

FAMILY DRUG SUPPORT – SUPPORT GROUPS REVIEW - 2009

Introduction

This report provides an update on the FDS support group program. It is a follow up from the review of the program conducted in 2008.

FDS runs support groups across the east coast of Australia. These groups are usually run on a weekly or fortnightly basis by trained facilitators. The facilitators are almost entirely former support group participants – who themselves have dealt with the problem of drug addiction in a relative.

The main sources of referrals to the support groups are through:

- The FDS telephone helpline
- The FDS's Stepping Stones (SS) program
- FDS's Bridging the Divide Program / via treatment services.

Referrals from the Helpline are via volunteers providing callers with the contact details of their nearest group. In the case of SS, the referral link is more structured: whenever SS is run in a new location, FDS try to establish a support group for the SS participants to subsequently attend.

In 2008, FDS received funding for 'Bridging the Divide', a program to increase the capacity of treatment services to work with families. The program objectives include establishing support groups in collaboration with treatment services, and referring families to support groups.

Other people are referred into the support groups through the FDS website, through advertisements or referrals from other agencies.

Most participants are women – and men tend to be brought along by their partner, at least in the initial stages. Attendance patterns vary widely. Some participants may attend regularly for years, others for a few months, others for just one meeting. People are encouraged to attend 3 or 4 times to see if the group is useful to them.

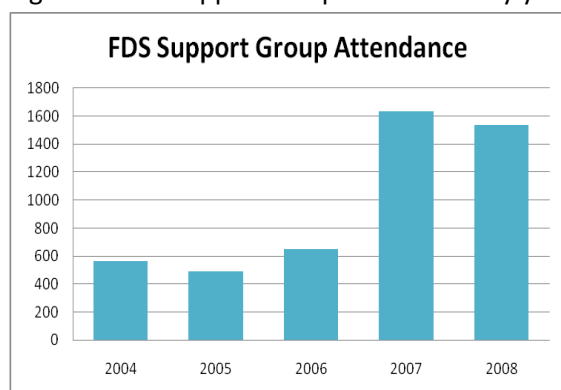
Support Group Attendance Data

In 2008, 1539 people attended family support groups, close to the attendance figures of 2007 (Table 1 and Figure 1).

Table 1. FDS Support Group attendance by year

Year	Attendance
2004	566
2005	488
2006	647
2007	1637
2008	1539

Figure 1. FDS Support Group attendance by year



In 2008, support groups were held in 16 locations, an increase from 14 in 2007. The total number of participants in each group and average per meeting for 2008 are shown below - Table 2.

Table 2. FDS Support Group Attendance - by group

Location	Total 2008	Average/meeting ¹
SYDNEY		
Ashfield/Lilyfield	291	7
Chatswood	47	2
Penrith	44	3
NSW REGIONAL		
Byron Bay	16	3
Cessnock	180	4
Coffs Harbour	87	5
Kincumber	92	4
Maryland	6	1
Port Macquarie	84	7
Windale	102	3
Wyang	10	2
QUEENSLAND		
Brisbane	20	2
VICTORIA		
Geelong	22	3
SOUTH AUSTRALIA		
Hallet Cove	121	6
Leabrook	288	12
Salisbury	129	7

¹ Includes zero attendances.