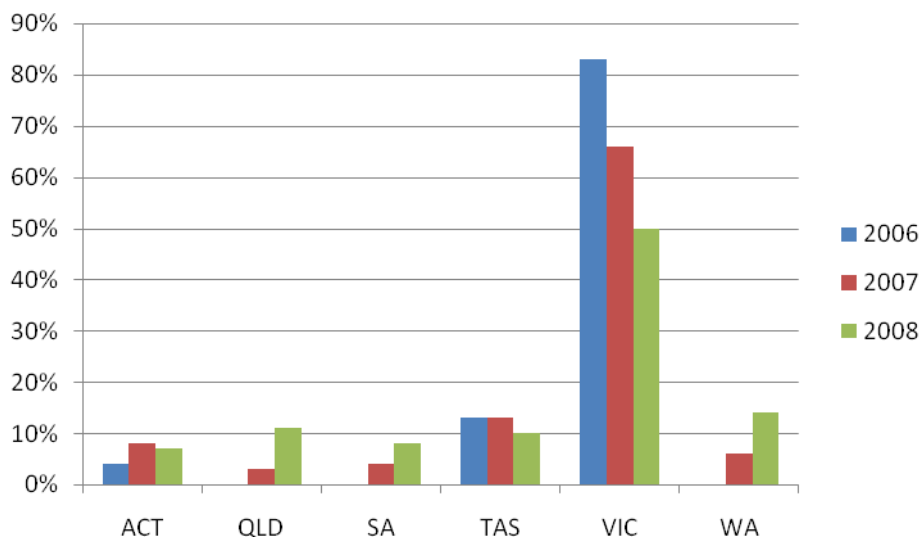
**2007:** Total of 219 applications

Round 1 (January -March)	16
Round 2 (April-June)	65
Round 3 (July-September)	43
Round 4 (October-December)	95

**2008:** Total of 128 applications to date

Round 1 (January-March)	128
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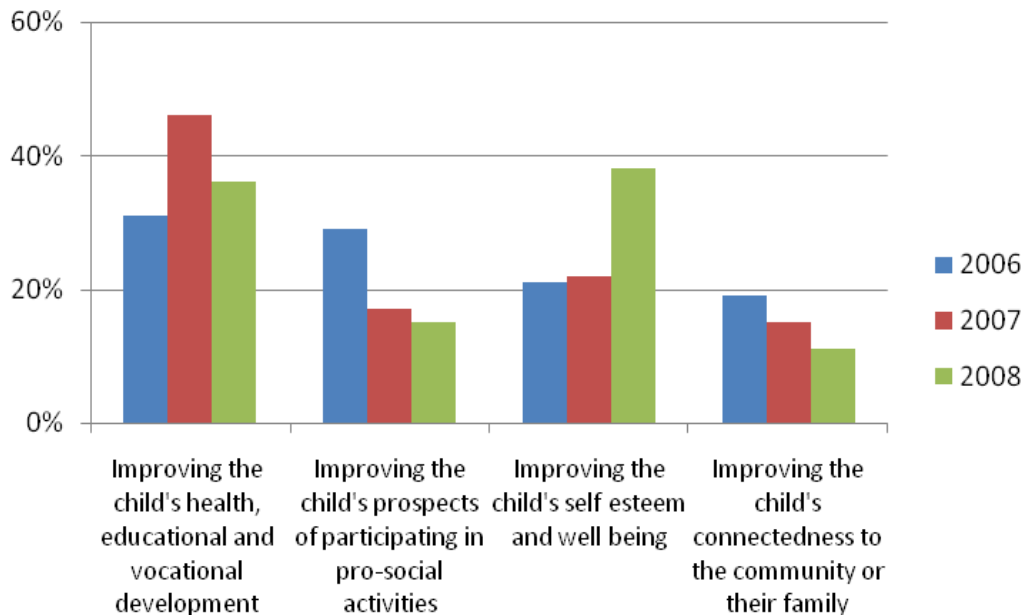
Figure 3 shows the distribution of applications from different states made during 2006, 2007 and 2008, controlling for number of rounds per year:



Note. TAS and ACT included from Round 2 2006; WA, QLD and SA included Round 4 2007.

**Figure 3: Percentage of total applications per state in 2006, 2007, and 2008**

The database asked workers to record using pre-coded categories, the primary purpose for each application. Figure 4 shows the number of workers indicating the purpose of grants for each year included in the evaluation (controlling for number of rounds within any given year):



Note. 2006 – missing data for 25 applications; 2007 – missing data for 4 applications; 2008 – missing data for 3 applications.

**Figure 4: Percentage of application purposes for 2006, 2007, and 2008**

*In summary, information from the databases shows the number of applications to have increased substantially over time. The number of applications received in Round 1 2008 was the largest number of applications received from all Rounds, and in total amounted to more than all applications for 2006. The largest number of applications continues to be from Victoria, but the percentage of total applications from Victoria dropped over 2007 and 2008 as other states were introduced to the fund. In Round 1, 2008, the proportion of applications from Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia were greater than the number of applications received from these states in 2007. The number of applications from Tasmania and the ACT, however, would not appear to be growing at the same rate. The primary reasons for applications would also seem to be changing somewhat over the years, with more workers identifying the aim of “Improving children’s self-esteem and well-being” in 2008 and fewer identifying “improving the child’s prospects of participating in pro-social activities” and “improving the child’s connectedness to the community or their family”.*



## *Information about the organisations making applications to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund*

The following information describes characteristics of the organisations involved in making applications across the three years included in the evaluation. It was not possible to identify whether organisations from 2006 also made applications in 2007/8.

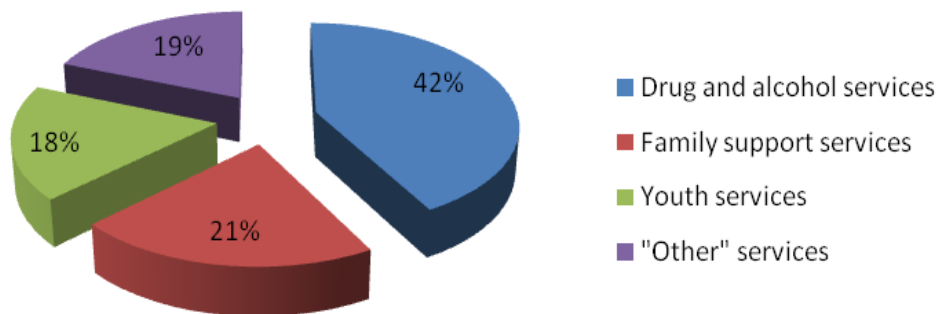
In **2006** there were 26 organisations making applications to the fund. Individual organisations made between 1 and 27 applications. The organisation making the most applications was Victorian based and provided drug and alcohol services.

Information about characteristics of organisations was limited in the 2006 database. Most organisations ( $N=15$ ; 58%) were recorded as providing drug and alcohol services, followed by organisations offering child, family or youth services ( $N=8$ ; 31%). Data was missing for 3 organisations.

The 2007/2008 database asked workers to indicate the range of services offered by their organisations (using nine pre-coded categories), with a median of three services offered by organisations in both years.

In **2007** there were 110 organisations making applications to the fund. Individual organisations made between 1 and 21 applications. The organisation making the most applications was Victorian based and offered family support and youth services. Most (69%) of the organisations made only one application, 14% made two applications, 7% made three applications and 10% made four or more applications.

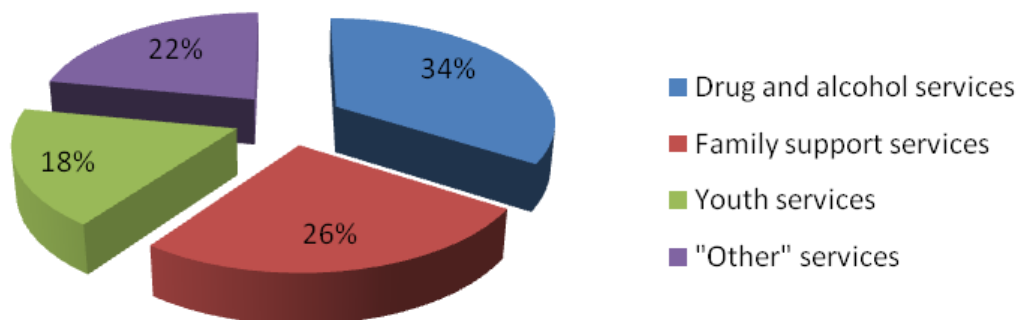
Figure 5 shows the range of services offered by organisations in 2007. The general category “drug and alcohol services” was created by combining several of the pre-coded categories used by Odyssey House (including: counselling, residential programs, pharmacotherapy, withdrawal programs, rural programs, and needle syringe programs). The pre-coded category “other” was used by workers when other categories did not describe services offered by their particular organisation.



**Figure 5: Percentage of organisations offering different types of service in 2007**

In Round 1 of **2008** there were 80 organisations making applications to the fund, 27 had made applications previously in 2007, 53 were “new” organisations to the fund (i.e. not involved in previous applications). Individual organisations made between one and 7 applications. The organisation making the most applications was ACT based and offered family support and “other” services. Most (69%) of organisations made only the one application, 20% made two applications, 2% made three applications and 9% made four or more applications.

Figure 6 shows the range of services offered by organisations in 2008.



**Figure 6: Percentage of organisations offering services in 2008**

*In summary, information about the types of organisations making applications to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund reflects the rapid increase in applications that occurred during 2008. The number of organisations “new” to the fund in the first round of 2008 was almost half of the total number of organisations involved in making applications in 2007. As well, it would appear that the types of organisations making applications had changed over the course of the three years, reflecting changes to eligibility criteria. There was a decreasing proportion of applications from organisations offering drug and alcohol services over the three years, and an increasing proportion from services offering “other” generic services*

*It has become apparent to our agency that this funding has been invaluable to the families we have been able to approach so far.*

## *Information about the workers making applications to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund*

The following information described characteristics of the workers involved in making applications across the three years included in the evaluation.

In **2006**, 34 workers made between 1 and 27 applications to the fund. The worker making the most applications was employed in the drug and alcohol sector based in Victoria. Most (62%) of workers made only the one application, 23% made two applications, and 15% made more than two applications (median=1).

Within any given organisation in 2006 there were between 1 and five workers making applications to the fund. The organisation that had the most workers making applications was a community health centre.

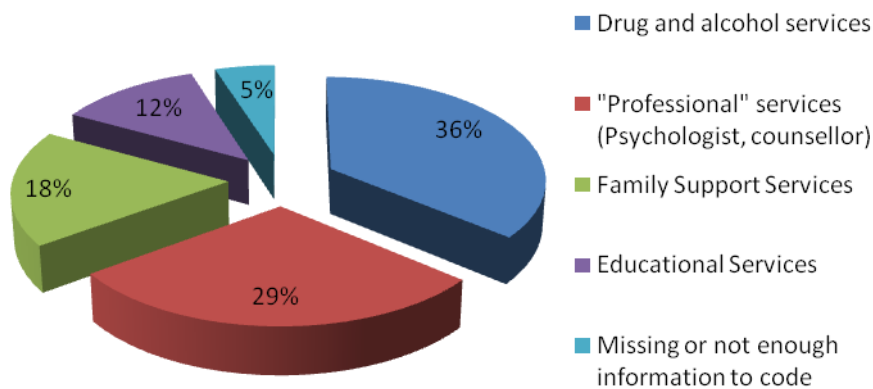
In **2007/2008**, a total of 240 workers made between 1 and 11 applications (in some cases more than one worker was involved in making an application). Twenty four (10%) workers made applications in both 2007 and 2008. One worker made 11 applications across both years. This person was in an administrative role making applications on behalf of a small organisation offering family support/youth service/and “other” services. Most (78%) of workers in 2007/2008 made one application only, 12% made two applications, and 12% made more than two applications (median =1).

When considering 2007 and 2008 separately, in **2007** 142 workers made between one and 11 applications to the fund. The worker making the most applications was an educator in an organisation offering drug and alcohol services in the ACT.

In Round 1 of **2008** 93 workers made between one and seven applications to the fund. The worker making the most applications was the manager of family support programs in an organisation offering family support services, based in the ACT.

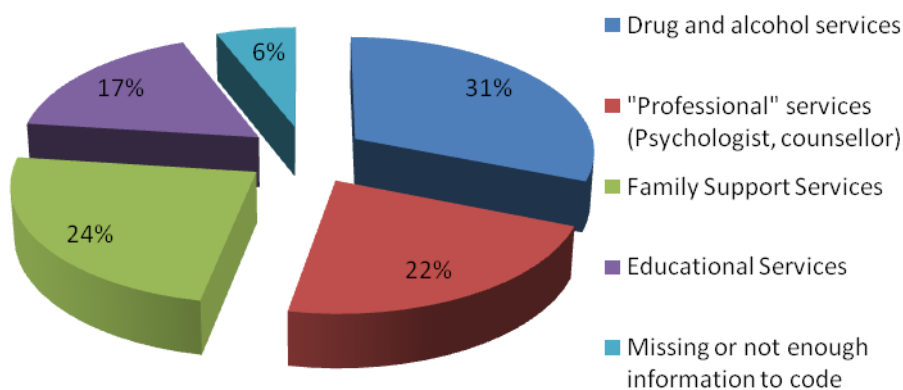
Within any given organisation in 2007/2008 there were between one and eleven workers making applications to the fund. The organisation that had the most workers making applications was a mid sized Victorian based organisation providing a range of drug and alcohol services.

The 2007/2008 database included information about the types of services offered by workers. Information was coded according to main categories of services. Figure 7 shows the range of services offered by workers in 2007 (one service per worker).



**Figure 7: Percentage of workers offering services of different types in 2007**

Figure 8 shows the range of services offered by workers in 2008 (one service per worker):



**Figure 8: Percentage of workers offering services of different types in 2008**

*In summary, information relating to the characteristics of workers making applications to the Counting the Kids fund reflects the rapid increase in numbers of applications in 2007 and particularly, 2008. The number of workers making applications in 2008 was almost two thirds of the total number of workers making applications in 2007. While it was not possible to examine the number of workers making applications across the three years of the fund, the majority of workers in 2007 made only the one application, and only a small number of workers have thus far made a second application in 2008. More workers identified themselves as providing family support or educational services in 2008, with fewer identifying themselves as providing drug and alcohol and "professional" services in 2008.*

## *Characteristics of families and children for whom applications made to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund*

### **Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has produced a number of indexes based on 2006 Census data which measure the level of 'disadvantage' in any given area. These are known collectively as the 'SEIFA' indexes (Socio-Economic Indexes For Areas). The Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage is a continuum of advantage (high values) to disadvantage (low values), and is derived from Census variables related to both advantage and disadvantage, such as household income, education, profession, household and dwelling size. The Australia-wide average for the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage is 1,000, with a standard deviation of 100. An area with a score below 1,000 can be considered relatively disadvantaged, and an area with a score above 1,000 can be considered relatively advantaged. The further away from 1,000 the scores are, the more or less disadvantaged the given area is.

The databases used for the evaluation included information about the postcodes recorded for caregivers of children for whom applications were made. This information was used to identify the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage, for applications made in 2006, and 2007/2008. Scores were identified from postcodes recorded for caregivers living in different households, for all applications for which this information was available.

In **2006** the Range for the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage for all caregivers for which this information was available (excluding caregivers living in the same household) was 807-1126 (Mean = 991, SD= 71, Median = 989). In **2007/8** the range for all was 788-1149 (Mean = 983, SD= 71, Median = 973). This information suggests families (caregivers and children living with them) for whom applications were made to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund between 2006 and 2007/2008 were likely to live in areas of relative disadvantage.

Table 1 reports scores for the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage for different states, for 2006 and 2006/2007.

**Table 1: SEIFA scores for applications made in different states 2006 and 2007/8**

<b>2006</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>	<b>Median</b>
VICTORIA	42	841-1117	994 (67)	1002
*TASMANIA	15	807-1056	958 (62)	973
*ACT (missing information for 17 applications)	3	1066-1126	1106 (35)	1126
<b>2007/2008</b>				
VICTORIA	221	828-1149	985 (67)	980
TASMANIA	42	845-1098	932 (57)	910
ACT	29	1025-1144	1076 (29)	1066
† WESTERN AUSTRALIA	30	927-1135	989 (58)	966
† QUEENSLAND	21	892-1070	1000 (48)	998
† SOUTH AUSTRALIA	24	788-1007	910 (57)	928

\*Tasmania and ACT included from Round 2 2006

† Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia included round 4 2007

This information suggests families applying to the fund who were living in South Australia and Tasmania live in areas of greatest relative disadvantage, while applicants living in Canberra live in areas of relative advantage. The latter finding should be treated with caution, however, the ACT has more “affluent” suburbs per capita, than other states, and such suburbs may include families experiencing financial difficulties.

### **Characteristics of children and caregivers**

Information in the databases relating to characteristics of children and caregivers for whom applications were made, included items relating to the:

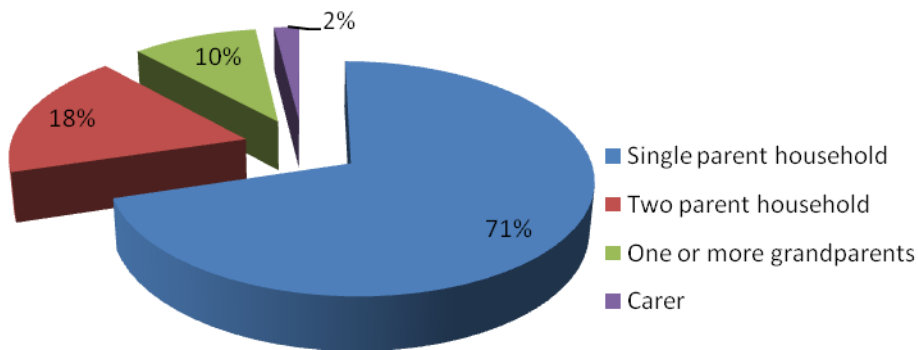
- Family situation (i.e. who the child was living with)
- Number of children living in families
- Age and gender of children in families
- Drug and alcohol problems experienced by caregivers

The **2006** database included records for 106 children. This included all children in a family, rather than just the children who would be benefitting from the application. The **2007/2008** database included records for 679 children. As in the 2006 database, this included all children in a family. The database also included information which identified which children would be benefitting from the application.

## Family situation

### 2006 applications:

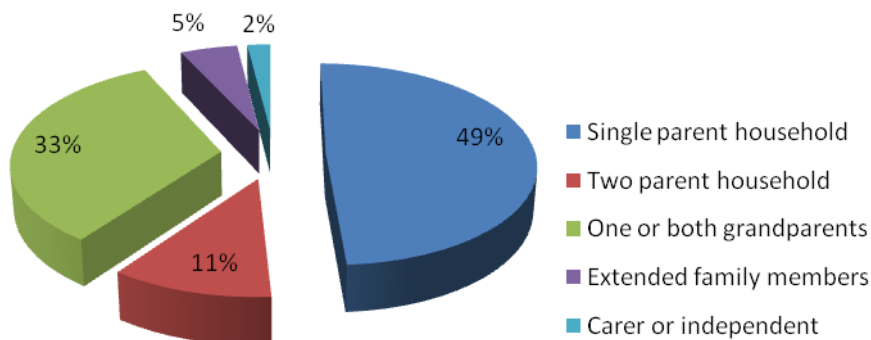
Figure 9 shows the range of family “types” reported in 2006. It should be noted that 88% of single parents were mothers. In total, 77% of children lived in a single carer household (i.e. with a single parent, grandparent or other relative) and 87% of all single carers were female.



**Figure 9: Percentage of families of different types in 2007/2008**

### 2007/2008 applications:

Figure 10 shows the range of family types reported in 2007/2008. Eighty seven percent of single parents were mothers. In total, 71% of children lived in a single carer household (i.e. with a single parent, grandparent or other relative) and 89% of all single carers were female.



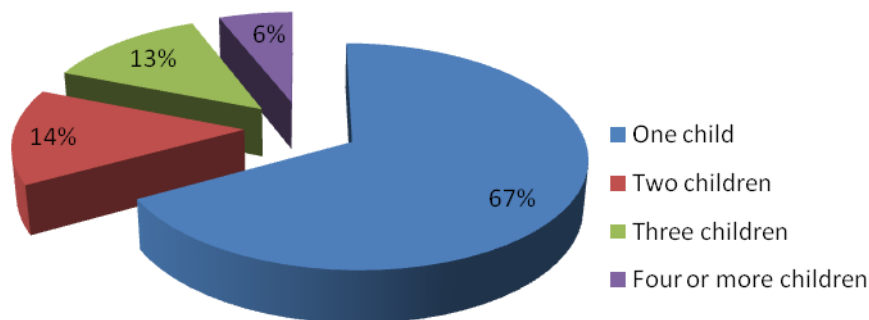
**Figure 10: Percentage of families of different types in 2007/2008**



## Number of children in the family

### 2006 applications:

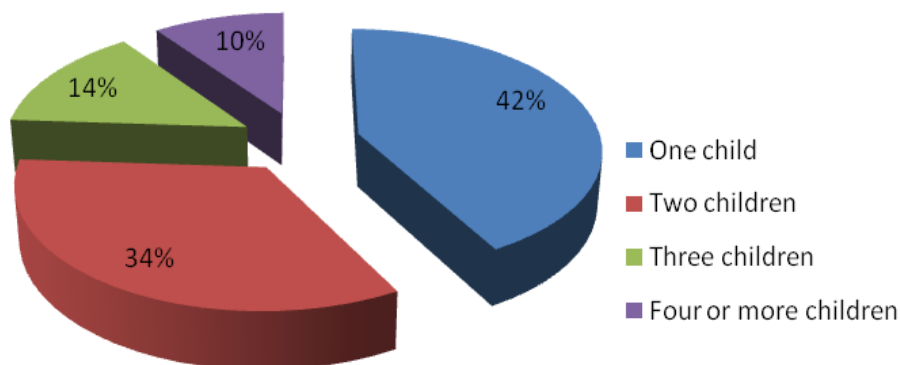
Figure 11 shows the range of families including different numbers of children in 2006. The number of children in families ranged from one to eight. Children ranged in age from 1 to 18 years (Mean= 8 years, SD = 4½ years, Median = 8 years). There were more boys (59%) than girls (41%).



**Figure 11: Number of children in families 2006**

### 2007/2008 applications:

12 shows the range of families including different numbers of children in 2007/2008. It should be noted that the graph shows all children in families, not just those who were identified as benefitting from applications to the fund. The number of children in each family ranged from one to ten. Children ranged in age from one to 20+ years (Mean= 10 years, SD = 4 years 10 months, Median = 10 years). There were slightly more boys (52%) than girls (48%).



**Figure 12: Number of children in families 2007/2008**

There were 597 children who were identified as benefitting from items in the 2007/2008 applications (rather than including all children in a family). These children ranged in age from one to 18 years (Mean= 9 years 10 months, SD = 4 years 8 months, Median = 10 years) and there were also slightly more boys (53%) than girls (47%).

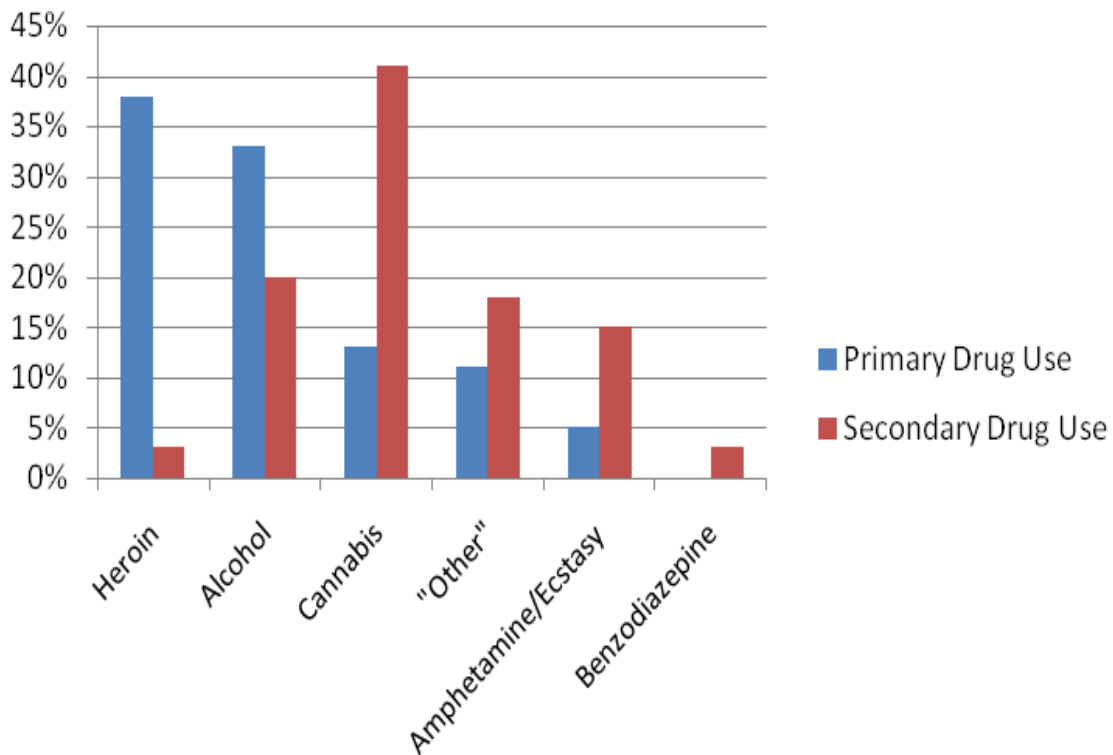
*In summary, the information relating to the characteristics of children and caregivers for whom applications are made showed most children to be living with in single carer households. In the majority of cases, the single carer was a single mother, but many more children were living with their grandmothers in 2007 and 2008. Most families in 2006 comprised a single carer and one child, in 2007 and 2008 there were more families with two children and they were on average 2 years older than the children included in the 2006 applications.*

## ***Drug and alcohol problems experienced by caregivers***

The databases asked workers to identify the primary and secondary substance used by the caregivers of children for whom applications were made, and any treatment programs if applicable. In 2006, however, 55% of caregivers were reported to have had no primary or secondary drug type recorded and in 2007/2008 61% of caregivers had no primary or secondary drug type recorded. This primarily reflects the number of children living away from parents with drug and alcohol problems.

Figure 13 shows the distribution of different types of drugs identified as being primary and secondary problems for caregivers (for whom this information was recorded) in 2006 applications:

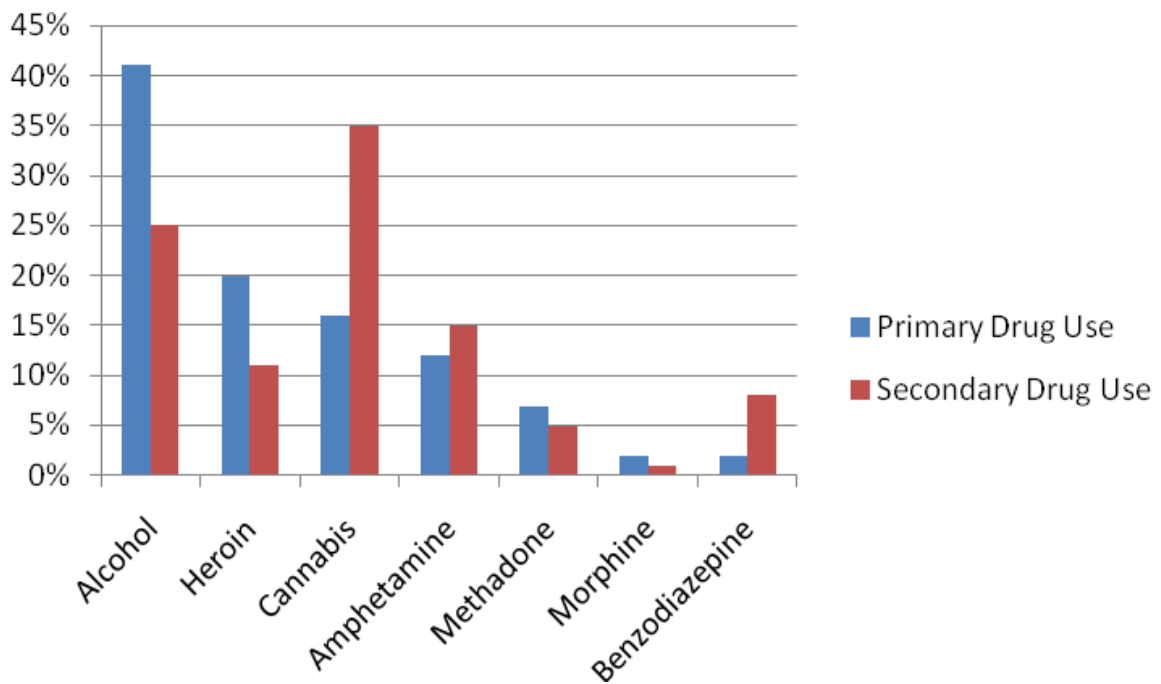
**The most frequent combination of primary and secondary drugs in 2006 was: Alcohol/ Cannabis followed by Heroin/ cannabis.**



**Figure 13: Percentage of primary and secondary drug use in 2006**

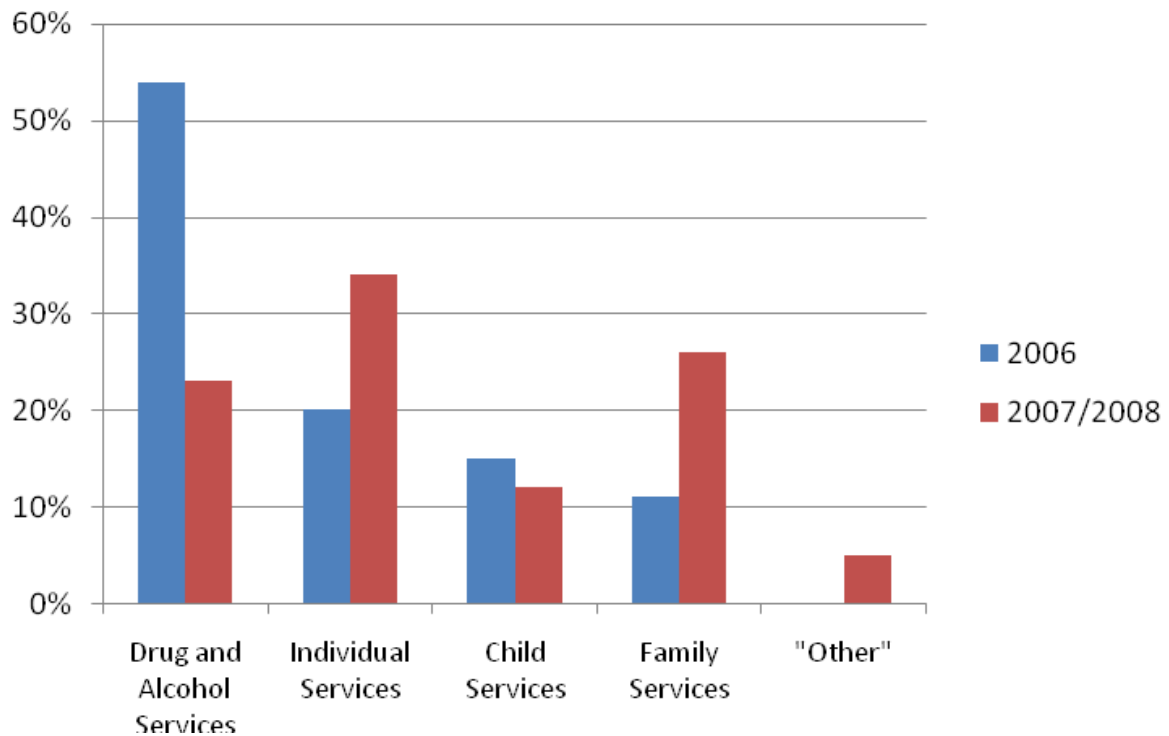
Figure 14 shows the distribution of different types of drugs identified as being primary and secondary problems for caregivers (for whom this information was recorded) in 2007/2008 applications.

***The most frequent combination of primary and secondary drugs in 2007/2008 was: Alcohol/ Cannabis followed by Alcohol/ Heroin***



**Figure 14: Percentage of primary and secondary drug use in 2007/2008**

Figure 15 shows the percentage of caregivers who were recorded as receiving treatment for their drug and alcohol problems, in 2006 and 2007/2008. Treatment for drug and alcohol problems included residential programs as well as drug and alcohol specific interventions; individual services included “case management”, “support”, and interventions for mental health issues; child services included child protection services , child “support” or therapy, and educational support; family services included family support, and parenting support.



**Figure 15: Types of drug and alcohol treatment received in 2006 and 2007/2008**

*In summary, the information from the database relating to the types of drug problems experienced by carers was less complete than other information but suggests the types of problems changed from 2006 to 2007/2008. Heroin was the most frequently identified type of drug problem in 2006, while workers more frequently reported alcohol to be the primary problem for caregivers in 2007/2008. Though in all years, alcohol was reported as being misused by more parents than any other substance. Similarly, in 2006 carers were most frequently reported to be receiving drug and alcohol specific services. In 2007/2008 there was more of an even spread of treatment types, with individual services being most frequently recorded, followed by family services. These changes most probably reflect the broadening of eligibility criteria beyond the AOD sector.*

## *Amounts distributed by the Counting the Kids brokerage fund*

The databases included detailed information about applications, including the items applied for, the amounts required for each item and whether funding for items was fully or partially granted, or declined. Before considering individual items, however, analysis firstly examined information for each application (i.e. combining information for all items included in an application). An application was considered to be fully funded if the total amount requested equalled the total amount of funds granted; to be partially funded if the amount granted was less than the amount requested; and to be declined if no funds were granted to the application.

### **Applications**

Table 2 shows the total funds requested in 2006, 2007, and Round 1 2008. Table 3 shows the total funds granted across the three years, for all applications that received full or partial funding.

*It should be noted that the range of total amounts requested and total amounts granted may reflect items requested or granted for more than one child. Grants were initially limited at \$4,000 per child, so some applications requested up to \$12,000 for individual items benefiting up to three children (i.e. \$4,000 x 3).*

Ten percent of the total number of applications (for which information was available) was declined in 2006, in comparison to 6% of applications in 2007 ( $n = 13$ ), and 5% of applications in 2008 ( $N = 6$ ). In 2006, 62% of funds requested were granted (i.e. \$114,902/\$184,706). In 2007, 78% of funds requested were granted (\$467,531/\$602,076), and in 2008, 18% of funds requested were being granted (\$74,934/\$427,902). It should be noted that because of the large number of funds received in Round 1 2008, a decision was made by fund managers to cap the total amount granted to \$80,000. This decision significantly reduced the percentage of funds granted in 2008.

**Table 2: Total funds requested in 2006, 2007, and 2008**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Total sum requested (\$)</b>	<b>Number of applications</b>	<b>Range (\$)</b>	<b>Median (\$)</b>
<b>2006</b>	186,374	76	69-18,788	1,568
<b>2007</b>	602,076	219	250-15,554	2,080
<b>Round 1</b>	50,545	16		
<b>Round 2</b>	181,490	65		
<b>Round 3</b>	119,350	43		
<b>Round 4</b>	250,783	95		
<b>2008 (Round1)</b>	427,902	125	170-13,000	2,700
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,216,352			

*Note: data missing for some applications*

**Table 3: Total funds granted in 2006, 2007, and 2008\***

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Total sum granted (\$)</b>	<b>Number of applications</b>	<b>Range (\$)</b>	<b>Median (\$)</b>
<b>2006</b>	114,902	70	160-18,788	1,099
<b>2007</b>	467,531	199	179-15,262	1,709
<b>Round 1</b>	42,656	16		
<b>Round 2</b>	136,987	65		
<b>Round 3</b>	84,682	43		
<b>Round 4</b>	203,206	95		
<b>2008 (Round 1)</b>	74,934	116	150-4,500	600
<b>TOTAL</b>	657,367			

*\*for applications that were fully or partially granted*

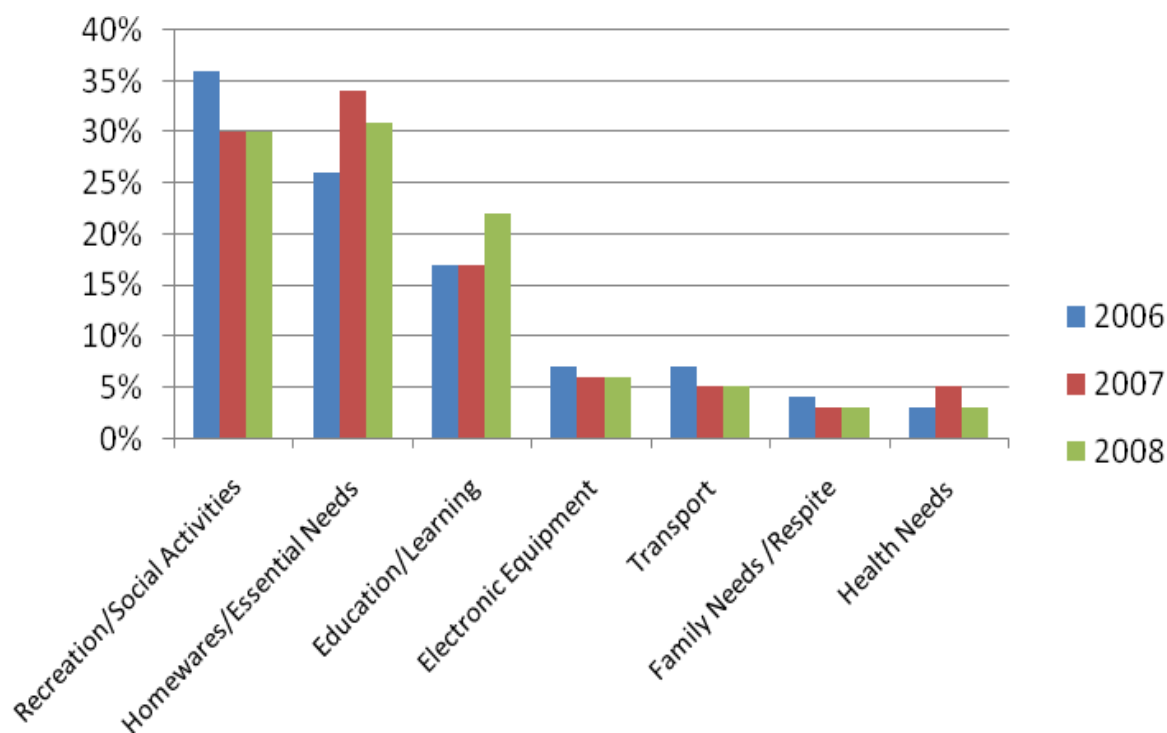
*In summary, the total amount requested from the Counting the Kids brokerage fund increased substantially in 2007, and appears to be continuing this growth in 2008. The total amount requested in Round 1 2008 almost equalled the total amount of funds granted in 2007. It is also of note that the median sum requested for applications also grew in this time (from \$1,564 in 2006 to \$2,700 in 2008). The rapid increase in applications to the fund led to a decision to cap the amount of funds available for applications in 2008 to prevent funds becoming unavailable later in the year. In consequence, the percentage of funds requested that were granted dropped markedly (62% in 2006, 78% in 2007 to 18% in 2008).*



## Category of items

There were 356 items recorded in the 2006 database, ranging from 1-12 items per application (total of 70 applications). There were a total of 1,657 items recorded in the 2007/2008 database, with 994 items from 2007 applications (total of 219 applications) ranging from 1-37 items per application (Median = 3 per application), and 663 items recorded for 2008 applications (total of 128 applications) ranging from 1-17 items per application (Median = 4 per application).

Figure 16 shows the percentage of items in different categories for the three years of the fund (see Appendix D to view the categories and examples of the items comprising the categories).



Note. Information for some items was uncodable or missing.

**Figure 16: Types of items requested from the brokerage fund use in 2006, 2007, and 2008**

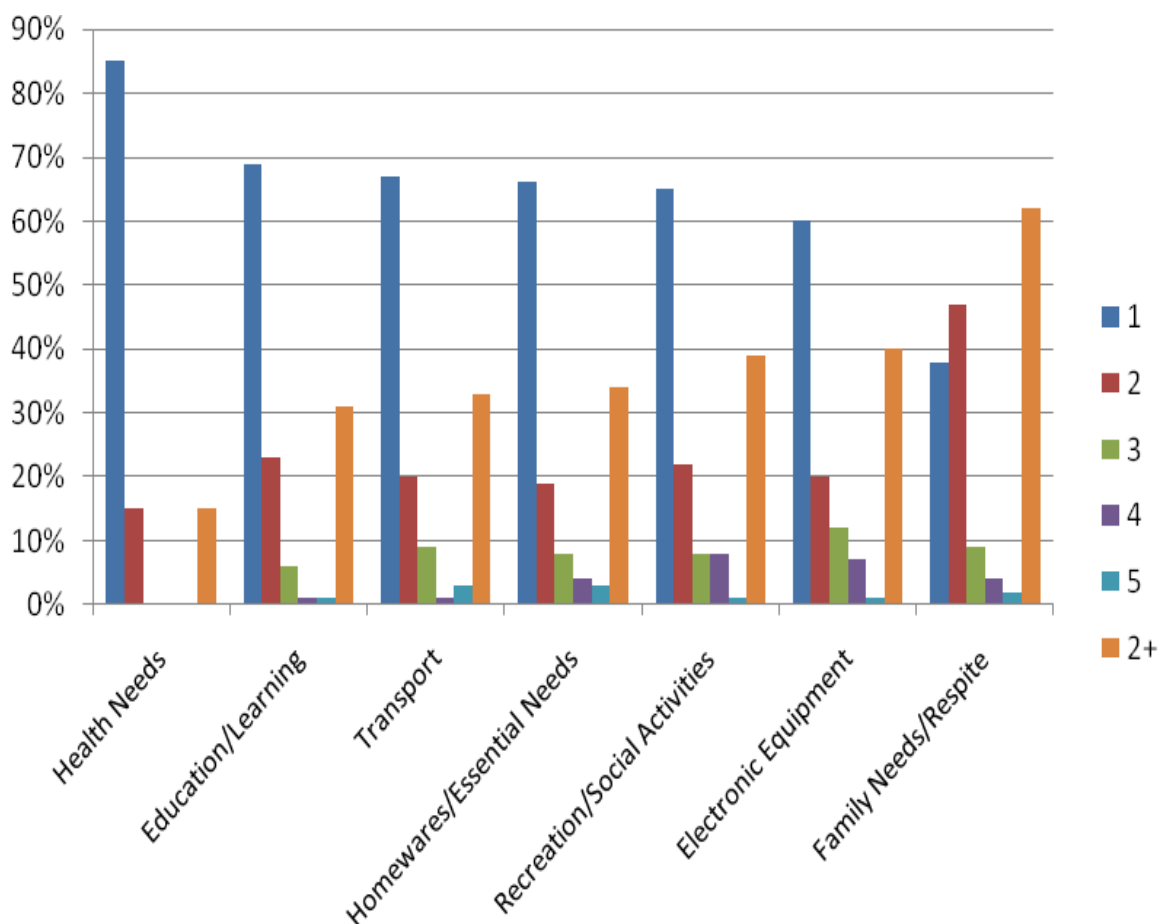
Information relating to the types of items requested and the types of item being granted shows some changes across the three years in which data was collected. Items relating to children's recreational and social activities were more frequently requested in 2006, while the greater proportion of items requested in 2007/8 were for homewares and basic needs. This result may relate to the change in eligibility criteria in this time. The number of applications on behalf of grandparents caring for children whose parents are unable to care for them because of drug and alcohol issues increased in the second half of 2007 and Round 1 2008. It is likely grandparents had more need of help in providing their grandchildren with items such as furniture (i.e. beds) or clothing.

## Children benefiting from items

Information relating to which of the children recorded on an application were to benefit from items was missing from the **2006** database. It was possible to establish, however, that 45% of items were to benefit more than one child.

In the **2007/2008** database, 66% of items were to benefit one child, 21% were to benefit two children, 8% were to benefit three children and 5% were to benefit four or more children. In comparison to the 2006 database, 34% of items in 2007/2008 were to benefit more than one child.

Figure 17 shows the percentage of item types that were to benefit one or more children in 2007/2008.



Note. 2+ = summation of items relating to 2, 3, 4, or 5 children

**Figure 17: Percentage of children benefiting from brokerage fund use in 2006, 2007, and 2008**

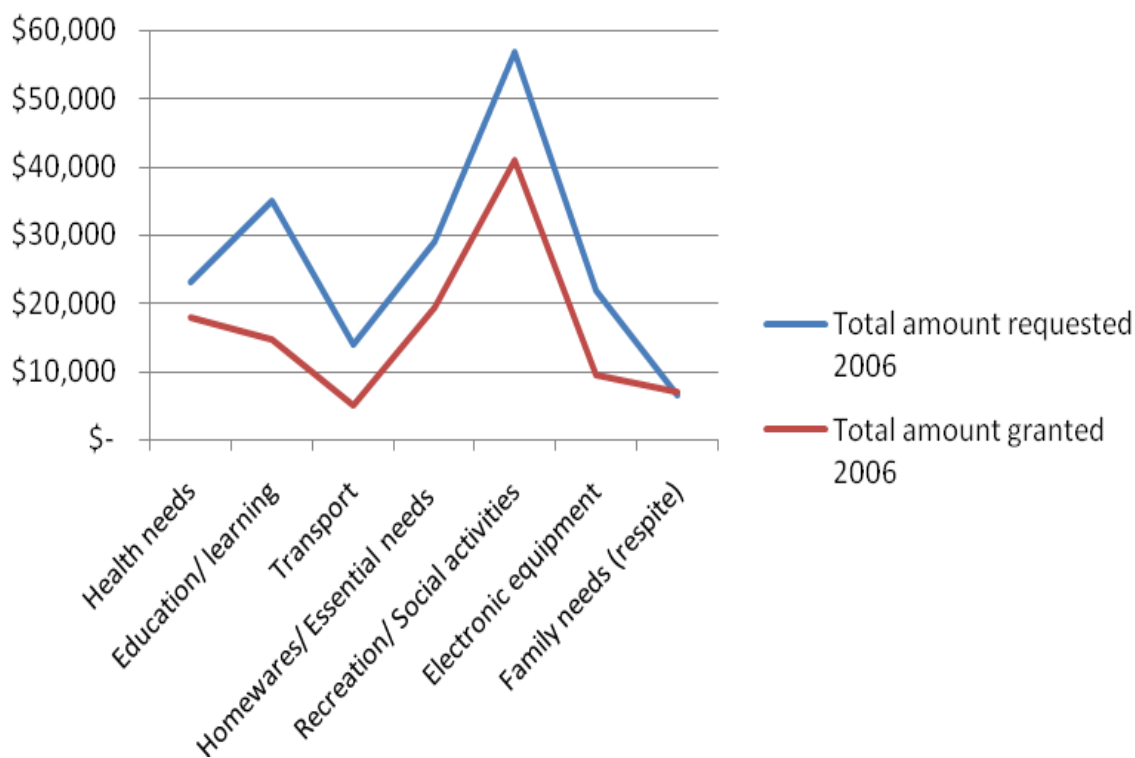
The number of children benefiting from individual items grew slightly, from about one half of all items in 2006, to closer to two thirds of all items in 2007/8. Items relating to health, and education/learning, were more likely to benefit one child while items relating to family needs, and electronic goods, were more likely to benefit more than one child.

## Amounts requested/ granted for each item group

Figures 18 to 20 show total amounts requested for each category of items, and total amounts granted for each category for 2006, 2007, and 2008. Totals reflect the three rounds included in 2006, the four rounds included in 2007, and the one round included in 2008. Detailed information (numbers of items, amounts requested and granted) are shown in tables included in Appendix G.

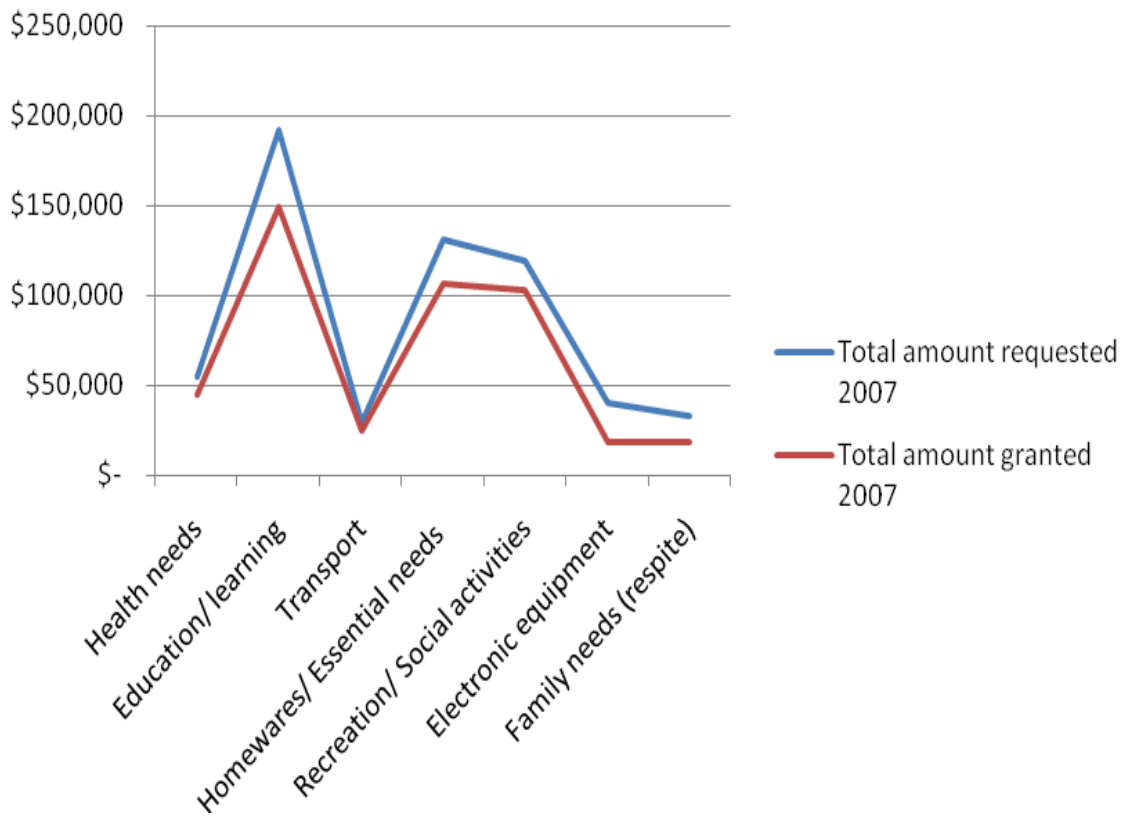
*It should be noted that the range of total amounts requested and total amounts granted may reflect items requested or granted for more than one child. Grants were initially limited at \$4,000 per child, so some applications requested up to \$12,000 for individual items benefiting up to three children (i.e. \$4,000 x 3).*

In **2006**, the median amount requested for individual items in any category was \$265 (range = \$10-\$14,212). The median amount granted for individual items (for all grants fully or partially funded) was \$209 (range = \$10-\$14,212).



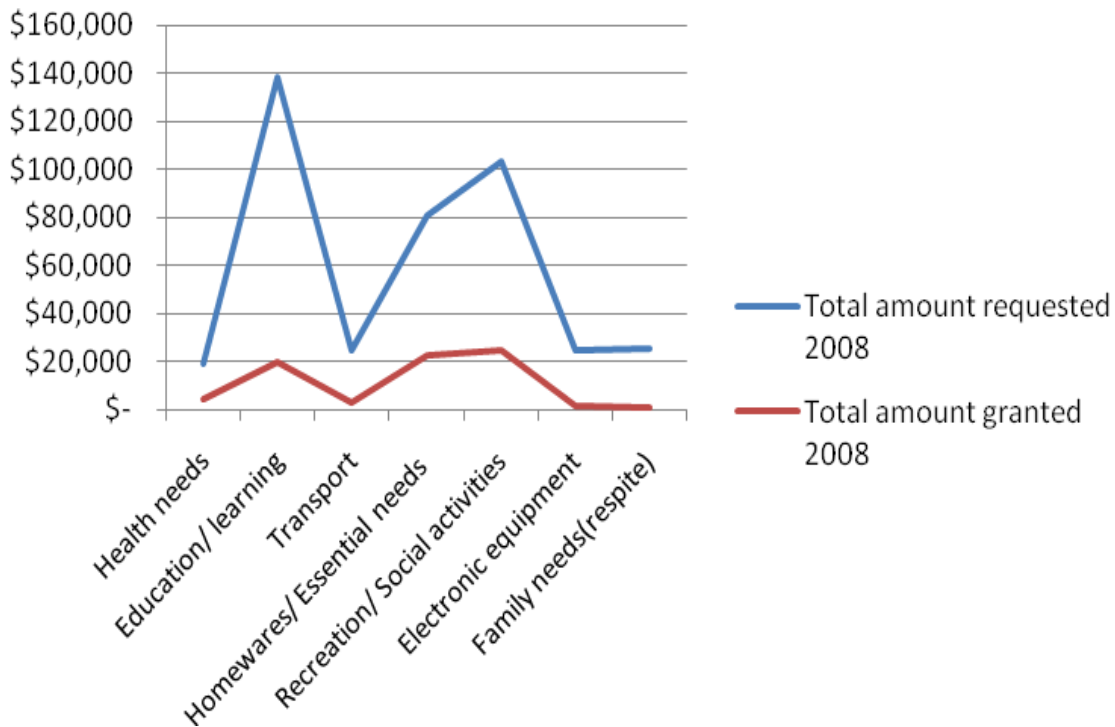
**Figure 18: Total amounts requested and total amounts granted for item categories in 2006**

In **2007**, the median amount requested for individual items in any category was \$300 (*range* = \$6-\$12,000). The median amount granted for individual items (for all grants fully or partially funded) was \$269 (*range* = \$6-\$12,000).



**Figure 19: Total amounts requested and total amounts granted for item categories in 2007**

In Round 1 **2008**, the median amount requested for individual items in any category was \$300 (*range* = \$20-\$12,000. The median amount granted for individual items (for all grants fully or partially funded) was \$254 (*range* = \$20-\$2,500).



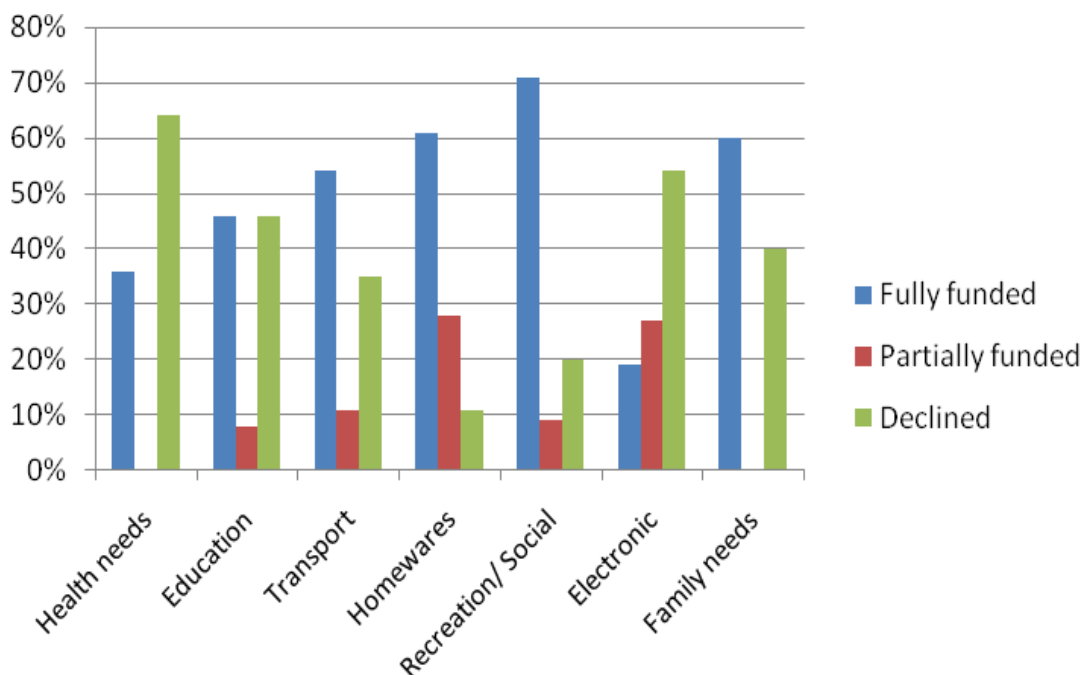
**Figure 20: Total amounts requested and total amounts granted for item categories in 2008**

*In summary, in 2006 the item category for which the most funds were **requested** related to children’s recreational and social activities, in 2007 and 2008 the item category for which most funds were requested related to children’s education and learning needs. The item category for which most funds were **granted** in 2006 was recreation and social activities. In 2007 the category receiving the largest amount of funds was “educational and learning needs” while in 2008 items relating to children’s recreational and social activities again received the most funding. This pattern reflects changing funding priorities, as a consequence of the availability of funds. Greater availability in 2007 enabled grants to be made for the “larger ticket” items such as fees for tutoring. When less funds were available, comparatively larger amounts were directed towards items encouraging access to recreational and social activities.*

## Status of items

Items were identified as having been fully granted or partially granted, or as having funding declined. Categories of items were examined to see if one category was more or less likely to have funding approved, or declined. Some data relating to the outcomes for individual items was missing for the following calculations. As items were excluded if their outcome was uncertain (i.e. pending discussion or research).

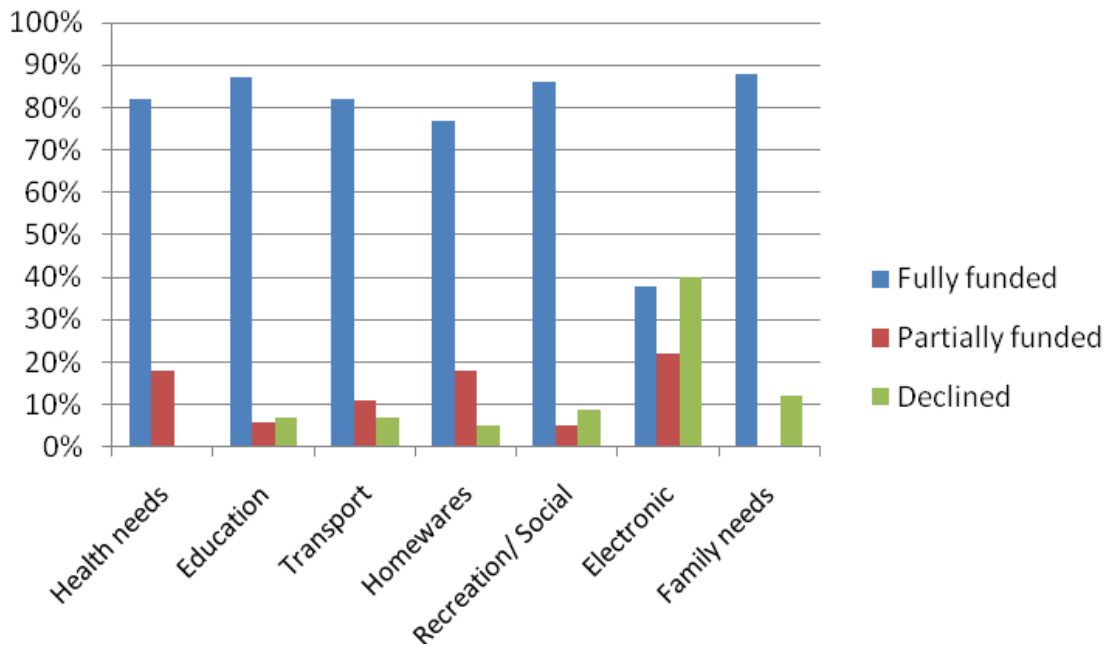
Figure 21 shows the percentage of item categories receiving funding or declined funding in **2006**. Of a total of 347 items, 200 (58%) were fully granted, 51 (15%) were partially funded, and 96 (27%) were declined funding.



*Note: Graph does not indicate the number of item within each category. Some categories (i.e. health needs) had only a few items within each category.*

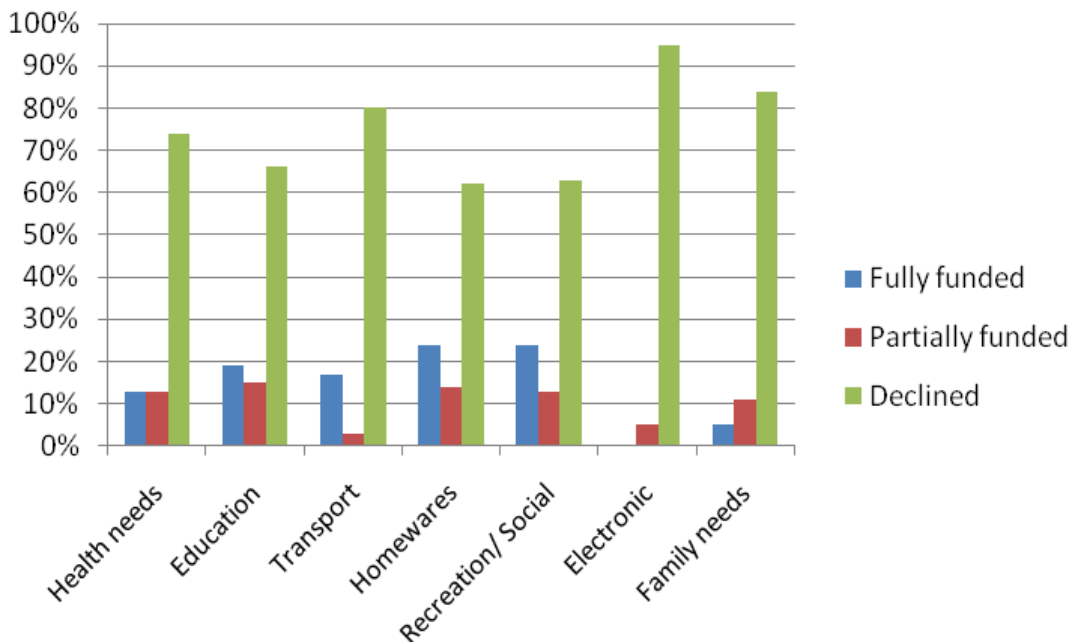
**Figure 21: Percentage of item categories receiving funding or declined funding in 2006**

Figure 22 shows the percentage of item categories receiving funding or declined funding in **2007**. Of a total of 960 items, 767 (80%) were granted full funding, 99 (10%) were granted partial funding, and 94 (10%) were declined funding.



**Figure 22: Percentage of item categories receiving funding or declined funding in 2007**

Figure 23 shows the percentage of item categories receiving funding or declined funding in **2008**. In **2008**, of a total of 656 items, 133 (20%) were granted full funding, 85 (13%) were granted partial funding, and 438 (67%) were declined funding.



**Figure 23: Percentage of item categories receiving funding or declined funding in 2008**

*In summary, information about the types of items that were more likely to be successfully granted, or more likely to be declined, also reflects variations in the availability of funds across the three years. In 2006, homewares and basic needs were most successful. In 2007 all categories of items were likely to be successful, while in 2008 all were more likely to be unsuccessful. Electronic items, however, were more likely to be declined than other categories of items across all three years, reflecting funding guidelines. Items that showed the biggest change from 2006 to 2007 (i.e. were much **more** likely to be granted in 2007) were health items, and items relating to educational and learning needs. Items showing the biggest change from 2007 to 2008 (i.e. were much **less** likely to receive funding in 2008) were items relating to transport (e.g. airfares), and items relating to family needs (e.g. child care).*

***By being able to assist a family so positively through receiving your grant has made us aware of checking with our families if they are eligible for your services.***



## *Recommendations relating to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund database*

The database was a rich source of information enabling exploration of the characteristics of the workers and agencies making applications to the fund, and the families and children on whose behalf applications are made. As well, information across the three years of the fund tells an interesting and potential valuable story about how the fund has developed, and changed during this time. It is strongly recommended that the database be maintained as an administrative tool, but also for the opportunities it provides for research about the fund.

The database has evolved during the three years the fund has been operating, and will continue to do so. A few minor changes are suggested to improve the quality of data produced:

- Include additional information about organisations/ agencies making application to the fund, to reflect changes in the eligibility criteria;
- Clarify the collection of information about the status of the caregiver and of biological parents where possible. Encourage recording of information about drug and alcohol problems experienced by parents, regardless of whether children are residing with parents or with other carers;
- Include item coding (see Appendix D);
- Clarify information regarding children who are benefiting from items;
- Collect additional information about the characteristics of children and families for whom applications have been made (i.e. to identify how many families are from non-English speaking or Aboriginal backgrounds, or how many children have learning or health problems).

## Family Vignette 2

### The A Family

L is a single parent of two young children. L has been caring for her children alone for the past two years following a lengthy period of being exposed to significant violence, aggression and abuse from her ex husband. L herself has a history of out of home care and welfare involvement. L has suffered homelessness and has a history of substance misuse starting when she was about 12 years old including very regular use of heroin, amphetamines and marijuana. In recent years the children have been exposed to constant disruption and parental stress. L has been struggling to accept a diagnosis of Bipolar disorder and until recently has not been willing to accept mental health support or medication. The impact of parental mental health issues on the children is clear, financial pressure on the family had meant that they had been served eviction notices to vacate their property; the children had not been attending childcare or preschool leaving them with limited opportunity to socialise with other children. Due to L's aggressive behaviour she had difficulty engaging with support services and had withdrawn from her family also, leaving the family socially isolated and having crises that escalated rapidly as they did not have the support that they required.

Since receiving the grant funding B has been able to attend childcare two days per week. The impact that this has had on the family has been significant. B has been able to develop positive relationships with his peers and teachers and his social skills have improved dramatically. B has blossomed in this environment and is a bright, happy and engaging toddler. This childcare has provided much needed respite for his mother who has been able to engage in other activities to help improve her emotional and physical wellbeing during this time.

Much of the funding has been spent on clothing, bedding and other household items that have substantially boosted the living conditions for the children. They have warm bedding and clothes that have assisted the children to get through the winter without constant colds and flus that they have experienced in the past. Their mother has been able to prepare wholesome meals consistently with the cooking appliances purchased. The children's physical development has improved, they have put on weight and have energy to participate in different activities that the school and mother provide them.

## *ii Worker Feedback and Family Feedback forms*

Two feedback forms were used to evaluate the fund. One form (“**Worker Feedback**”) was intended for completion by workers only, and asked for feedback about their experience of applying for the grant, and the impact of the grant on worker and agency practice. The second feedback form (“**Family Feedback**”) was also completed, in part, by workers but also asked workers to obtain direct information from families and children about the perceived impact of the grant. Copies of both forms are included in Appendix C. A total of 155 questionnaires were collected. The following analysis was carried out separately for Worker Feedback forms ( $n=66$ ), and for Family Feedback forms ( $n=89$ ).

### *Worker Feedback forms: Experience of the application process and agency impact*

#### *Introduction*

Analysis of information from the Worker Feedback forms will be presented in several sections. The first section will report on general information about the numbers of forms received, and characteristics of the workers completing the forms. The second section will show the results of rating scales included in the form, describing the overall experiences of workers. The final section will report on analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the form. Information will be presented separately for four questions asked by the form, relating to:

- Strengths of the application process;
- Perceived impacts of the application process on worker practice;
- Barriers and difficulties encountered when making an application; and
- Suggestions for improvement.

Results of coding of the data will be described, including illustrative worker comments.

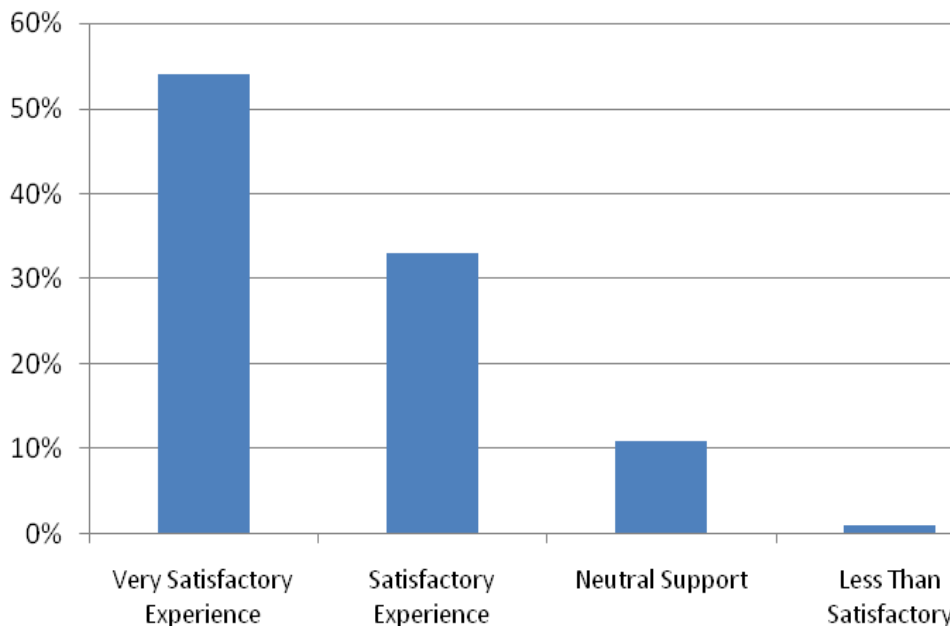
#### *General information*

- A total of 66 Worker Feedback forms were collected from 62 workers, being 25% of all workers making applications between 2006-2008 (Round 1);
  - Workers who completed the forms made between 1 and 11 applications (median = one application). Three workers completed multiple forms for different applications. The remaining workers ( $n=46$ ) completed one form for one application, or one form which was assumed to represent all of the applications made by that worker;
  - Workers came from all states, with most forms from workers based in Victoria (74%), followed by Tasmania and Queensland (both 6% of forms); ACT and South Australia (both 5%); and finally Western Australia (4% of forms);

- Workers came from 58 agencies (the number of forms completed by workers from one agency ranged from 1-3; median =1), being 31% of all agencies from which applications were made between 2006-2008 (Round 1);
- Worker Feedback forms represented 116 applications (i.e. all applications made by the workers), being 27% of all applications made between 2006-2008 (Round 1)
  - Applications were made in all three years covered by the evaluation:
    - 2006 (3%)
    - 2007 (67%)
    - 2008 (10%)
    - 2007 & 2008 (20%)
  - Forty eight percent of the 116 applications were fully granted, being slightly more than the 33% of all applications which were fully granted between 2006-2008 (Round 1);

### Rating scales

Figure 24 shows the percentage of workers who rated their overall experience in making an application to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund.



Note: Missing three forms (n=63)

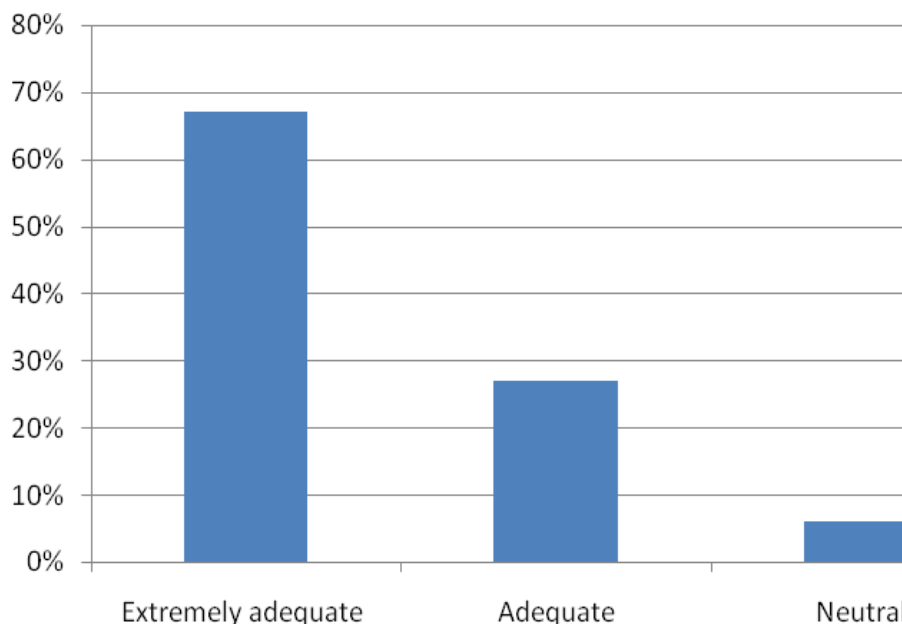
**Figure 24: Percentage of workers rating their overall experience of making a grant application**

Of the seven forms indicating a neutral response:

- Two made responses to other questions included in the questionnaire that were otherwise positive;
- Five made specific reference to concern about time delays; and
- One indicated concerns about stress experienced by getting the application in on time

Two workers (one from 2007 and one from 2008) indicated they would not be submitting to the fund again (both referred to time delays), another expressed disappointment about the amount of funds granted in 2008.

Figure 25 shows the percentage of workers who rated the adequacy of support received when making an application to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund.



Note: Missing three forms ( $n=63$ )

**Figure 25: Percentage of workers rating the adequacy of support when making a grant application**

Workers were also asked to indicate, on average, how long after they received the grant cheque did it take to spend the money. Six workers indicated funds were still in the process of being spent. Of the remainder, 35% of workers indicated funds were spent immediately; 47% indicated funds were spent within a month of receipt of the cheque; and 18% reported it took between 2 and 5 months to spend the funds.

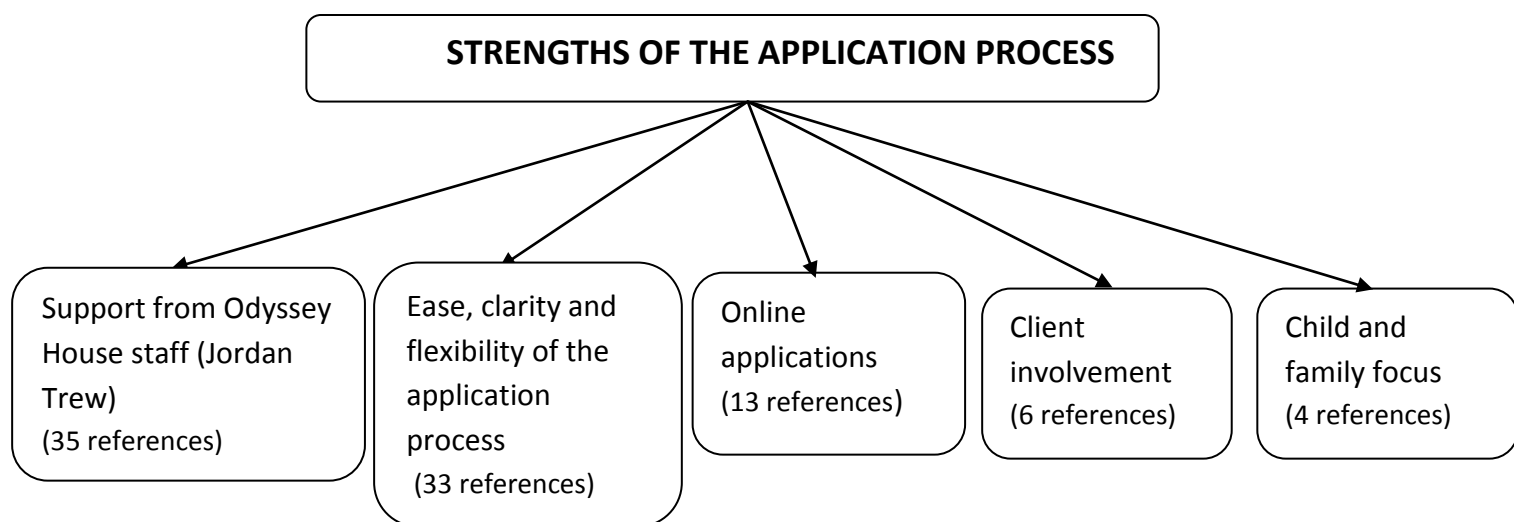
## Qualitative information

### Question 1:

The first question in the Worker Feedback form requiring a written response asked workers to:

*“Please comment on any strengths of the application process”*

Eleven percent of workers did not respond to this question. Results of analysis for workers who did respond are illustrated by the coding categories shown in the following diagram. The boxes include the number of times reference was made to the categories by workers (i.e. the number of references identified as being relevant to the coding category). This figure indirectly reflects the relative saliency of the category for respondents .



The diagram shows most comments made by workers referring to strengths of the application process related to the support given from Odyssey House staff, and in particular from the fund administrator Jordan Trew:

*Extensive assistance with the application process and later expenditure of the grant – great support received from Jordan.*

*Nothing was too much trouble for the staff, all questions were answered fully and efficiently.*

*The application process seems to be very streamlined, with good administration. The emails sent while the application is in process are reassuring and supportive! Jordan’s commitment to the brokerage and his willingness to chat and support the application is a great asset to the fund.*

The second most frequent group of responses related to worker perceptions of the ease, clarity and flexibility of procedures available to support applications:

*The guidelines were clear and concise and the information provided to achieve the aims and objectives for the application was useful and easy to follow. There was easy access to the application on the internet and overall this process was user-friendly.*

*Application process was easy to follow and an efficient way to apply for funds.*

*Flexibility in terms of what the grant could be used for. Understanding from staff regarding changes regarding grant that may occur after submission.*

There were also a number of comments made about the convenience of being able to make applications online:

*..that it is online. You can apply for the grant at your own pace as a worker. Save and go back to the grant applications.*

*The development of online submissions has made the process quicker with less of an environmental impact.*

*The facility of using an online application system was a great strength.*

A smaller number of workers commented on the ways in which the fund moved focus onto children and their families. This was referred to both in terms of a change of focus for the worker, but also in relation to a change in focus for clients (i.e. a greater emphasis on the needs of children):

*Main strength is the applications focus on specific needs of young children and their family.*

*Good to think seriously about needs of children/ family and what were the priorities in terms of practical assistance and extra opportunities.*

*The information on "assessing children's needs" was very helpful in broadening the focus on and understanding of the children's needs both for the agency and caregiver.*

Finally, several comments made reference to the value of involving clients in the application process:

*Clients totally involved in decisions about fund from beginning.*

*Involves both family and organisation (in this case school). The application process has a real feeling of togetherness and team approach.*

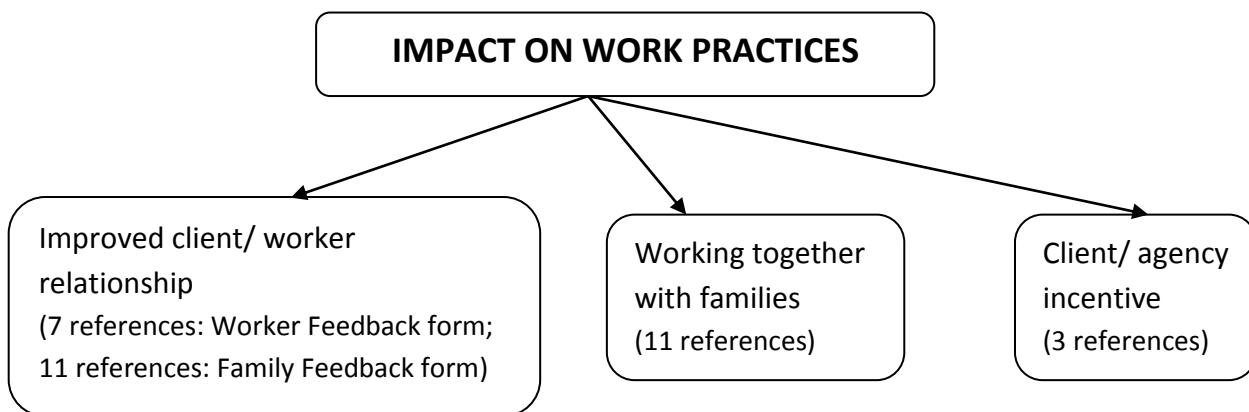
*I think I learnt a lot more about the client from working closely together to complete the application, and I think the client appreciated having so much input and liked knowing they were the "expert".*

**Question 2:**

Workers were also asked to reflect on whether they had found the process of making an application to the fund had changed their own, or agency practice:

*“Has applying for this grant changed the way in which you might work with clients in the future?”*

Ten workers responded in the negative to this question, a further six workers indicated that the application to the fund had reinforced their existing practise. Analysis of remaining responses to this question was conducted, as described in the following thematic map:



The impact most frequently mentioned by workers, related to improved relationships with clients as a consequence of the process of making an application to the CTBs fund. Workers indicated the application offered opportunities to discuss issues with clients that may not have been possible in other circumstances. This, in turn, led to opportunities to offer new services.

Comments reflecting this theme were found in response to Question 2 of the Worker feedback form, and were also evident in responses to Question 1 of the Family feedback form (see next section):

*Applying for this grant allowed me to address sensitive issues of a financial nature that I would not have normally discussed. The outcome has been very positive and has allowed me to discuss these issues in a broader context for future planning.*

*The application process did provide an opportunity to have different discussions with the family that I would not have usually fully explored. It also facilitated the family themselves to have discussions around their needs and problems they were experiencing. This in turn was reflected in other conversations to other service providers enabling the contribution of support.*

*Provided leverage to explore and discuss impact of drug use and parenting skills and parenting role. Woman was very receptive to family service referral and engagement.*



The next largest category of responses made by workers to Question 2 of the worker feedback form, related to the perception that the process of applying for a grant had led them to have a more holistic view of client and family needs:

*It has helped broaden the focus on their needs as a whole family and heightened awareness of the economic impact on the children of their parent's drug use.*

*The experience expanded my view about things that might be impacting on families and children's lives and that don't usually get mentioned in the context of my work.*

*It has been good to have family focussed conversations to include the impact of substance abuse on children and having their needs met, and sharing that knowledge with other service providers who are also able to contribute support*

One worker also suggested that the application had made them feel more confident in working with the family unit, and children in particular:

*It has increased my awareness of the needs of children having worked with adult populations predominantly, have not had much contact with children of clients. The grant has highlighted the importance of considering children's needs and addressing these results in better outcomes for both parents and children. I think the parents really appreciated the fact that their children were considered and consulted. It has changed the way I work by giving me more confidence to bring children to a session to assess their needs.*

Several workers indicated that they already worked within a "holistic" framework, but that the process of applying to the CTKs fund had facilitated this approach:

*We already operate within a social model of health that takes a holistic approach to clients needs. However the application reinforced the importance of this approach*

*It has not changed the way I work with my clients, but it has made it easier for me to provide holistic and creative options when there was no funding to support. Which I would like to thank OH (Odyssey House) and Jordan for!!*

The smallest category of responses to Question 2, suggested some workers perceived the CTKs fund provided increased motivation for clients and agencies:

*It provides an incentive for clients to clear up a few smaller issues to then get access to the fund.*

*Your funding assists in giving clients a more "human face" to large organisation. Also they can see a tangible reward that benefits their kids for all the hard work they put in in AOD treatment. It adds a big positive to working in this field to be able to offer this to families who are struggling.*

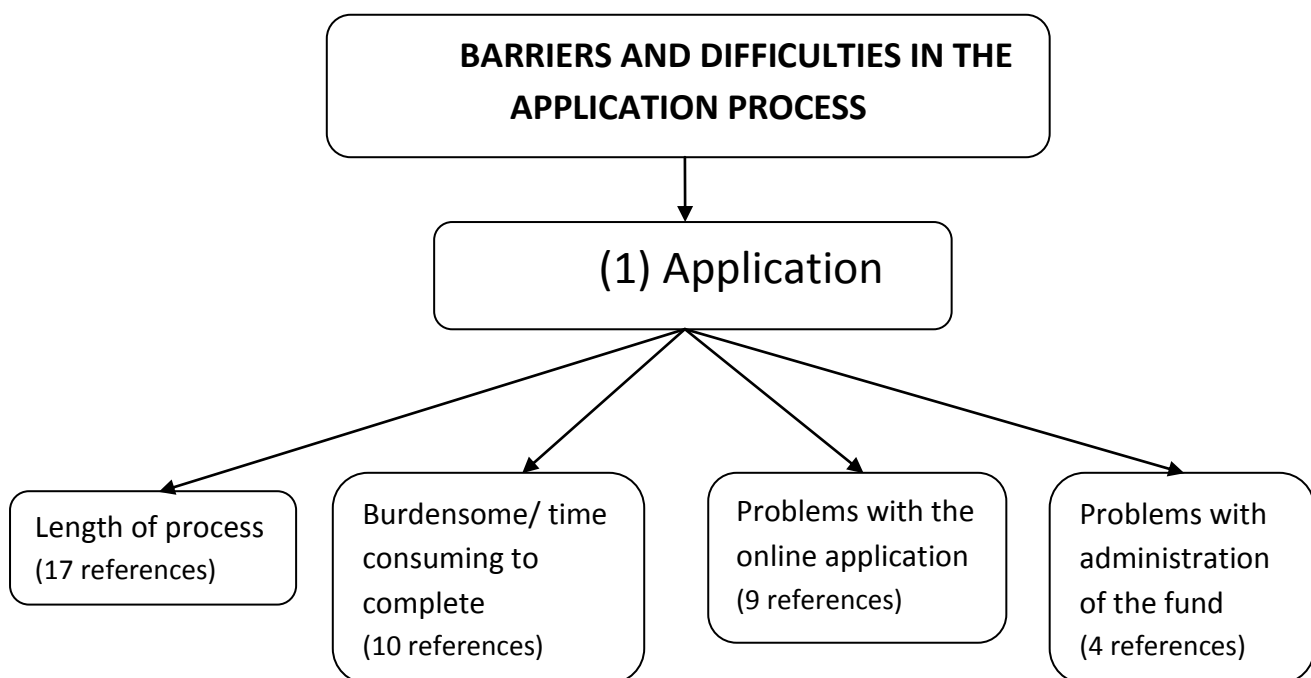
**Question 3:**

The third question in the Worker Feedback form, requiring a written response, asked workers to:

*“Please comment on any barriers or difficulties in the application process”*

Thirty six percent of workers did not respond to this question ( $n = 12$ ), or responded positively (i.e. indicating that that they did not experience any problems:  $n = 11$ ). The following diagram represents the coding categories identified for this question. The boxes include the number of times reference was made to the categories by workers (i.e. the number of references identified as being relevant to the coding category). This figure indirectly reflects the relative importance of the category for respondents .

The results of thematic analysis suggested that there were two main groups of responses to this question. The first group of responses made reference to issues to do with the application process, and are illustrated by the following thematic map:



Most comments made in response to Question 2, relating to application issues, referred to how long it took for the application to be assessed and for funds to be received:

*The timeline between application and receipt of funding was quite long....It would be good if this could somehow be streamlined.*

*Length of time between initial application and notification of approval – clients often have to make financial commitments e.g. school fees, books, camps before funds approval obtained.*

*A barrier that significantly impacts is the length of time taken to release funds after approval.*

One worker suggested the quarterly assessment round was too infrequent:

*Quarterly assessment is too long (sometimes mean that items cannot be applied for)*

The second most frequent area of concern related to the application itself, related to the time commitment and work involved for the worker when completing the application. Several workers referred to the detail required by the application, but that they understood this was necessary. Others referred to the difficulties involved in obtaining accurate quotes for items requested:

*Filling in application extremely time consuming for worker. Difficulty with quotations based on some items that changed by the time funds available. Clients changed their minds about items they wanted/ classes for children. Second worker assisted clients with purchases due to lack of transport etc – very time consuming*

*It was quite time consuming for myself as a worker. It was not clear in the information provided to me how the grant would be supplied so that I could figure out the logistics of that. I was unable to provide the money up-front to be reimbursed so had to lay-by all items to get an itemised list of their current price and then go back with a cheque. This was a lot of extra work.*

*The requirements outlined in the application process are fairly demanding of worker time and resources, but understandably justified*

In contrast to the predominantly positive comments made in response to Question 1, there were a few workers who experienced problems with making applications online. Some comments, however, related to problems experienced with in-house computer systems, rather than to the Odyssey House system:

*We have continual computer problems here, with the computers regularly crashing. As the form was online, I lost newly entered material twice and had to repeat the process – this isn't your fault though!*

*I felt the (online) application form itself was not very user friendly. There was no scope to scroll to the relevant pages that I needed to look at. It required the user to click back page by page – backwards. This was a bit awkward and time consuming. There was no capacity for formatting or spell check either!*

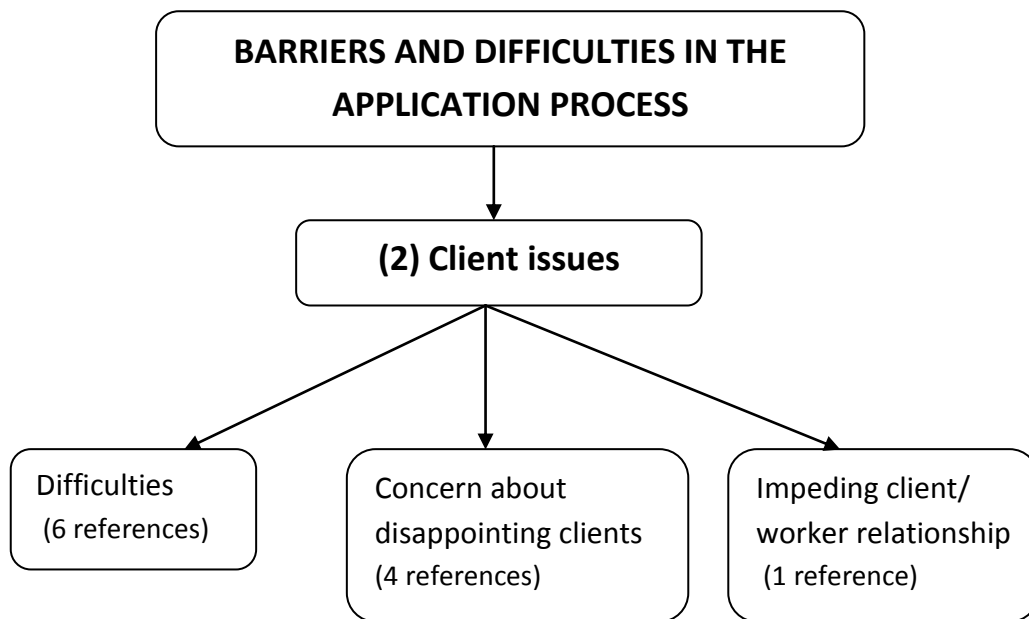
*I had difficulty attempting to erase a mistake I had made on the internet form, and subsequently had to complete a new form.*

Also in contrast to comments made in Question 1, a few workers noted problems experienced with the administration of the fund:

*When JT was sick there was no-one taking over.*

*The family could contact Jordan directly and then tell me what they wanted to change. It made my work a little difficult because I had to contact him to check.*

A second, smaller group of responses made to Question 2, made reference to issues to do with clients, and are illustrated by the following thematic map:



Most comments related to difficulties in engaging clients and problems arising from changing client circumstances:

*The actual application process was not the problem – it did, however, take three re-scheduled appointments for the client to turn up prepared to proceed.*

*Main difficulties were waiting on family to initiate/ commence services or purchases*

*Difficulties were more related to the complexity of family situations; their isolated living location & issues around negotiating with children (i.e. initially interested in tutoring but when time to attend child did not want to proceed)*

A few workers mentioned concerns related to disappointing children and families if funding was not available:

*The only difficulty I found was when asking children what they need trying not to get their hopes up.*

*The one issue that I have found has caused concern was when identifying needs with the client and forming a “wish list” of need and then finding out later that the rules have been changed and we have to “change” our thinking i.e. applying as a grandparent for full funding, then being told later that you could not apply for 4000, now 1500. Even though the family was very grateful in the funding, I could see such disappointment in the young person when we went back to redraft our list of priorities to resubmit.*

One youth worker indicated that the process of applying for the fund had impacted on their relationship with the young person:

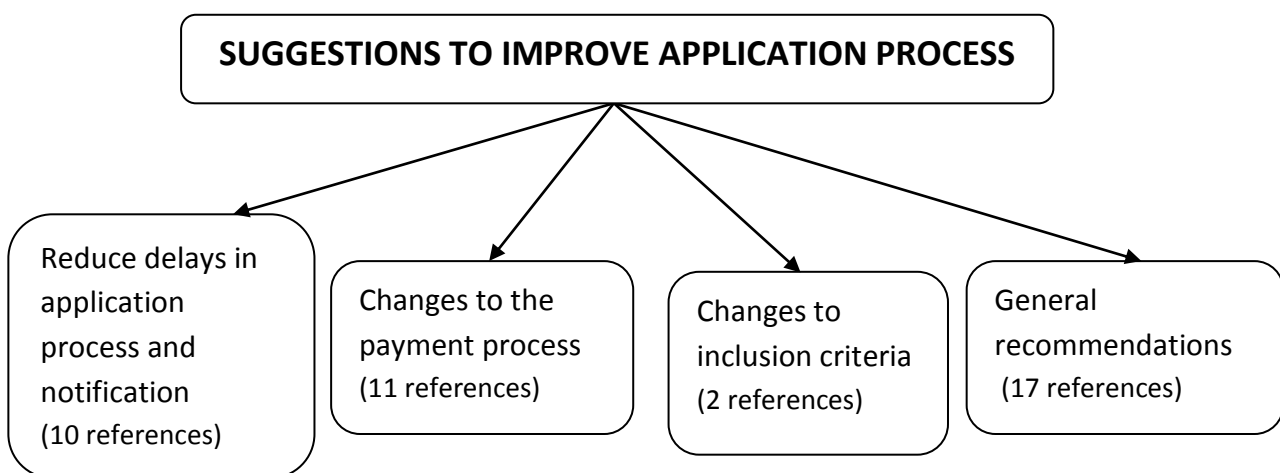
*Working more so with parent- created increased contact and (resulted in) conflicting views related to parent and young person (client). (A problem) especially from workers' point of working with client (young person) as primary focus.*

**Question 4:**

The final question in the Worker Feedback form asked respondents to provide feedback about potential improvements to the application process:

*“Please provide any suggestions regarding how the application process can be improved”*

Thirty five percent of workers either did not respond ( $N = 17$ ), or made a positive response (i.e. indicating they had experienced no problems so had no suggestions to make:  $N = 6$ ). The following thematic map describes the outcome of coding for this question.



The largest category of suggestions made by workers to help improve the application process (with the exception of “general recommendations”) related to time frames. Suggestions were general in nature, rather than offering specific advice, and reflected dissatisfaction with the time taken to process applications and to receive funds:

*There appears to be a lack of urgency about the funds, which can be detrimental to families needing to access funds quickly.*

*Faster turn-around of time between initial application and final approval would really be helpful for clients (and me!)*

*Decrease the amount of time for notification to the agency of success or otherwise of the application as the waiting period did cause a degree of stress for this client.*

The second category of responses made by workers in response to Question 4 related to suggestions about payment processes. Most suggestions were to improve access to funds once approval had been received:

*The only suggestion the writer could make would be if the cheques provided by OH could be paid directly to a (service agency) if possible. It can present as a minor issue to have cheques paid into an organisations account and then have to send them off to the required agency.*

*It became more cumbersome... because (funds) went into a special grant at (Agency name) and needed 2 managers, including CEO to sign off every purchase! And I live 1 ½ hours away and the family live 1 ½ hours further away! But we got it all sorted. Thank you.*

*I think that direct communication between OH and our (accountant) of my service would have vastly improved the process. There were many conversations I had with both that would have taken up much less time had they been direct with accounts. It needs to be considered by OH that an accounts contact person be asked for.*

A number of comments related to the possibility of greater flexibility in payment of funds:

*When a panel's decision is made and certain items are knocked back it would be good if the family could prioritise how the money is spent.*

*One difficulty is when a quote is given e.g. a flight cost, and the actual amount when purchasing is quite different. Don't know how this can be accommodated.*

Two workers suggested that funds be made available to additional client groups (i.e. adolescents with drug and alcohol issues) or to organisations rather than clients.

The last category shown in the thematic map was a grouping of suggestions that could not otherwise be categorised. Suggestions ranged from the need to market of the fund, to reflections on the administrative process:

*Maybe better promotion and marketing of the brokerage fund to community services. I stumbled across it!*

*It might be useful for OH to provide regular feedback in terms of where the application is up to....*

*My only suggestion would be that if applicants know what the financial limits are before applying...*

*Initial application guidelines suggested include all associated costs (i.e. travel expenses). When we applied and included this we were advised it was “excessive”. More care and consideration required for rural families.*

*It would be good to see a past application that had been successful to have an idea on how to present the information. I found I gave too much information in the items I was requesting.*

*As (agency name) has contact with so many families, we would need a designated worker to determine families’ needs, write applications and follow-up invoices, paperwork etc.*

One worker suggested a prioritisation of items to be funded:

*Possibly a criteria i.e. all health and developmental applications are given the grants over applications for social related applications i.e. BMX club subscriptions when Positive parenting- in house and intensive- is required.*

## Summary of information from the Worker Feedback forms

In general, feedback from workers was very positive. Eighty seven percent were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience of applying for a grant. Over 90% felt the support they had been given to make an application was adequate, or more than adequate. **Many workers commented upon the ease and clarity of the application process, and were appreciative of the amount of support given by the fund administrator, and other Odyssey House staff.** As well, many workers indicated that they liked being able to complete applications online. Problems experienced by some workers, however, would suggest the need for both hard copy and online application options. This may also be useful for other forms, such as the feedback forms. When asked to consider the impact of the CTKs brokerage fund, **workers suggested the process of application was valuable in facilitating or reinforcing a holistic or “whole of family” focus.** The process of making an application process **also contributed to closer relationships with clients, and to improved service provision.**

Feedback about barriers or difficulties encountered when completing the fund showed two main areas of concern for workers. **The first area of concern related to the length of time between making an application and receiving notification of the success of the grant, and also the time between notification and receiving funds.** Workers indicated this caused administrative problems, but also led to stress for the families involved in the grant application. The need to provide regular feedback about the success of the grant was stressed by several workers in when making suggestions for improvement. **The second area of concern related to the amount of worker time and effort required by the application.** This also led to suggestions for improvement, relating to the payment of funds in particular. Several workers also suggested that larger organisations have staff dedicated to the process of making applications.



# *Family Feedback forms: Agency and family impact*

## *Introduction*

Analysis of information from the Family Feedback forms will be presented in several sections. The first section will report on general information about the numbers of forms received, and characteristics of the workers completing the forms. The second section will report on analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the form. Information will be presented relating to:

- Worker learnings as a result of making an application to the fund;
- Feedback from workers, carers, and children about perceived impacts of grants received.

The term carer, in preference to parent, has been used in this section because of the number of grandparents caring for children receiving grants.

## *General information*

- A total of 89 Family Feedback forms were collected from 60 workers. being 25% of all workers making applications between 2006-2008 (Round 1);
  - Workers who completed the forms made between 1 and 9 applications (median = one application);
  - Workers came from all states, with most forms from workers based in Victoria (70%), followed by Tasmania (17% of all forms), ACT (5% of forms), Western Australia (4%), Queensland (3%) and South Australia (1%);
  - Workers came from 54 agencies (the number of forms completed by workers from one agency ranged from 1-11; median =1), being 29% of all agencies from which applications were made between 2006-2008 (Round 1);
- Family Feedback forms represented 89 applications (i.e. one form for each application), being 21% of all applications made between 2006-2008 (Round 1)
  - Applications were made in all three years covered by the evaluation:
    - 2006 (7%)
    - 2007 (77%)
    - 2008 (16%)
  - Forty four percent of the 89 applications were fully granted, being slightly more than the 33% of all applications which were fully granted between 2006-2008 (Round 1);

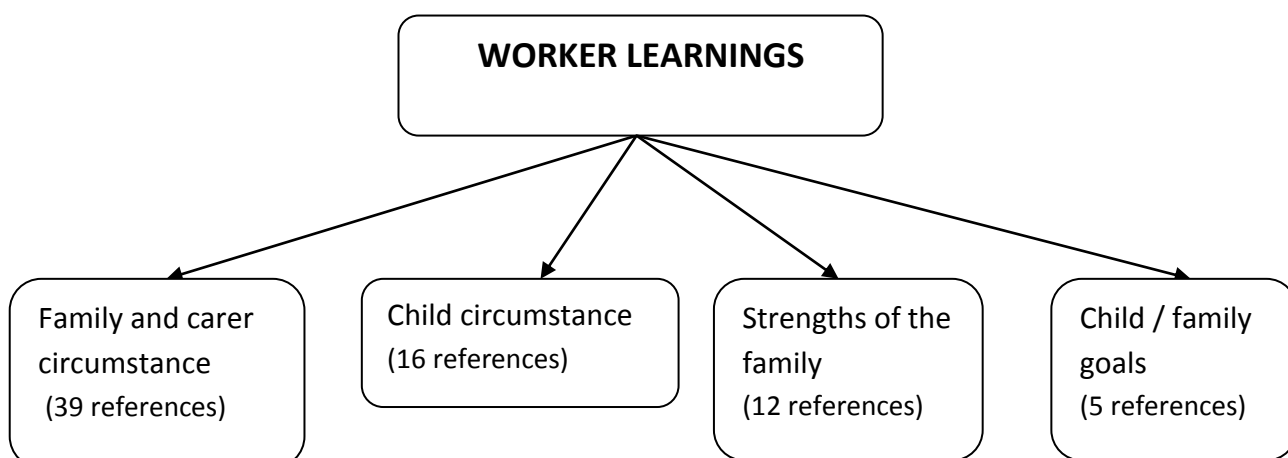
## Qualitative information

### Question 1:

The first question used in the Family Feedback form asked workers:

*“In the course of the application process, have you discovered anything about this family that you may otherwise not have explored or had the opportunity to assist with?”*

Five workers either did not respond to this question, or responded in the negative. The following diagram represents the coding categories identified for remaining responses to Question 1. As in the previous analysis of the Worker Feedback form, the boxes include the number of times reference was made to the categories by workers (i.e. the number of references identified as being relevant to the coding category). This figure indirectly reflects the relative salience of the category for respondents .



The category with the largest number of comments made by workers related to learnings about family and carer circumstances:

*I gained more clarity as to the day to day difficulties and stresses the family was under. It also provided an opportunity to better understand the family background.*

*I believe I have gained further insight into the dynamics of this family which has been of benefit in the counselling process.*

*Discovered what this family needed and found important. Seeing them together to make choices about needs rather than wants. Great to observe this process.*

*It has really provided an opportunity for the mother to discuss openly the impact of her former drug use on her capacity to “get on with life”.*

Other comments related to specific situations, with several references to housing environments; financial stressors; and health issues:

*This family are experiencing a significant space problem in their home. We are now working toward rectifying this issue.*

*On assessing (circumstances as part) of the application for this fund I discovered that (child's name) did not have a bed and that this was a source of concern to his mother. I would probably not have heard of this had I not asked directly.*

*They are in debt because of legal fees, not qualifying for legal aid. The ongoing costs for medical and dental treatment, including travelling costs. A new respect for the daily hurdles they surmount.*

*Had been aware of their financial difficulties, but it reinforced the financial difficulties that single grandmothers find themselves when they care for their grandchildren.*

*This family have some significant and ongoing serious health challenges that (we) were not aware of. We are now looking at referrals to specialist agencies.*

Workers also indicated that the new knowledge enabled them to refer families to other services they might otherwise have not had access to:

*There were many things discovered, for instance, the opportunity to assist with other services. Because we became close during our time together, the mother shared personal concerns and asked for assistance to resolve them. The mother has a lot more confidence to ask for help.*

*The background of the grandmother is the stuff of novels. We have been able to set up a support network in her local community to assist with managing (the child's) behaviour.*

The second largest category of response to Question1 related to improved knowledge of children's circumstances, including educational needs:

*Have had discussions about the impact different relationships have had on the child's behaviour. Have a greater understanding of his issues.*

*The girls have been very open about their family and living circumstances. I have learnt about their interests and things they enjoy doing.*

*It was a wonderful opportunity to make more regular contact with family. Opened up a channel of communication between school staff and family, revealing information about (child's) "growing up" history, an understanding of (child's) family relationships and his father's recovery process.*

*It has meant more conversation (and hopefully) learning about (the child's) educational and developmental needs at this time in his life.*

Another category relating to increased worker knowledge indicated improved appreciation of family/carer and child strengths:

*The family's commitment to ensuring their children do not miss out on the things other families take for granted. This family genuinely grateful and thoughtful for assistance.*

*Mother's concern for her children's well-being. Mother commitment to treatment for herself and her children.*

*I discovered how resilient and mature (child) has been. Having at times to live on her own and take herself off to school while mother was in prison.*

The last category found for Question 1 related to worker knowledge of child and family goals:

*This was a real opportunity for the mother to talk about what she wished for her children's future and how she really wanted to draw out their natural skills.*

*The application process triggered discussion with my client about her child's needs and her plans for herself and her son in the future.*

#### **Questions 2-4:**

A series of questions were used in the Family Feedback form to obtain an understanding of the perceived impacts of receiving grant money. Workers were asked:

*From your perspective, please comment on any impacts which the grant has had for your clients' children, and for the family as a whole*

Carers were asked:

*Can you describe any difference which the grant has made in your life and your children's life?*

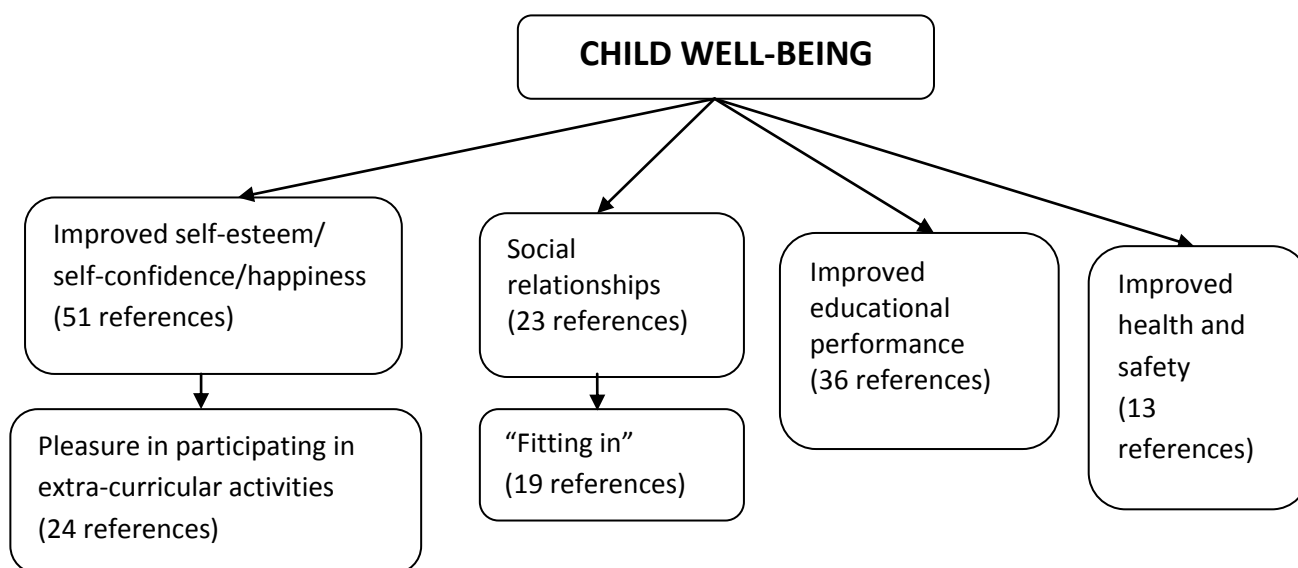
Children were asked:

*What's been good about doing.... or getting the ....?*

The majority of workers (97%) responded to Question 2. Feedback was obtained from 83% of carers, and 84% of children who were recipients of the fund, in response to Questions 3 and 4.

During coding of responses to the questions relating to perceived impacts of the fund, it became apparent that workers, carers and children were referring to similar outcomes. Content analysis was therefore undertaken for all responses made to Questions 2, 3 and 4, by all respondents.

Impacts of the fund were described for children, carers and families. The largest impact was for children's well-being, as shown by the following thematic map:



Many references from workers, carers and children themselves, reflected on how the fund had improved the self-esteem; self-confidence, and happiness of children (which often led to other positive consequences):

*It's been a great boost to the children's ...self esteem, and consequently to the caregivers self-esteem. The children are enjoying... healthy activities. (One child) in particular is achieving very successfully in golf and has greatly improved social friendships.*

*There is a noticeable increase and enthusiasm at school. (Child) has (in the past) had the tendency to look at life negatively, however these days he's more positive about life.*

*(Child) is a much less stressed young person attending university and I would suggest that it has prevented her from "giving up" university due to too much work load and stress.*

*I believe that my children having this grant has made them happier and more confident in themselves. I like being able to leave the house to go and do something with them and watch them have fun. Their dad has also made an effort to come into town to watch them.*

*The grant has enabled (child) to develop leadership skills and get a real focus fro the future. We would have struggled to be able to let me participate without the grant.*

*I love playing tennis and Nan is always there to watch. I feel safe and happy. I love my tutor. She is cool and she makes the work fun and I am better with my maths as well. I don't feel like stupid so much anymore.*

Workers, carers and children also described happy outcomes from specific extra-curricular activities:

*(Child) hasn't stopped playing since receiving the guitar- very engaged with music store personnel and about to commence lessons this week – very excited.*

*The girls are loving the singing. (Child) practices at home and thinks she is an opera singer. The kids would not have been able to go to singing if it wasn't for the funding. The singing gives the girls a sense of doing something that any other kid can do and that they're enjoying.*

*(Child) is a different person on the dance floor. He's happier, more confident and a shining star when he is dancing.*

*I used to do drumming before but mum couldn't afford it anymore so being able to do it again is great as I'm getting better at it all the time and I like the teacher.*

*The bikes. I can now visit my friends down the road. I can play footy on the paddock. I've never had a new bed before.*

The category with the next largest number of comments from respondents related to positive changes to children's social relationships:

*Child's response to the approval of this funding has been that she feels confident with her position at school, no longer feeling isolated or in danger of possible exclusion.*

*The grant provided (the mother) with the ability to access day care on a regular basis. This increased (child's) social interactions and greatly relieved (mother's) 24 hour parenting role.*

*The mother has an air of confidence about her now, and the children are joining in social activities.*

*I have just started girl guides. I am going for the second time. I like it because I have made 7 new friends and at the end of the term I get some badges. I am also going to do swimming soon which I am excited about too.*

*School camp was great except I missed my mum. I made new friends.*

A significant number of references within the broader category of social relationships suggested the fund had enabled children to feel less different, and better able to "fit in" with their friends.

*She feels less like a "poor relation" amongst her friends.*

*It has assisted the child's self esteem and ability to fit in with other children.*

*I believe that the trip away gave the young person something that is not often thought to be important – feeling like everyone else and having something new to talk about and be proud of.*

*It allows the kids (to do things) like any other normal family. It doesn't make them seem different and we can do things as a family. It's the simple things – we can ride our bikes to school, to the pool and go on picnics. It makes the kids feel happier and they can go riding and swimming together and with their friends.*

*It's awesome, my kids are happier. They have new friends, they go to parties with the other kids from child care. We feel like we belong in the community because we do the things other families do all the time. The kids have a trendy winter wardrobe to wear and they look like they belong with all the other kids.*

*I just love having a new uniform. I look like the other kids. Thank you very much!*

*The cricket gear meant that I could play in the team and feel like the other kids. Really cool!*

The next category identified from coding related to ways in which the fund had improved educational or vocational outcomes for children, particularly as a consequence of tutoring to help with learning problems:

*The grant has enabled (the child) to continue his education. At the end of 2007 he had lost interest in continuing his education. This was due to his belief that his grandmother did not have the finances to allow him to do Years 11 and 12.*

*Helped (child) to participate in class activities and to be more confident. Develop some more literacy and numeracy skills. Child happier at school, therefore family happy and pleased with his progress. Still having educational difficulties but the support is helping him to cope better and participate.*

*(Child's) reading is improving daily. Her confidence is growing along with it. Her carer finds that their daily lives are less challenging with less conflict. Home life is smoother.*

*The grant has helped heaps with school work. I'm now able to complete work neatly and it's on time.*

*I have really appreciated being able to learn new skills. I hope to join the navy.*

*I feel better about myself and having the computer has assisted me with school work and seeking part-time employment options.*

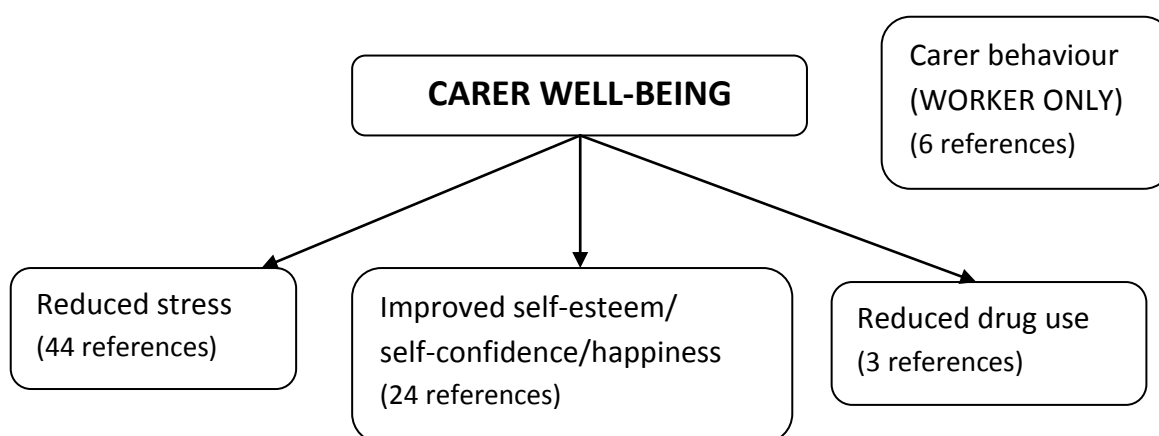
The last category within the child well-being theme, included comments related to ways in which the fund had helped to improve children's health or safety:

*Improvement of health and personal hygiene (especially as had clothes to change into rather than wearing the same clothes over and over).*

*The kids sleep now and love being in their new beds. They don't have disturbed sleep now, less bad dreams too. It's made a huge difference.*

*Could not afford the costs of seeing the doctor she felt comfortable with, now she can.*

In addition to impacts for children, respondents suggested that the CTKs fund had had substantial impacts for carer well-being, as illustrated by the following thematic map:



Most references were made to how the fund reduced levels of carer stress, and in particular reducing financial pressures. This often led to other positive outcomes:

*His grandparents have had a burden of guilt lifted from them because they couldn't afford to do this for him.*

*Many, many thanks from the carer. (They) said all of the things provided through the funding have changed their lives, has relieved some of the financial, emotional and physical stress of caring for five children and has enabled them to spend quality time with the children.*

*This grant has made a great impact on me because it has taken a huge financial strain off me. I would literally have had no food in the cupboard if I had to pay for membership. In fact (my child) would have had to cease playing, and this would have had a disastrous effect on us as a family unit.*

*It has been brilliant. I am studying now. The kids go to day care and I can relax and get involved with my study and not worry about the cost of care.*

There were also many comments reflecting improved self-esteem, self-confidence and positive outcomes for carers more generally:

*The relief and empowerment (the carer) felt due to being able to purchase clothing for her children. After struggling with her own problems and seeing her children going without necessities, with this financial assistance my client's self-esteem has grown.*



*At one stage, the grandmother cried as we left the store –very positive impact. Also on me as the worker. Thank you.*

*Feeling more complete and closer to goals. Good to have clothes and drawers to put clothes in rather than being on the floor. I'm able to concentrate on the big picture now as it's not so overwhelming.*

*I am in prison for doing drug offences. (The fund) has enabled my children to stay at the same school they were attending. This eases the guilt I feel at affecting their lives by being in prison.*

Several carers suggested that the fund had indirectly led to reduced drug use:

*Being a single mum, this has taken the strain off having to budget so strategically. It relieves my anxiety and depression regarding the children's needs. My usage of cannabis has dropped dramatically.*

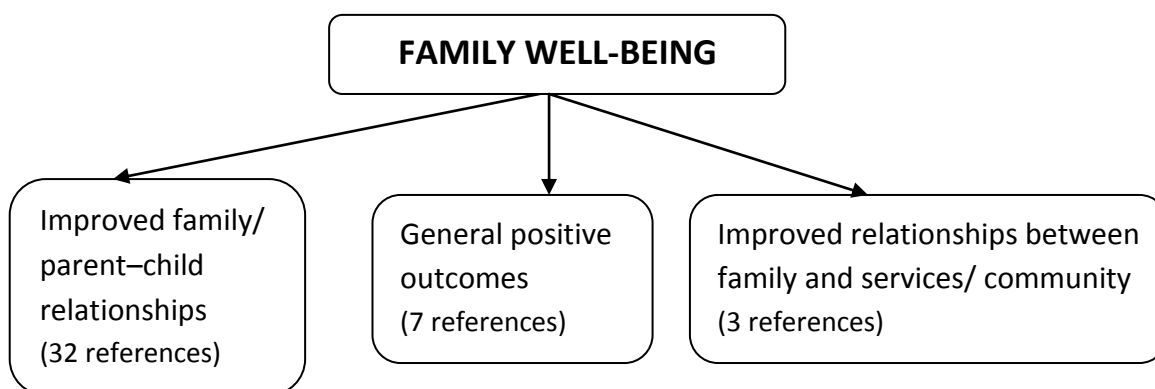
*Staying sober so I get to do things with the kids. We're in more of a routine thing now with stuff to do. Weekends was hardest with the alcohol-easy now there is something to look forward to.*

Lastly, several workers made mention of how they had observed positive changes in carer behaviour since receiving funds from CTBs:

*(The carer) has taken a sense of responsibility with the children since receiving the brokerage funds.*

*Increased confidence in parenting- connectedness to the children.*

Finally, workers, and carers commented on positive changes to the functioning of the family unit, as a consequence receiving support from the CTBs fund as show by the following thematic map:



Most references were to improved relationships within the family:

*I believe the nature of the request also facilitated a bonding and connection within the family because each of the children were treated equally and received a personal item the same as each other. This was a very important issue at the time and remains so.*

*The grant has enabled (child) to have important contact with her sister which will now continue, hopefully, for the rest of their lives. This connection is terribly important and the physical journey would have been impossible without your help.*

*.. the tennis lessons have enabled the children's grandmother to be involved in an activity that all of them find joy in.*

*Relationship between child and mother positive. Child trusting of mother as she followed through with commitment to provide him with clothes and books for school.*

*Was great to see them in a great environment, watching kids at sport and encouraging them. I had only seen them engaging in negative interactions before this.*

Other references indicated positive outcomes more generally:

*The family expressed excitement with the arrival of their new bedding and furniture, and as a result, there seems to be a sense of pride and connectedness.....*

*Being able to participate in swimming has had an impact in a number of ways. It has allowed (mother) to interact with other parents that don't use substances. It has provided more structure and routine for the family as a whole.*

*I think the grant came at a time when the family most needed encouragement and recognition of what they had already achieved. Apart from the practical assistance, it was a real boost to their emotional and psychological health and well-being.*

Lastly, workers commented on ways in which the fund had positively altered relationships with the community or with services:

*The parents and child were so excited and it changed their view of services. They had never got a great deal from anyone and were overwhelmed with the support and help offered.*

*Family feel supported financially and socially by the community. Increases feelings of trust/social capital.*

## Summary of information from Family Feedback forms

Workers indicated that the process of applying to the Counting the Kids brokerage fund had **substantially improved their understanding and knowledge of family, carer and child circumstances**, information that would not otherwise have been acquired. Many references were made to a better appreciation of the financial constraints experienced by families, of difficult living circumstances, and of the specific needs of children. In addition, workers also reported the process of application had allowed them to observe, or better appreciate, family strengths such as a commitment on the part of parents to ensure their children's needs are met.

The Family Feedback form asked for perceptions of the impact of the fund for families and children. Workers were asked to obtain direct feedback from carers and children, where possible, providing a comprehensive picture of the ways in which the fund has made a difference to the lives of those receiving grants. Coding indicated that the views of workers, carers and children were very similar. The largest group of impacts related to child well-being, and in particular to **improvements in children's self-esteem, self-confidence and happiness** as a consequence of being able to participate in activities, or of receiving new goods. Feedback suggested the fund gave children opportunities to make **new friendships** and to receive **help with learning issues**. Several older children continued their education as a result of receiving financial assistance from the CTKs fund. Of particular note, was the frequent reference to the importance of the fund in **helping children to feel like they "fit in"**, and to have experiences in common with their peers.

Impacts for carers were also positive. Many references were made to how the support from the CTKs brokerage fund had **reduced carer stress and relieved financial strain**, in particular. Several parents described how this had led them to reduce their use of cannabis and alcohol. Workers also observed how the grant had strengthened bonds between carer and children.

The final category of impacts reported by workers and carers related to the well-being of families more generally. Workers described **improved relationships between family members** as a consequence of reduced financial stress and new opportunities provided by the fund. Several workers, for example, observed how children's participation in extra-curricular sporting activities had led to closer relationships with their parents. References were also made to how the fund had led **greater trust and stronger relationships between families, service providers and the community**.

# Family Vignette 3

## The D Family

Ms D and Mr D live with their five children. They rely on Centrelink benefits and public transport, and have very little family support. Mr D has a long history of drug and alcohol abuse and had a very traumatic upbringing living in out of home care and group homes. The family were living in a three bedroom house with three adults and six children. The house only had mattresses on the floor with most of the family sharing one double mattress. The house had very little heating, furniture, storage and activities for the children. The parents struggled to provide the basics for the children including access to school services and clothing.

Since receiving the Odyssey House funding the family's circumstances have changed significantly. The family have moved to a five bedroom house as they were able to use some of the money to make repairs on their previous home in preparation for the transfer. Each bedroom now contains a bed, curtains, dresser, computer desk and chair. The children were all able to purchase warm clothing for winter and school clothing so they can now wear the school requirements. Several children have been recognised for their sporting ability and have been able to continue with their sports.

The children are able to access all school activities such as excursions and camp where previously they stayed home because they couldn't afford to attend. Ms D has also started driving lessons to be able to transport children to activities. Several children are now accessing weekly tutoring for their learning difficulties. All the children are eagerly awaiting the weather to warm up so they can start swimming lessons.

### *iii Worker interviews*

#### *Introduction*

Results of analysis of the transcripts from worker interviews will be structured around the themes present in the interview schedule, relating to:

- Need for the fund
- Consequences of the fund
- The application process, and
- Improvements to the fund or application process

Many of the comments made by the interview respondents reflected themes found in the qualitative analysis of the Worker and Family Feedback forms.

#### *General information*

Table 4 describes information about the workers who took part in the in-depth interviews, the organisations they worked for and applications they made.

**Table 4. Details of workers who participated in in-depth interviews**

<b>Worker</b>	<b>State/ Territory</b>	<b>Services provided by organisation</b>	<b>Number of applications</b>	<b>Years applications were made</b>	<b>Status of applications</b>
Child & family worker	ACT	Family support	1	2007	Fully granted
Operations manager	Victoria	(Missing)	1	2007	Fully granted
Principal	Tasmania	School	5	2007/2008	Fully granted/ declined
Child/youth support	Victoria	Family/youth services	5	2007	Fully granted/ partially granted/ declined
Family AOD worker	Victoria	Drug and alcohol services	8	2007/2008	Fully granted/ partially granted
Childcare	ACT	Drug & alcohol services	11	2007	Fully granted /partially granted

## *Analysis of interviews*

Transcripts from the in-depth interviews with workers were analysed in relation to the key themes around which questions were structured in the interview schedule (see Appendix E). Feedback from respondents was summarised according to these key themes and will be presented in the following sections, including quotes from workers to illustrate main issues.

### ***Need for the fund***

All six respondents identified a high need for the brokerage fund and spoke of the opportunities it provided for families.

*In our particular organisation there's a high, high need. We could have, if we had the resources to write the applications we could have written applications for every one of our families, and we've got more than 400 children on our books in Victoria. A lot of our applications, we didn't go looking for the need, they sort of came to us but if we had of, we definitely would have, I would say, 95-100% need for an application.*

### ***Heard about the fund?***

Respondents heard about the brokerage fund either from colleagues (e.g. managers during team meetings or supervision, or co-workers who were previously responsible for completing funding applications) or from publicity about the fund through Odyssey House. All respondents had completed applications for the fund, but now had varying roles in this regard. For example, in one organisation applications were centralised through the respondent, whereas in others the application process was delegated to others or supervised by respondents. Having one person coordinating the application process was recommended by several respondents.

All six respondents said they have recommended the fund to colleagues and at times, the respondent's own success in obtaining funding for their clients was the stimulus for other workers to complete applications. Conferences, regional network meetings and general word of mouth with colleagues were described as means of publicising the Funds.

Two respondents were guarded about speaking to colleagues about the Fund, concerned that such recommendations might create competition for funding. This was seen as particularly undesirable given the time and resources being devoted to the process.

*It's a significant investment in time. I also don't want to be cutting my throat...if I tell ten colleagues, chances are three of them may be switched on to apply and whilst that would be fantastic in the big picture, in the little picture, what it means is that my kids might miss out, you know what I mean?*

One respondent reflected that the way their agency had initially advertised the Fund didn't resonate with clients or with workers.

*I certainly was frustrated with my staff that people were just passively resisting. I think they just saw it as add-on, it wasn't normal business, it wasn't their normal thing to do with their clients...*

One respondent spoke of inviting a client to promote the fund within the client group. This was initially unsuccessful, but did work after a time.

## ***Alternatives to the fund?***

All respondents reflected that the Odyssey House brokerage fund was filling an unmet need. No respondents were aware of any equivalent funding, unless the children of their clients were under a care and protection order where some of these costs (but not all) would be met by statutory services. Certain other funds (e.g. the Smith Family, Rotary) might also fund only one component of the monies sought from the brokerage fund, but no other funding source was seen as so readily able to address the needs of families in such a holistic way.

## ***Consequences of the Fund***

### *Positive consequences for workers*

Five respondents described the professional and personal benefits of the Fund for themselves, their colleagues and their organisations (one respondent did not perceive any benefits). Benefits included:

- the development of new skills such as applying for funding and managing the fund within the agency;
- increased understanding of the value of working with families in a child-and family-focused way;
- increased motivation on the part of workers;
- increased trust with families;
- enhanced knowledge of other services available and building relationships with service providers;
- receiving feedback from other professionals (e.g. speech therapists) engaged via the funding;
- spending less time looking for funding;
- being able to demonstrate organisational leadership in this area;
- being able to be part of families' experiences in purchasing the items;
- Increased knowledge of family circumstances;
- Improved relationships with families.

*..having to articulate and communicate about families and their needs is a skill, so it's professional development. I think also ....as a worker you're getting to learn or know or be connected more to what resources are available out there for families. And then of course within this community and working with the families in here it's also a benefit to be able to work with and give parents the opportunity to focus on their children you know some parents*

*for the first time are focussing on their children, they didn't realise this about their children, or they didn't realise that about their children.... Oh gosh, no. I love it. It's so good to know that there's that out there. It makes your role easier... makes you a bit more motivated.*

*...And hopefully what it has revealed is a bit of trust... A lot of them (families, or dads, or mums) have a distrust of authority.*

*We've been talking about client-focussed work and family-inclusive work here for a long time, and I suppose more than anything it increased my knowledge of the worker deficit... our workers are still thinking of individual clients, not thinking about the whole of life cycle...and thinking that you're just getting them in to dose them, and not thinking, 'what's the family impact here', and that again raised my knowledge about our internal processes more than it did about anything else, and that was a good thing.*

*Having this opportunity has expanded the practice platform of many workers who have been involved in this process.*

*...We didn't realise when we first got involved, you know the carpet was putrid and housing was saying, 'They've got to pay for new carpet' and we were saying, 'Oh, come on, it's 10 years old!' And what we didn't realise was that they actually didn't have a vacuum cleaner. And so then when I thought, well that would have been a good question at the start but who would think of that, she didn't really have a proper mop and a bucket and a broom, you know the sorts of things you'd think 'Oh, I'll just wash the floor'...*

### *Negative consequences for workers*

Three respondents reported no negative consequences of the fund for workers, although all respondents reported that the process was time consuming (e.g. requiring up to three visits with clients). One respondent commented on the concern that the funding gave the perception that the organisation and the respondent were the source of money for all who needed it.

*Well, clients see you as, 'we can get money' rather than looking at the things that have been going wrong and how to address that. So as I said, I've learnt from it you need to be very careful with it and make sure it's purposeful.*

One respondent also noted that their client group fought with each other over items in the application. Such competition and the high needs of clients at times led to aggressive behaviour, and the learning of this worker was not to let any clients know of their success with the funding until all monies had been received.

*..He came flying into my office: "How come I have to XXing wait..." and he just went on and on and he was really abusive to me... I wasn't prepared for the staff to end up wearing abuse or anger from clients because they didn't get what they wanted.*



## *Positive consequences for families*

The fund was seen as extremely valuable for families (at times overwhelmingly so) as they were able to provide for their children things they would not otherwise have been able to. The fund was seen to allow families to reconnect with each other and with the wider community, and to build positive relationships with others (e.g. mentors, workers). Respondents described the boost to children's and parents' wellbeing, self esteem and confidence. In particular, giving children a sense that they fit in and that they are important, and reducing parental stress, anxiety and guilt.

*just for the child to feel good about themselves, it contributes to that as it boosts up their self esteem and it does make them feel like that they matter in this big world, that finally they matter and maybe for the first time or for a long time, it's all about me, and I've got this new pair of shoes to wear, or a new school bag.*

*..for the parents, it takes away some of the guilt about being in a treatment facility with their children, so being able to participate with their children in extra things like sport or even to be able to buy their children a new school uniform and provide them with the schoolbooks they need through the money that we access, helps them to cope with the guilt that they have around what their children haven't had because of their substance abuse... when their parents are going with them to extra activities especially football and swimming, they're getting involved with their children and the children are feeling that they belong in the family, that they are taking care of their needs for once rather than focusing on what they [parents] need before coming to the program.*

*For us to be able to say, we can find money to pay for swimming lessons or private speech therapy or something like that it has allowed a lot of pressure to be taken off both us as workers and the families, and I think it's had a ripple effect throughout the families. Taking one pressure off doesn't take everything off but it does allow for an ease, a bit of space in the day. And to hear some of the carers, when you say you can take a bit of the extra pressure off for however long, it's just amazing, because it is a big relief.*

*For the first time in their lives, the kids had space to sleep on their own in a bed. They actually, as a family, had the opportunity to eat together, because before that they hadn't had enough chairs or room in the kitchen to seat seven people....The teenage boy had developed a high level of ownership towards his room – he was very protective of it, I mean these might be honeymoon things, but I guess this was the impact. It was privacy, it was space, it was about ownership..*

*Her level of excitement now, now that we've acquitted all of the money she's been down three times now to say, "When are you coming down for a cup of tea?" So that's a very significant shift.*

Two respondents indicated that it is too early to talk about benefits – one because their clients are only part way through the process of receiving goods and services, and the second because such changes will take some time to appear after the items have been received. For one respondent

working in a pharmacotherapy treatment program with long term clients, one benefit would be for parents to become more child-focused.

*For me, I honestly think that the benefit, the real benefit, would be for the client to look at themselves in the context of their families, stop always just focussing on their drug and alcohol issues and for us to support them to realise that them and their kids have got a right to ask for these other things and just because they're drug users doesn't mean that they have to be socially isolated...*

### **Negative consequences for families**

Four respondents indicated no negative consequences of the fund for families. One respondent based in a school setting spoke of the distress caused to two children who received funding after they were made aware of the source of the funds as this stirred up bad memories for the children. Another respondent spoke of the fund raising expectations for children and families and the length of the process causing distress in some of the families.

*the mother whom I had asked to not actually say anything to her son, and she said something to him and then he was pestering her, and he was getting really upset because it wasn't coming, it wasn't coming, it wasn't coming.*

The same respondent spoke of conflict between families in the same organisation about the amounts of funding received (e.g. "Why did they get more than us?"). Another respondent with a centralised application process within their treatment community spoke of being able to avoid such conflicts by making sure equal amounts are applied for and by giving parents a list of items they can ask for.

## **The application process**

### **Understanding the process**

Most participants reported that they currently have no problems with the application guidelines, although on the initial application the process was somewhat confusing and there was some redundancy in questions in the first round. In these cases, contact with Odyssey House and Jordan Trew, the fund administrator, helped to streamline the process. Changes in the guidelines caused some confusion for one respondent. One respondent reflected that the time consuming nature of the application process is a positive in that otherwise everyone would be applying.

## *Website*

As with the application guidelines, respondents reported increasing familiarity with the website and online application. One respondent could not comment on the use of the website as that was the role of other staff in the organisation. Three respondents reported no problems with the applications; although one respondent (who is responsible for completing all applications for their organisation) reported that it can be quite daunting having to fill out multiple applications for the organisation and for multiple children within a family.

Two respondents reported difficulties with the online application. One reported that the application would time out and that the website could be improved with navigation buttons on the side. The second reported that it was difficult not being able to see the questions without having to go into a formal application form.

## *Assistance*

All respondents had received either telephone or face to face assistance from Jordan Trew, the fund administrator, which they found very supportive and helped to speed up the application process and clarify respondents' thinking. The relationship with Jordan and his accessibility were highly valued. Respondents found it easier to contact Jordan in the first instance rather than read through lengthy text. At times, the unavailability of assistance could be anxiety provoking for applicants particularly towards the closing time for the applications. It was suggested that having someone to speak to if Jordan is unavailable would help reduce this anxiety.

## *Competency*

All respondents reported that establishing the needs of the children and families was well within their professional capacities. The processes for establishing children's needs were either determined through ongoing work with clients (e.g. where parents were the client of the service and their family's needs were well known and this was an opportunity to have established needs funded) and/or in meetings specifically arranged to determine family's needs.

*As time went on, I tried to get the clients to do as much of the work as possible. Not because I didn't want to do the work, but more because it's something of an empowering exercise, for them to do it, and to find out, if they're going to send their child for tutoring lessons, to go out and find out what the tutoring lessons would involve, who would be doing it, to take ownership for part of the process.*

## *Process*

The following quote is a very clear account of the process followed by one worker when making an application to the fund:

*Have a meeting with them, this is before every time it's time to do a submission, before the quarter, before the funding is up. Have a meeting with our families. And if it's not the families here who are in the program in the halfway houses then I talk to the workers of the halfway houses so that they can go and talk to the women or the families in those houses. So I have a meeting, I explain what the fund's for, I explain that the funds are there to assist them as a family and as parents to meet the needs of their children whilst they're here in the program. I explain to them that they have to be in a program to have the funds; that if they were to leave our program the funds don't go with them, that this isn't their money that they get to keep no matter what happens. And I explain that whatever we apply for is what the fund is for. That you can't swap and change it.... they can't say 'I've changed my mind, we want to get that'. I explain all that to them and what it's all about, and at first a lot of them are pretty overwhelmed that these funds are there and that this is what they're for. I have a form I give them for them to write down some of the things that they think would benefit their children and some of the activities or some of the goods or some of the services that they think they would like to access, to benefit their children. I think I have a demonstration list, a list 'this is what...' We actually do have a list of what we can apply for. And I tell them to keep it realistic, within what the limits of this program are. That we will try our utmost to meet most things but remembering this is a therapeutic community and there are some things that we can't meet. But I definitely tell them all the examples of what it can be met for, for their children's health benefits, anything to do with schooling, anything to do with fees for camp or fees to do with school extra activities, soccer, that sort of thing.*

One respondent spoke about the criteria for the families they would refer to the Fund. Because the organisation does not want to set families up to fail, they have only taken applications from families who are relatively stable (e.g. stable housing, no domestic violence, not in the middle of a significant drug episode). The idea is that families need to be committed to the process and their commitment is reflected by them working on their issues in conjunction with receiving the funding. The following quote also illustrates how lengthy a process this may be:

*We would have a working relationship with the family ...that would have involved home visits and school visits and meeting with the family, and so then (we have conversations about the fund) if we are able to access it... the criteria... and then we would probably leave it for a bit and get them to do a bit of work and thinking, and then go back and plan what it is that might be available for this family. And that would probably take a couple of weeks, sometimes longer? ...The sorts of families that we're dealing with are quite complex. And you don't want to set the agenda, it's also about getting them to think and use their own knowledge rather than our knowledge, trying to push our stuff that we think the kids might need. But if I was honest, we guide them, because often they have no value on books and things.*

There were no reported disagreements about what items should be included in the applications. If a parent suggested something that was not appropriate for the child (e.g. a laptop computer for a three-year-old child), reference to the funding guidelines resolved this issue. In one case the worker provided families with a list of potential items to choose from, and then from a pragmatic and

community perspective (because of resources such as supervision and transport) the agency would suggest what they could support as a therapeutic treatment community.

All respondents reported that the approval process was fair, although one respondent reported that a child in their school had missed out due to the timelines and another respondent reflected on the recent change in their success rate.

*Fair? I found it really fantastic, but the last round I hardly got anything for my clients, and I felt a bit sad about that, 'cause after 3 or 4 rounds I kind of really got what it was for, and what it's about and how this fund can be really used to help people, rather than just throw money at people.*

The application and administration processes were at times seen as time-consuming, lengthy and confusing, involving a lot of writing and language which some workers might not be used to. The process was seen as very labour intensive by one respondent who reflected that their organisation was possibly doing more than it should so as to put in the best application and not miss out on funding. At times changes to the guidelines were occurring relatively frequently (described by one respondent as a “moving feast”).

### *Supporting documentation*

Whether respondents had provided supporting documentation with their applications varied considerably. One respondent had not provided any supporting documentation (and did not know it was required) but the items applied for were basic goods rather than services. Because of time constraints, another respondent had not initially provided supporting documentation until they were requested.

Another respondent had quite an extensive process for completing the application and documenting the cost of each item:

*.. our spreadsheets were like thirteen or fourteen pages for this family. I guess, I don't know if that's the way it's intended ...*

In the supporting documentation, one respondent provided details of parental health status relating to their substance misuse. Two respondents reported that they ask their clients to provide the documentation for their items (e.g. cost, brand, quantity etc) to engage parents in the process and empower them.

### *Waiting for an outcome*

Of the five respondents who answered questions about waiting for an outcome (one respondent did not complete the interview); all had said that the waiting period was lengthy. Times ranged from one month up to five (depending on how early applicants submitted their forms). Clients would often call

or visit to check on the fund's progress with the workers. One respondent commented that updates from Jordan about the fund's progress were useful.

Once the funding was approved, the funding contracts did not take long for any of the respondents. Where an organisation had facilities (e.g. corporate credit card or reserve funds) to be able to cover the purchases once the application was successful, there was no impact of funding delays on obtaining the items. One respondent mentioned that families were happy to wait for funds once they knew their application had been accepted

### *Administering the funding*

Administering the fund was sometimes seen as resource intensive and there is a need for clarity with families about what the funds are to be spent on.

*I have found that you just have to show discretion, you just have to be really clear with your clients about what the money is used for. I mean I think as long as you set up the boundaries, you say 'I need receipts for everything', it needs to be discussed beforehand...*

Processes became complicated when multiple workers were administering the funds within an organisation, and also where the responsibility for purchasing the items was the sole responsibility of the carer or was done in conjunction with a family.

*It's quite resource-intensive, because once you get the money, there's an accounting process, that involve our accounting person, and then there's a worker actually goes with the family to acquit any of the money.*

The time taken to spend the funding varies. For example in one organisation it was quick for group items (e.g. swimming lessons) and longer for individual purchases. Some families felt overwhelmed by the money and it required more than one visit to the service provider. Organising payments when money was spent in such a piecemeal fashion could be time consuming also. In some cases, invoices could be provided directly to the administering organisation. Where purchase orders were required this also made the process more cumbersome.

### *Evaluation*

One respondent did not complete the second half of the interview and another respondent had not disbursed all of the funds and so could not comment on the evaluation process. Three respondents commented on the value of the evaluation. One respondent remarked that the evaluation makes the fund accountable:

*I think the program needs to get those evaluations to know that the funds that they're providing are meeting the criteria of what the program's about. I also think it's good for the parents to sit down and think about it.*

Another respondent felt the evaluations were valuable and commented on the difficulties of obtaining children's responses to the funding due to children being unavailable for interview.

*Because I was calling or visiting during school hours I didn't often get a direct comment from the child... I would be interested in getting more feedback from the kids.*

Finally, another respondent thought a longer follow-up period would allow more time for benefits to emerge.

*I don't reckon you'll know the outcome for some of the grants for some time. In terms of things like self esteem and confidence and social isolation, that's not going to happen in three weeks. If it were a 6-month follow up, maybe...*

### ***Improvements to fund or application process***

The interviewer prompted for some improvements which were generally supported (e.g. electronic funds transfer for purchases and a checklist of items that could be applied for) but one suggested improvement was not supported (or no need was seen for it) was to categorise the items that could be applied for. It was thought that this would reduce the ability of the fund to be flexible, holistic and family-focused.

Improvements that were suggested related to:

- the timelines for the fund with the possibility of an ongoing application process rather than quarterly;
- providing opportunities to learn from the application and implementation experiences of others. This could be in the form of case studies about or networks with other organisations who had successfully applied for funding
- having a network available to those who are new to the application process – able to talk to and share information and ideas (e.g. with other workers from similar agencies who have applied for funding for different items);
- having online access to previous applications made would be useful so as not to repeat the whole process;
- making it explicit what applicants need to do if funds are unspent or if families circumstances change and they want to spend money on something else;
- changing the criteria to allow for items such as computers;
- reminding people that there is only one assessment round each quarter and if your application goes in early there will be a lengthy waiting period (notifying of timelines and time lags);
- encouraging clients (and workers) to take care in how they communicate about the fund with children – don't raise expectations too high;
- consideration of block funding (to enable agencies to run a program – e.g. of playgroup for these families as won't engage in mainstream playgroups) or for

funding to sit with agency to be distributed (although this suggestion may be unrealistic) – this would help for costs that come up intermittently (e.g. school camp) or for reimbursement for those which have already been paid (e.g. school fees and school uniforms);

- increasing staffing at Odyssey House to help with the administration of the fund and respond to inquiries;
- emailing to advise of changes to the application process with a summary of the questions that will be asked (this would be helpful to provide to parents too)

*I would allow for computers. I think that this is actually a huge downfall of the program, because all family members can benefit from having a computer. Most of these families are very socially isolated, and the internet would allow them to connect with other people, even if it's virtually?*

*..the timing of when the school camp happens and when the money could have come through meant that even though they might have wanted their kids to go on the school camp, they may not have been able to go to school camp because we couldn't promise them the money. If we actually had the money in advance, we could support...*

Other comments reflected improvements that could be made to the process from the organisation's perspective including applying for and administering funds. This included centralising processes, limiting the number of service providers that were being used to provide goods and services and appealing to a broader client base.

*..what I would say to anyone I was recommending the program to is to have one person coordinate the whole thing.*



## Summary of in-depth worker interviews

Results of analysis of the in-depth worker interviews supplemented results from the Worker and Family Feedback Forms. Participants had all completed, or had been involved in making a number of applications to the fund, so were very familiar with the processes of application and had opportunities to observe outcomes. **All respondents saw a high need for the fund and were unaware of alternative sources of funding that were equivalent to that offered by Counting the Kids.** Respondents reported a range of positive consequences arising from applications to the fund, for workers, organisations and families. Many of the benefits reflected themes arising from Worker and Family Feedback Forms. The interviews, however, also pointed out ways in which applications encouraged workers fostered stronger relationships with other agencies involved with the same family, and encouraged the sharing of information. **The fund was seen to be extremely valuable for families, fostering positive relationships with each other and the wider community.** The value of the fund in focusing parental attention on the needs of children was highlighted. **The long time taken to complete applications was considered to be a negative consequence for workers, while negative consequences for families related to the time taken to hear about the outcome of their applications, or not receiving the amount of funding that was expected.** In general, respondents did not have major concerns about the process of making an application to the fund, though may have had more problems on their initial applications. All respondents had found the support form Odyssey House valuable. Respondents provided a range of useful suggestions to improve the fund and application process.

***So in a sense, part of it is a celebration and these people have never had money to spend in their entire lives. So going to the shop and spending \$500, I mean one woman got so excited she just got totally overwhelmed and couldn't concentrate to pick out the stuff***

## Family Vignette 4

### The E Family

Mr and Mrs E live together with their five very young children. Although the family are all together at this time, there have been frequent separations between the parents over many years and the children have moved between their mother and father. There is a long history of drug and alcohol use, mental illness and domestic violence within this family as well child protection involvement. Due to these factors the children have experienced a lot of stress and change in their young lives.

Fortunately at this time the family are experiencing a level of stability and Mr and Mrs E are showing some commitment to providing more structure and security for their children. It had been initially difficult to encourage this family to accept additional supports however they are currently very receptive and the Odyssey House funds have helped to make many of those supports happen.

The opportunities that have been provided to this family through the Odyssey funds are enormous and I have been able to witness the delight of these children enjoying the activities that all children should be able to take part in. Reading at home with their parents and riding their bikes and playing with one another. Strengthening the supports provided outside the family such as tutoring, school holiday programs, after school care, childcare and sports will add richness to their lives and provide opportunities that they would otherwise miss out on.

## *iv Online survey of panel members*

### *General information*

As part of the administration of the Counting the Kids brokerage fund, applications are assessed by small panels who meet at regular intervals for this purpose. Panel members include senior management from child and family health, welfare organisations, child protection, peak parenting organisations, education and academic institutions. Panels are based in Victoria, Tasmania, and the ACT. Another panel meets in South Australia with members from South Australia and Western Australia. Each panel consists of between two to four members, with a total of 15 members across all states. Not all panel members will necessarily be present at all panel meetings.

Four panel members responded to the request to give feedback about the panel process (27% of the total number of panel members). The four respondents came from Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia.

### *Analysis of survey responses*

Completed survey forms were analysed in relation to (1) questions relating to the panel process and (2) questions relating to the administration of applications. Feedback from respondents was summarised according to these key themes and will be presented in the following sections.

#### ***Panel process***

All respondents thought that sufficient time was permitted for assessing applications (depending on their schedules). Panel members spent between 10 and 20 minutes assessing applications (one respondent could not remember how long the assessments took).

All three respondents who answered the question regarding panel meetings found them to be very conducive to the assessment process, providing a broad range of expertise, stimulating discussion and as an efficient means of dealing with the applications. The online process which was suggested as a future option for panels was endorsed by participants, but the face to face panel meetings and the cross-sectoral experience represented at these were highly valued.

All four respondents were happy with the sitting fee for the assessment panel (\$750).

#### ***Administration of applications***

Panel members were asked to reflect on the value of the four criteria used to assist in decision making. The criteria are as follows:

##### Criterion 1:

- the child's prospects of participating in pro-social activities,

- the child's health,
- the child's educational development or employment prospects,
- the child's connectedness to the community or their family,
- the child's self esteem and well-being.

Criterion 2: The grant will provide a sustainable, long-term benefit to the child.

Criterion 3: Other avenues of funding or services are unavailable, insufficient or otherwise inappropriate.

Criterion 4: The application demonstrates that the worker has invested substantial effort to ensure the application is appropriate for the individual children and family, in accordance with the guidelines available on the brokerage fund website.

One panel member thought all of the selection criteria were sufficient. One respondent commented that there is no prioritisation within the criteria, and while this respondent perceived that all aspects of criterion one “are important, some will have a more profound effect on the [child]’s wellbeing than others”. This panel member also reflected that criterion four is important but is a separate issue to the needs of the children and the content of the request. A second panel member reflected that criterion four is often not met and suggested adding a specific question relating to direct consultation with the child or young person where this is appropriate. The former respondent indicated that the requests also vary according to severity, urgency and relative needs and this should be reflected in the recommendations for funding using a prioritisation system. A fourth panel member reflected that a link between the child and the family environment needs to be made more explicit.

All respondents thought that the requirements for applicants to provide supporting documentation were appropriate and important. Reflections on documentation were that applicants needed to be reminded not to provide confidential information (e.g. parental health status) and incorporating information about what the children think about the items that are being requested. It was also suggested that it could be noted for the panel members on the applications if valid supporting documentation was received.

The ability to ask for further information if required was considered important by one panel member. Also thought to be important were details about what other sources of funding applicants may have approached and details of the application histories of applicants (e.g. what has previously been successfully or unsuccessfully requested). As mentioned above, two respondents indicated direct consultations with the children or young people in the applications as important additional information.

One panel member noted that some items appear in applications late in the year when the need for them obviously precedes the application (e.g. requests for school equipment appearing late in the school year) and thought there might be some way to be able to address this need.

Another panel member noted that it is important to let applicants know that they are unlikely to get all items fully funded.

Other general feedback included:

- one panel member was glad that the fund had expanded beyond children living with biological parents to those living with carers
- a short article detailing the benefits of the program for children and parents could boost the profile of the program within drug and alcohol treatment services (where perceived take up was low)
- the increase in panel members' and workers' knowledge and awareness as a result of participation in the program

### *Summary of online survey of panel members*

***Panel members were positive about the current panel process, considering it to be constructive and efficient.*** Some of those who responded to the survey, however, felt that the process of decision-making could be made easier if there was more information relating to the priorities of the fund, particularly in relation to criteria 1 (see above). Panel members also considered that it was important to workers making applications to consult directly with children and to prepare families for the possibility that not all funds would be granted. Finally, panel members were appreciative of the ability to request more information from workers to assist in understanding family circumstances and to assist in the decision-making process.

# Conclusions and recommendations

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## *Administration of the fund*

### *Processes and Support*

While the predominant feedback about the administration of the fund was very positive, there were several concerns expressed by workers that could be addressed by administrators.

- The first concern related to the lengthy period of time from submitting an application to the release of funds. This led to anxiety for caregivers involved in the applications (which in some cases resulted in added pressure for workers) and created problems if funds were needed more quickly (e.g. for a school camp). Problems also arose if children's needs changed during the period in which the application was assessed. It would be advisable for the CTKs brokerage fund to explore ways of reducing the time frame for applications to be assessed. Suggestions offered by workers included having ongoing process of assessment, rather than evaluating a large number of applications quarterly, as occurred during the period of the evaluation. This option would have significant administrative consequences, particularly for the process of evaluation by panel members.
- A second area of concern related to payment options available to organisations. For some workers the process of obtaining access to funds for families was lengthy and awkward. The administrators may wish to consider having a range of payment options available to workers and organisations (including electronic funds transfer options). As well, workers suggested the need for flexibility if situations changed from the time the applications were made.
- Most workers appreciated the option of making applications online and, once initial teething problems had been solved, it appeared that most did not encounter problems with this process. There is a need, however, to retain a hard copy option for some workers. Other suggestions made by workers included: having examples of previous applications; copies of applications being retained by organisations for use as templates for future applications; identifying a network of workers from similar organisations that could consult regarding the process of applications; and use of email to inform of changes to the application process. Workers were very happy with the level of support received from Odyssey House, and particularly from Jordan Trew the fund administrator. The only suggestion in relation to support was for Odyssey House to identify other staff that could assist with queries if Jordan was unavailable.
- The evaluation forms provided valuable qualitative feedback from workers and families about the application process and impacts of the fund. The administrators may wish to

consider supplementing the evaluation with standardised outcome measures. This would enable more objective assessment of any changes that may occur for families, caregivers, and children as a consequence of receiving support from the CTKs brokerage fund. The most relevant measures may include; measures of child self-esteem; caregiver stress and mental health (i.e. depression), and measures of the quality of the child-parent relationship. Where possible, measures should be completed by parents and children. Feedback from workers highlighted that the time taken to use funds was very variable, in most cases taking at least a month for all funds to be dispersed. As well, impacts for families may not be immediate, suggesting the need for evaluations to take place some time after the release of funds.

### *Eligibility/ exclusion guidelines*

Changes made to eligibility criteria over the period of evaluation led to significant differences to the characteristics of workers, organisations and families who made applications to the fund. Most significant was the decision to open the fund to children who were not residing with parents experiencing AOD problems. This resulted in an increase in applications for children residing with grandparents. With the rapid increase in the number of applications made to the fund in the first round for 2008, administrators were required to significantly limit the amount of funds available for individual families. Recent changes to eligibility have led, again, to the restriction of the fund to children residing with parents receiving treatment for AOD problems.

The past few years have shown some significant areas of need, and while it is not be possible for the fund to meet all these needs, there may be other roles the agency could have in assisting families who are not eligible for funding (i.e. grandparents). One worker highlighted the special needs of clients (and organisations) in country areas. Extra provisions, to cover additional travel expenses for example, could also be considered by administrators of the fund.

The recent decision to cap the amount of funds available to individual families will require that fund administrators prioritise the items requested by families. Patterns shown in analysis of information from the database show that items most likely to be funded in the period covered by the evaluation were items relating to children's participation in extra-curricular activities, and items relating to the essential needs of the family or homewares (such as bedroom furniture). The most expensive items requested related to health needs (such as dental treatments) and salaries for teacher aides, or tutors. Many children on whose behalf applications were made would appear to have significant learning difficulties. It would be useful for the database to collect information about the learning and other needs of children to obtain a clearer picture of the characteristics of children living with parents experiencing AOD problems. This information could be used to advocate for additional educational supports for children from governmental education departments.

Computers and electronic equipment are generally excluded from the CTKs brokerage fund but some exceptions were made to this policy during the period of evaluation. Many workers considered, however, that access to computers and the internet were important for their clients,

particularly adolescents for whom the internet may have a role in facilitating social relationships. This may indicate the need for a separate fund for such items in the future.

## *Impact of the fund*

### *Workers*

One of the aims of the brokerage fund, in addition to providing assistance to children, is to promote practice and cultural change within drug and alcohol treatment services. In particular, it encourages a greater awareness of the families' needs as a whole, rather than a focus on the person directly affected by drug and alcohol. Comments from workers indicated that the process of making applications to the fund had a positive impact in encouraging them to take a more holistic, family-centred approach when working with their clients. The change in eligibility criteria over the period of evaluation, however, led to fewer applications being made by AOD workers and more applications from family support workers and teachers/ principals. This change may be reflected by comments from some workers who indicated that they already worked in a holistic way with families. The recent decision to return to a focus on applications from AOD workers may result in the fund being more influential in changing the culture of organisations.

### *Families / children*

Feedback from families and children about the impacts of receiving funds from the CTKs brokerage fund were very positive. Some workers felt that families received the most benefit when closely involved in the application process, and when clients have achieved a certain level of stability in their lives (client volatility was noted as a risk for workers applying for and administering funds). This could be encouraged in the guidelines for workers making applications. A number of workers also suggested that there needs to be an emphasis on caution when completing application with families, so that families and children are not unduly disappointed if funds are not granted or only partially granted. This is particularly relevant in view of the recent decision to "cap" the amount of funds available to individual families.

### *The future*

The analysis of the evaluation findings presented in this report reflects the very high demand for and perceived benefits of the Counting the Kids Brokerage Fund. As the awareness of the fund grows and as a result, the number of applications continues to rise (e.g., applications for the first round of funding in 2008 almost totalling requests for all rounds of funding in 2007) there is also a need for the amounts to be distributed by the fund to increase accordingly, or for eligibility criteria to be tightened. The latter option could serve to disillusion applicants who had previously been able to provide resources for their clients that are not available under any other scheme. The ability of the fund to increase the awareness of practitioners to the needs of children in families in which a parent has a drug or alcohol problem and to address such needs in creative, flexible and holistic ways is of enormous benefit to the field. Any increases in the monetary resources supplied to the fund should be matched by a concurrent increase in personnel to administer the fund – the personalised support provided by Odyssey House staff was highly valued by applicants, and it could be argued, is one of



the factors contributing to the culture shift taking place in organisations as they move towards more child-inclusive practice. Future research regarding the Brokerage Fund could examine this and other factors involved in promoting or hampering such cultural shift, and, as identified above, should include outcomes data where appropriate. Disseminating details about the fund and its perceived benefits in the form of research papers, reports and conference presentations is a crucial step in sharing details of promising practices in this field.

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# Appendices

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## *Appendix A*

### **Application form for the Counting the Kids brokerage fund**

#### **Organisation**

Organisation name  
State

#### **Program/Department**

Program or department name

#### **Organisation details**

Address for correspondence, line 1  
Address for correspondence, line 2  
Address for correspondence, line 3  
Postcode  
Main telephone (incl area code)  
Main fax (incl area code)  
ABN  
Website  
Please provide a summary of the core activities of your organisation

#### **Program/Department details**

Number of staff in this program/department

#### **Banking details**

Account name  
BSB  
Account number

#### **Worker**

First Name  
Surname  
Gender  
Job Title  
Telephone (incl area code)  
Fax (incl area code)  
Mobile  
Email Address

#### **Manager**

First Name  
Surname

Gender  
Job Title  
Telephone (incl area code)  
Fax (incl area code)  
Mobile  
Email Address

## Children

Real First Name (required)  
Real Surname (required)  
Alias (if you wish to withhold names from the selection panel)  
Gender  
Month of birth  
Year of birth  
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander  
School year level in current calendar year  
Relevant information about child

## Caregivers

Real First Name (required)  
Real Surname (required)  
Alias (if you wish to withhold names from the selection panel)  
Gender  
Year of birth  
Relationship to children  
Is this person a legal guardian of the children?  
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander  
Suburb  
Post Code  
Primary drug of concern  
Secondary drug of concern  
Type of service/treatment you are providing to this caregiver (if applicable)

## Family circumstances

Please provide a brief summary of how much time the children spend with each caregiver, along with any other relevant information about their living arrangements. If the children's living arrangements have undergone significant change in the past 6 months, please provide details.

Please provide details of any practical limitations on the caregivers to support the children's access to activities. For example: Does the family have

access to a car/public transport? Do they live in a remote location? Do the caregivers' work or other commitments limit the time they have available to deliver their children to and from activities?

Please detail your involvement with this family, including the length of your involvement and how often you see them.

## Selection criteria

Please provide a brief summary of what the grant will be used for

**Criteria 1** In which one of following ways will your grant be most beneficial?

Improving the child's prospects of participating in pro-social activities  
Improving the child's health, educational and vocational development  
Improving the child's connectedness to the community or their family  
Improving the child's self esteem and well-being

Please provide details as to how your grant will meet Criteria 1

**Criteria 2** How will the grant provide a sustainable, long-term benefit to the child?

**Criteria 3** Why does the child need this grant? Do other avenues of funding exist? If so, what barriers exist for this family in accessing such funding?

Please provide any additional information relevant to your application

## Funding requests

Child(ren) who will benefit from this request

Request name

Quantity/Duration (if applicable)

Details of request

Supplier name

Supplier contact details

Will you be submitting supporting documentation for this request?

Total cost (numbers only)

## Appendix B

### Application guidelines

#### Introduction

Workers should familiarise themselves with these funding guidelines before lodging an application. Use the submenu on the right of the screen to navigate the guidelines. To print the funding guidelines in a single document,

#### Funding rules

Please select from the submenu to the right.

#### Eligibility

##### Children

Grants are available to children aged 1 to 17 years whose lives have been impacted by their caregiver's drug or alcohol problems.

The priority of this fund is to assist children whose legal guardian (caregiver) has or is recovering from a drug or alcohol problem. At least 80% of our funding will be allocated to children in this situation. To be eligible for funding, the caregiver(s) must be engaged in drug and alcohol treatment.

The fund also aims to assist children who are in the care of relatives due to a caregiver's drug or alcohol problem. Up to 20% of our funding is available to children in this situation. To be eligible for funding, the affected caregiver must still be involved in the child's life and must be engaged in drug and alcohol treatment.

Grants are not available to children living in foster care, living independently or under the age of 1 year.

##### Organisations

Applications must be lodged by organisations that provide AOD treatment services.

The organisation must have had a relationship with the caregiver for at least two months prior to lodging an application.

Applications must be lodged by the caregiver's primary AOD worker.

Eligible workers are welcome to write applications in collaboration with doctors, psychologists, school staff and so on.

#### What we fund

Grants are awarded for services, activities and material goods of direct benefit to the children in a family affected by drug or alcohol problems.

Grants are not awarded to cover agency program costs, staff salaries, events, capital works, equipment for organisations or similar.

##### Ineligible items

The following requests will not be funded.

*Laptops/PCs/Internet connections\**

*Private school fees*

\*These requests will only be granted in exceptional circumstances where supporting documentation is provided to demonstrate a critical need.

#### Limits

##### Limits for children

Grants are limited to \$2500 per child and \$4000 per family per year. A single application may not be made on behalf of multiple families: one application must be lodged for each family.

A grant application may include up to three requests per child. Requests that relate to each other can be grouped together as one request. For example:

*Request 1 for James: Hockey fees, uniform and stick. Total \$500*

*Request 2 for James: Flights to visit grandparents interstate, taxi fares to/from airport. Total \$1500*

Grants will not be awarded for arrears payments or for purchases already made.

##### Limits for organisations

A maximum of 5 applications can be lodged per agency per funding round.

### **Limits for individual requests**

General clothing	\$250
Bikes with accessories	\$200
Cameras	\$150
Cots and accessories	\$300
Chests of drawers/tallboys	\$160
Beds	\$160
Bunkbeds	\$250
Mattresses	\$200
Bedding	\$150

### **Selection criteria and process**

Applications are assessed within two weeks of close of applications for each funding round. In most cases grant payments will be made within the following two weeks.

An independent selection panel consisting of community and government representatives is responsible for funding decisions. The selection panel assesses eligible applications against the selection criteria detailed below:

#### **Selection criteria**

Criterion 1: The grant will improve at least one of the following:

- the child's prospects of participating in pro-social activities,
- the child's health,
- the child's educational development or employment prospects,
- the child's connectedness to the community or their family,
- the child's self esteem and well-being.

Criterion 2: The grant will provide a sustainable, long-term benefit to the child.

Criterion 3: Other avenues of funding or services are unavailable, insufficient or otherwise inappropriate.

Criterion 4: The application demonstrates that the worker has invested substantial effort to ensure the application is appropriate for the individual children and family, in accordance with the guidelines available on the brokerage fund website. (these guidelines)

### **Information required**

Applications must be lodged via the online application form, and need to include the following information:

#### **Organisation details**

Organisation name

Program name (if applicable)

ABN (this must match to the organisation name provided)

Contact details

Street address

Mailing address

Bank account details

Name of CEO

Brief description of your services

#### **Worker details**

Name

Position

Contact details

Name of manager

Manager's contact details

#### **Family details**

Description of family structure

Living arrangements

Practical limitations to caring for children

Details of family's relationship with worker

Location

### **Children's details**

Name  
Age  
Gender  
School year level  
Identified problems  
ATSI status

### **Caregiver details**

Name  
Age  
Relationship to child  
Legal guardianship  
Drug and alcohol details (where applicable)  
ATSI status

### **Individual requests**

Name and description  
Supplier name  
Supplier contact information  
Quantity/duration  
Cost  
Children to benefit  
Justification for need

### **Responses to selection criteria**

See "Selection criteria and process"

## **Assessing children's needs**

When preparing an application it is important that the worker identify the child's needs and formulate an appropriate response. The worker should seek the family's input on what the child needs and is interested in, and apply appropriate professional judgment in arriving at a response. The worker should also seek to discuss any health or educational issues with relevant parties such as school teachers, doctors and so on.

For further information please select from the submenu to the right.

## **General considerations**

Below are some things to consider when assessing the appropriateness of a request.

### **Age-appropriateness**

Is the request suitable for a child of this age? Are there alternatives that may better suit this age group? Is the category of request suitable at all, or would it be better to consider something completely different?

*Example: The client has requested a drum kit for their 5 year old child at a cost of \$300. Is such an item appropriate for a child of this age? Might the child be better to get involved in a music program where they can interact with other children and experience a range of musical instruments? Does the child have other more pressing developmental concerns?*

### **Sustainability**

Is the request going to provide a sustainable benefit to the child? How will the caregivers continue to support this activity if we are unable to continue assisting them?

*Example: The client has requested fees for a local sports club, however the family are in temporary accommodation and is likely to move in coming months. Is it likely that the child will have difficulty attending the club once the family has moved?*

*Example: The client has requested funds to cover the fees for an exclusive drama school with high yearly fees. Will the caregivers be able to afford the ongoing fees without the assistance of our funding?*

### **Value**

Is the price of this request appropriate? Could a cheaper alternative be found that fulfils the same function?

*Example: The client has requested a new bike for their 11 year old child. They have picked out a bike from a local supplier for \$500 plus accessories. Could a cheaper bike satisfy the needs of the child? Could the excess money then be used to enhance the child's life in another way?*



## **Safety**

Is the request going to be safe for this child? Is the caregiver able to satisfactorily supervise their child's use of it?

*Example: The client, a single mother with a 12 year old and a 3 year old, has requested an inflatable play pool for her 3 year old. Will the mother be able to keep a constant eye on her youngest if her eldest is distracting her? Might the mother's drug or alcohol problem compromise her ability to supervise?*

## **Alternative funding sources**

Could the request be funded through an alternative source? If alternative sources exist, the selection panel are likely to knock back the request unless the application provides details as to why the alternative source cannot be accessed.

## **Needs**

### **Essential needs**

When talking to a client about an application, direct questions about what they would like for their child may not uncover some of the broader issues and barriers that the child is facing. Instead, putting the application aside and focussing on discussing the child's life may provide the worker with a better starting point for establishing what services and activities might benefit the family.

Four important areas for discussion are health and well-being, education, extra-curricular activities and childcare. Even if the worker is already familiar with the child's situation, asking the client for an update might be helpful. Where appropriate, seeking the child's input is also very important.

### **Health and well-being**

The selection panel considers health problems to be a funding priority. Workers are encouraged to discuss health matters with their clients. As caregivers may often have a sketchy understanding of their child's health status, it is advisable to seek input from the family doctor.

Requests for involved medical problems must be accompanied by supporting documentation. This may include supporting letters from health professionals, results of formal health assessments, and quotes for medical procedures.

A child may be in need of various medical assessments to determine any health concerns. A worker may include the cost of such assessments in their application. It is most likely that we will cover the costs of any assessment (where an application meets all the eligibility criteria), even if the assessments require no follow up treatment, or if the selection panel decline to fund the recommended treatment.

Common areas of concern include:

- vision
- hearing
- teeth
- psychology
- physiotherapy
- speech therapy
- occupational therapy

We are able to fund various costs associated with these issues, including assessments, therapies, treatments, and aids (e.g. spectacles).

### **Education**

When assessing a child's educational development and their capacity for involvement, it is advised that the worker consult the child's school and caregivers, as well as the child themselves where appropriate.

Educational barriers may exist on a number of fronts:

- caregivers' inability to pay
  - school fees
  - uniforms, books and equipment
  - specialised subjects
  - excursions
  - school camps
  - TAFE fees

- child's difficulties with
  - learning
  - socialising
  - self-esteem

A grant may assist in simply covering the costs that a family cannot meet, or may be used to provide specialised services such as tutoring, counselling, the services of an integration aide, or other educational products aimed at addressing the child's difficulties.

Requests for involved educational problems must be accompanied by supporting documentation. This may include supporting letters from school principals, the results of formal educational or mental health assessments, or quotes for tutoring.

Requests for computers will only be granted in exceptional circumstances where supporting documentation is provided to demonstrate a critical need. Such requests should be discussed with the fund administrator prior to lodging an application.

### **Extra-curricular activities**

Extra-curricular activities can enhance children's physical and mental health as well as their social skills and self-esteem. Examples include sports, scouts, drama, dancing, singing, and other social groups. We can also assist with associated costs such as uniforms, equipment, and travel costs.

It is important that a child be involved in activities that they have a demonstrated interest in. Workers should speak with the family and the child's school to establish what activities the child has expressed an interest in or has enjoyed participating in. Workers should also ask the child personally about what they would like to do.

As these activities often require a time commitment from caregivers, workers should consider whether the caregivers are able to make this commitment.

### **Childcare**

Childcare is an important element of a child's social life and development, and provides respite for caregivers. Requests for childcare at private centres will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Family Daycare centres are preferred as they provide a cost-effective option with greater scope for connecting the child and their caregivers to the local community.

### **Other needs**

#### *Basic needs*

- Bedding
- Clothing and shoes

#### *Bedroom Furniture*

- Beds and mattresses
- Cots
- Wardrobes
- Desks

#### *Trips away*

Requests for trips away should explain in detail why the trip is needed. Preference will be given to trips that provide the maximum opportunity for interaction between caregivers and children, or that reconnect children with relatives. Workers should provide as much information as possible about the practicalities of the trip (e.g. travel times, accommodation arrangements, activities, reason for choice of location) and how the family will benefit.

## **Information to include**

To allow the selection panel to properly assess applications workers should provide all relevant information in a concise manner. Some requests should be accompanied by supporting documentation. If an application is not sufficiently detailed the application may be returned for amendment.

Below is a summary of information workers may need to include in their application.

### **General details**

#### *Family circumstances*

Applications should include the following information:

- What is the child's living situation?
- If the child is in the part-time care of a caregiver, what are the circumstances (e.g. the reason, the duration) and is it known when/if the child will be returned to the caregiver's full time care?

- Do the child's caregivers work?
- Do the caregiver's drug or alcohol problems have particular adverse effects on their parenting?
- Over what period of time will a requested activity take place - e.g. three months of a sporting activity; twelve months of childcare etc.
- How will the worker manage payments for long-term activities to ensure that the child is engaging and that the money is going towards the intended activity?

#### *Health problems*

- What is the history of the child's health problem?
- Has a formal assessment been done? If so, what are the recommendations?
- Is treatment covered by the public health system?
- Are there unreasonable waiting lists for the treatment?
- Is the family able to employ preventative measures to assist in the long term management of the problem?
- How is the child's life impacted by their health problem?

#### *Education*

- Has a formal education assessment been done? If so, what are the recommendations?
- What programs does the school have to cater to the child's needs?
- Have attempts been made previously to address the child's needs?
- What are the child's strengths and weaknesses at school?
- How does the child feel about their educational development and their school life?

#### *Extra-curricular activities*

- Has the child been involved in the requested activity before?
- Has the child demonstrated a particular interest in this activity?
- Can the child get involved in this activity through school before taking it up outside of school?
- How will the child get to and from the activity? Are there any barriers to the caregivers providing transportation?

#### *Bedroom furniture*

- What are the child's current sleeping/bedroom arrangements?

#### *Trips away*

- Why has this particular location been chosen?
- How much travel time will the trip involve?
- What sorts of activities or facilities will be available to the family?
- Are the caregivers in a position to look after their children satisfactorily while away?
- Is the purpose of the trip to visit relatives?

## **Supporting documentation**

### **Required supporting documentation**

#### *Requests relating to a child's health*

Requests relating to involved medical problems must be accompanied by supporting documentation. This may include supporting letters from health professionals, results of formal health assessments, and quotes for medical procedures.

A child may be in need of various medical assessments to determine any health concerns. A worker may include the cost of such assessments in their application. It is most likely that we will cover the costs of any assessment (where an application meets all the eligibility criteria), even if the assessments require no follow up treatment, or if the selection panel decline to fund the recommended treatment.

#### *Requests relating to a child's education*

Requests for involved educational problems must be accompanied by supporting documentation. This may include supporting letters from school principals, the results of formal educational or mental health assessments of a child, or quotes for tutoring.

### **Other supporting documentation**

Workers may choose to include supporting statements from people consulted while writing the application, such as other workers, doctors, teachers, school principals, family members and so on. These are not required, however they will demonstrate that the relevant parties have been consulted.

### **Grant payments**

#### **Grant payments**

Successful grants can be paid in various ways.

#### *Payments to the applying agency*

We can make grant payments directly to the applying agency. In this case, the worker is responsible for ensuring that the grant is spent as agreed and that copies of all receipts are returned to Odyssey House in a timely manner.

#### *Direct payments to various suppliers*

We can also make payments directly to individual suppliers. Workers should provide full contact details for the suppliers in their application. The fund administrator will organise these payments in consultation with the worker.

#### *Use of grants*

Grants must be used within the timeframe agreed between the fund administrator and the worker. Any unused funds after this period must be returned to Odyssey House Victoria.

### **Administration payments**

Organisations will receive an administration payment of \$100.00 for each successful application they lodge. This payment is intended to subsidise the cost to organisations of making applications and administering funds received.

### **Evaluation of the program**

Successful applicants are required to complete a brief 2-3 page evaluation questionnaire. The questionnaire addresses the impact of the grant on the family and the organisation, and the worker's satisfaction with the application process.

### **Privacy**

All family details including names, age, gender, drug use and treatment information must be provided accurately and in full.

If a worker or family is concerned about privacy, the worker may nominate aliases for the family members' names in addition to their real names. When the selection panel assess the application they will only see the aliases.

For example: Ms Anne Smith is worried that one of the selection panel members knows her and may be biased in their assessment. The worker completes the application, providing Ms Smith's full name, along with an alias of Amanda Spiteri. When this application comes up for assessment, the selection panel will only see the name Amanda Spiteri.

## Appendix C

### Worker Feedback and Family Feedback

#### 1. Worker Feedback form

#### EVALUATION FORM

##### Worker

##### Experience of applying for grants

1. On the scale below, please indicate your overall experience of applying for grants.

Please select ...

2. Please comment on any strengths of the application process.

3. Please comment on any barriers or difficulties in the application process.

4. On the scale below, please indicate the adequacy of the support in applying for the grant.

Please select ...

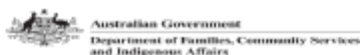
5. On average, how long after you received the grant cheque did you spend the money?

6. Please provide any suggestions regarding how the application process can be improved.

##### Impact on agency/worker practice

7. Has applying for this grant changed the way in which you might work with clients in the future? Please comment.

## Family Feedback Forms



### COUNTING THE KIDS BROKERAGE FUND



Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Worker

##### Impact on agency/worker practice

1. In the course of the application process, have you discovered anything about this family that you otherwise may not have explored or had the opportunity to assist with? Please comment.

##### Perceived impact on recipient of grant

2. From your perspective, please comment on any impacts which the grant has had for your clients' children, and for the family as a whole.

#### Recipients

##### Parent(s)

3. Can you describe any difference which the grant has made in your life and your children's life? (Prompts: What have been the benefits? Why has it been useful? What has it allowed you to do that you otherwise may not have done?)

##### Children

4. What's been good about doing ..... or getting the .....? (Insert items or service purchased with grant into your question). (Prompts: Have you started it, used it? How has it been good, helped?)

## Appendix D

### Guidelines use to code worker jobs and item categories

#### 1. Worker coding

1 = Workers from educational services i.e. principals, School counsellors, Child care directors

2= Workers who identify themselves as being D&A workers OR workers who provided a general job description but who worked in agencies providing D&A services i.e. D&A caseworker OR case worker, psychologist; project worker etc

3=Family support worker i.e. job titles in which family support features

4= "Other" professional i.e. child or youth worker; Nurse; Case manager (not from a D&A agency); clinician, therapist or mental health professional

#### 2. Item Coding

<p><b>1. Education/ learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutoring/ programmes to help with learning (visual perception training)</li> <li>• Childcare</li> <li>• TAFE/ VET</li> <li>• Books/ educational books</li> <li>• School costs and camps/ excursions</li> <li>• Psych-educational assessments</li> <li>• School uniform/ school shoes</li> <li>• Stationary and school supplies</li> <li>• Educational software</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Homewares/ Basic needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Furniture (including computer desks)</li> <li>• Home repairs</li> <li>• Bedding/manchester</li> <li>• Clothing (general)</li> <li>• Shoes (running shoes/ sports shoes not related to a specific sport)</li> <li>• Infant essentials</li> <li>• Rental costs</li> <li>• Home electrical equipment (washing machine, microwave, rice cooker, clothes dryer, heating/ air-conditioning, electric shaver)</li> <li>• Turf/ Plants</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Health and well-being</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical</li> <li>• Dental/ orthodontic</li> <li>• Therapy/ counselling</li> <li>• Optometry</li> <li>• Therapy/ support programmes (Life long learning; mentoring; social skills)</li> </ul>	<p><b>4. Electronic equipment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computers etc</li> <li>• Cameras</li> <li>• Mobile phone</li> <li>• iPods</li> <li>• Internet</li> <li>• CD player</li> <li>• TVs</li> <li>• Stereos</li> </ul>

<p><b>5. Recreational/ social activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational activities</li> <li>• Sporting activities and lessons</li> <li>• Musical Instruments and lessons</li> <li>• Board games</li> <li>• Toys/ play equipment</li> <li>• Bikes and bike equipment</li> <li>• Sewing and gardening stuff</li> <li>• Language lessons (not as part of school curriculum)</li> <li>• Social clubs</li> <li>• Clothing (specific to sports i.e. soccer boots and sport uniform)</li> </ul>	<p><b>6. Family</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Babysitting</li> <li>• Respite</li> <li>• Vacation care</li> <li>• After school care</li> <li>• Breakfast &amp; lunch programme</li> <li>• Holiday programmes</li> <li>• Family Day Care</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Transport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel costs</li> <li>• Car repairs</li> <li>• Driving lessons and help with getting licence</li> <li>• Bus/ train fares</li> <li>• <b>Airfares</b></li> <li>• Car seats</li> <li>• Petrol</li> </ul>	



## Appendix E

### Questions included in the in-depth worker interviews

#### Need for the programme:

##### **What is the worker's sense of the need that exists for our programme:**

1. What is your perception of the level of need for the programme?
2. What difference has obtaining support from the brokerage fund made to the lives of your clients and their families?

##### **Does the worker know of any other workers who have applied; have they recommended it to anyone else?**

3. How did you find out about the brokerage fund?
4. Do you know if any of your co-workers have applied? Were they successful?

Would you recommend our programme to your colleagues?

##### **Alternatives?**

5. Have you gained any additional knowledge of available support and services in applying for this programme?
6. Can you comment on the level of redundancy of the fund?
7. Are the needs the addressed currently being sufficiently met by another source?

#### The Programme

##### **Has the worker found the programme valuable? If yes, why?**

8. Please comment on the value of the programme.
9. What are the benefits the child/ family have obtained through the programme? Were any of these unexpected?
10. Are you aware of any suffering the child or family has in any way endured as a results of involvement of the programme?
11. Are you aware of any misuse of the programme by any persons, including both clients and workers?

If so,

12. Are others in your organisation aware of this?
13. How was it dealt with?
14. What do you feel could be done to prevent this kind of outcome?

##### **In what ways does the worker feel the programme could be improved (Note: this relates to macro level changes e.g. providing different types of grants, providing more educational resources for workers, etc., not issues to do with the application process itself)**

15. In consideration of the fund itself, rather than the application process, how could you improve the fund as a whole?
16. How fair have you found the granting process to be?

17. What is your opinion of the potential division of grants into subsections e.g. educational, recreational etc.?
18. In the application process, did you have any difficulty in finding educational resources? Ideas for items of application? Sources for such items?

### **The Application Process**

#### **Understanding the process**

19. Did you encounter any misunderstanding regarding the guidelines?
20. Was any of the information provided to you by Odyssey House misleading, confusing or otherwise difficult to work with?

#### **Website**

21. How easy was it for you to navigate the website?
22. What could Odyssey house add to the website to make it more informative and/or user friendly?
23. Did the website adequately explain the application process and requirements?
24. Was there any information not on the website that should be/

#### **Assistance**

25. Did you contact Jordan Trew to discuss the fund at any stage?
26. How much assistance did you receive from Jordan?

Was this:

27. Adequate/ inadequate
28. Informative/ not informative
  
29. Clear/ unclear
30. Friendly/ unfriendly
31. Helpful/ unhelpful
32. Timely/ not timely

#### **Writing the application**

33. Did you use the online application form or post it in using a hard copy?

If online:

34. How did you find this process?
35. Was the form clear, comprehensive etc.?

If hard copy:

36. Why did you choose this method?

37. Are there changes which need to be made to make the online method more compatible with your needs?

38. Can you please describe the process of speaking with the family and establishing the child's needs?

39. To what extent did the family have input into the items/ services for which funding was sought (can you provide an estimate as a percentage e.g. 60% family contribution, 40% worker)?

40. Were there any items or services sought by you (the worker) which did not make the final application/  
41. How were disagreements about necessity of services/ items resolved?  
42. Whose was the final decision about items/ services requested?

**Professional competency (appraisal, resources etc.)**

43. Do you feel it was within your professional capacity to appraise the needs of each family?  
44. Was there any support lacking that would have been helpful in the appraisal process? For example, would you have found specific guidelines or a questionnaire helpful?  
e.g. minimum requirements as a checklist

Does the child have:

- Sufficient school clothing
- Access to appropriate educational materials 9required texts/tools
- Etc.

**Supporting documentation**

45. Did you provide documentation with your application?  
If so:  
46. How time consuming was this?  
47. Did this process reveal to you information that you may not have known otherwise?  
  
48. Were there any particular reasons you did/ did not include documentation?

**Waiting for an outcome**

49. How long did you have to wait for the outcome?  
50. Was this a satisfactory timeframe? N/Y  
51. How could this time frame have been improved in your situation?  
  
52. Once the outcome was known, how long did it take to arrange the funding contracts and receive the cheque?  
53. Was this a satisfactory timeframe? N/Y  
54. In your opinion, is there a method of dispensing funds which is more efficient for all parties? (If so, please elaborate)

**Administering the funding and evaluating the grant impact**

55. Upon receiving the cheque from Odyssey House, were there any difficulties in processing it?  
56. Were there any difficulties in assigning the funding to the worker?  
57. How time consuming was this process?  
  
58. Would an electronic funds transfer be preferable to a cheque payment?  
59. Approximately how long after receiving the cheque were all the funds spent?  
60. Did the family's circumstances change during this time?

61. Did you need to amend the application N/Y  
If yes,
62. How easy was this to do?
63. Did you find the process satisfactory?
64. How much work was involved in arranging payment for the various requests agreed upon?
65. What would make this process easier?
66. How do you feel about this process relative to the outcome?
67. Was the administration payment beneficial (for applications after July 2007)?

### **Evaluation questions**

68. What was your opinion of the evaluation questionnaires?
69. Do you think these are valuable?
70. How do you feel about the areas addressed by the questionnaires? (Are there any areas you feel should be addressed by these evaluations?)

### **Support from Odyssey House staff**

71. Did you seek support from Jordan at any stage during the process?
72. If so, was this support satisfactory? Timely?
73. Are there any additional methods of support you would like to see introduced?

### **Changes to the process**

#### **Does the worker have any thoughts on how we could improve the application process?**

74. What improvements could be made to the application process?
75. Have you encountered similar programmes which had vastly different methods of application?
- If so:
76. What was good about this method?
77. What was bad about it?

### **Impact**

78. Please describe the impact that being involved with the brokerage fund has had on you professionally?
79. Have there been any key benefits? (If so, what?)
80. Have there been any key detriments? (If so, what?)
81. What impact has the grant had on the children/ family?
82. Do you feel that this impact could/ would have been attained through other means/
83. Has the program impacted on agency practice? Do you feel this has been for the better or worse?
84. Are there any aspects to the fund that we have not discussed that you consider to be of significance in your particular situation? Is there anything more about the fund (feedback, impact, application process etc.) about which we have not asked that you would like to raise?

## Appendix F

### Questions included in the online survey of panel members

#### Process

Do you feel that the time made available for you to undertake your assessments was sufficient?

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Approximately how much time did you spend assessing each application on average?

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(For VIC, QLD, SA and WA) Did you find selection panel meetings to be conducive to constructive decision making? Do you feel they were necessary?

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Would you be comfortable to conduct and submit your assessments online in a forum that provided the facility, where necessary, to consult with other panel members?

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Are you happy with the current \$750 fee per round for your contribution to the program?

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#### Applications

Do you feel that the selection criteria (see below) are sufficient to measure the quality of applications?

Criterion 1 The grant will improve one of the following:

- the child's prospects of participating in pro-social activities
- the child's health
- the child's educational development or employment prospects
- the child's connectedness to the community or their family
- the child's self esteem and well-being

Criterion 2: The grant will provide a sustainable, long-term benefit to the child.

Criterion 3: Other avenues of funding or services are unavailable, insufficient or otherwise inappropriate.

Criterion 4: The application demonstrates that the worker has invested substantial effort to ensure the application is appropriate for the individual children and family, in accordance with the guidelines available on the brokerage fund website.

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Do you feel that the requirements on applicants to provide supporting documentation are appropriate?

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Is there any information, that we have previously not sought from applicants, that you feel would improve your ability to assess applications?

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Do you have any other ideas for improving the quality of applications and ease of assessment?

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If you have any general feedback or ideas that you would like to contribute, please do so.

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## Appendix G

### Tables showing details of amounts requested and amounts granted for item groups in 2006, 2007, and 2008.

NB: Information was missing for some amounts requested, so the number of items reported within the total for this category will not be consistent with totals reported for applications. It should be noted that amounts requested and amounts granted may reflect items requested or granted for more than one child. Grants were initially limited at \$4,000 per child, so some applications requested up to \$12,000 for items benefiting three children (i.e. \$4,000 x 3).

#### Amounts requested and granted for item groups in 2006

Item Category	Amount requested (\$)			Amount granted (\$)*		
	N	Sum	Range	N	Sum	Range
Health needs	9	23,067	55 - 14,212	4	18,012	25 - 14,212
Education/ learning	57	35,040	10 - 3,200	32	14,812	10 - 1,872
Transport	25	13,945	60 - 3,412	17	5,028	50 - 1,200
Homewares/ Essential needs	89	29,059	20 - 3,000	82	19,488	20 - 1,450
Recreation/ Social activities	125	56,812	25 - 457	105	41,013	25 - 4,576
Electronic equipment	25	21,967	40 - 2,041	12	9,615	96 - 1,219
Family needs (respite)	10	6,484	41 - 1,599	9	6,934	41 - 1,924
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>186,374</b>	<b>10 - 14,212</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>114,902</b>	<b>10-14,212</b>

\* = for all items fully or partially granted

#### Amounts requested and granted for item groups in 2007

Item Category	Amount requested (\$)			Amount granted (\$)*		
	N	Sum	Range	N	Sum	Range
Health needs	45	55,044	50-10,750	36	45,455	85-10,750
Education/ learning	173	192,195	30-12,000	149	149,548	30-12,000
Transport	49	29,577	32 - 4,370	45	24,821	32-3,900
Homewares/ Essential needs	332	131,581	6-8,646	313	106,498	6-8,646
Recreation/ Social activities	298	119,472	19- 4,000	265	103,033	19-4,000
Electronic equipment	59	40,753	88-2,400	33	18,740	150-1,500
Family needs (respite)	30	33,174	90-4,370	22	19,157	90-3,750
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>989</b>	<b>601,796</b>	<b>6-12,000</b>	<b>866</b>	<b>467,531</b>	<b>6-12,000</b>

\* = for all items fully or partially granted

**Amounts requested and granted for item groups in 2008**

<b>Item Category</b>	<b>Amount requested (\$)</b>			<b>Amount granted (\$)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>Sum</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Sum</b>	<b>Range</b>
<i>Health needs</i>	22	19,192	110 - 2,500	6	4,247	117-2,500
<i>Education/ learning</i>	149	138,027	25 - 12,000	51	19,279	62-1,200
<i>Transport</i>	30	24,513	199 - 4,000	6	2,464	235-694
<i>Homewares/ Essential needs</i>	202	80, 418	23 - 8,000	77	22,442	30 – 1,500
<i>Recreation/ Social activities</i>	197	102,965	20 - 8,800	73	24,525	20 - 2,000
<i>Electronic equipment</i>	39	24,471	58 - 4,000	2	1,400	500 - 900
<i>Family needs(respite)</i>	19	25,624	70 – 2,600	3	576	100-276
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>427,902</b>	<b>20 - 12,000</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>74,934</b>	<b>20-2,500</b>

\* = for all items fully or partially granted