

# families ACT

**Annual Report to the Community Services Directorate  
2016-2017**

## Introduction

This report provides examples of Families ACT's work throughout the 2016-17 year and an assessment of our performance based on our annual member and stakeholder survey. The survey was conducted through June and July 2017. For each deliverable this and last year's results are presented side by side for comparison.

The number of survey respondents who were very satisfied with the work of Families ACT in all areas rose again this year. In particular, stakeholders were very satisfied with Families ACT's collaborative work (up from 62% in 2016 to 96% in 2017) and leadership and innovation (up from 67% in 2016 to 91% in 2017).

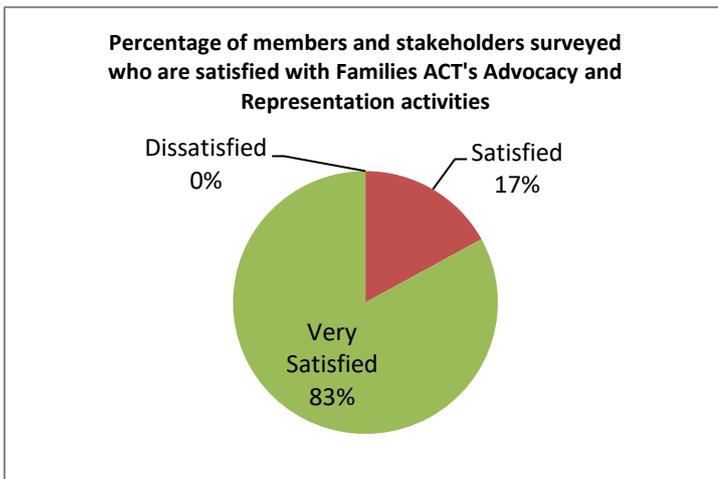
As with last year's survey, no respondents were dissatisfied with Families ACT's performance.

### 1. Systemic Advocacy and Representation

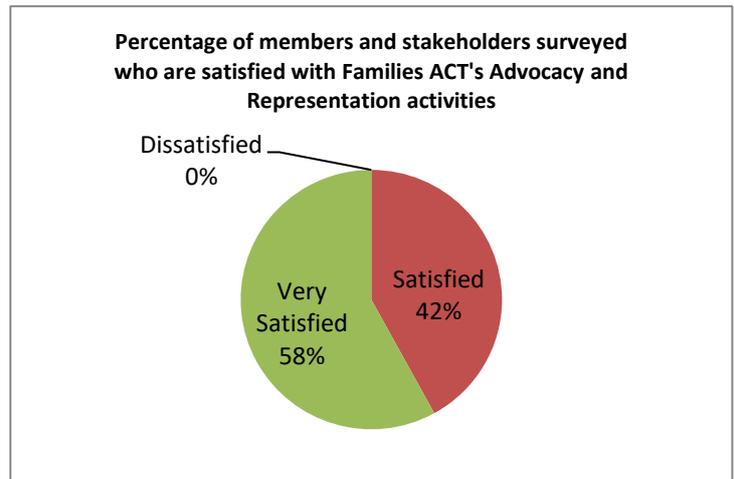
The recruitment of a part-time Communications and Research officer has helped Families ACT to develop its advocacy voice. The past year's advocacy and representation activities have included:

- Collaborating with the Youth Coalition to promote greater equity in education
- Involvement in the Education Minister's round table supporting the implementation of the Schools for All initiative
- Partnering in the development of a shared community sector statement with ACTCOSS
- An ACT Budget day media release picked up by the Canberra Times and CityNews
- Maintaining our Facebook page and improving our website content
- Attendance at CYFSP Directors meetings and Practice Managers meetings.

**2016-2017**



**2015-2016**

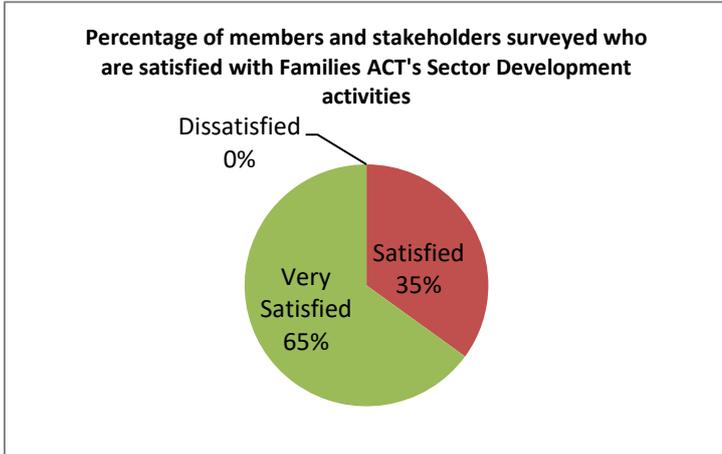


## 2. Capacity Building Contributing to Sector Development

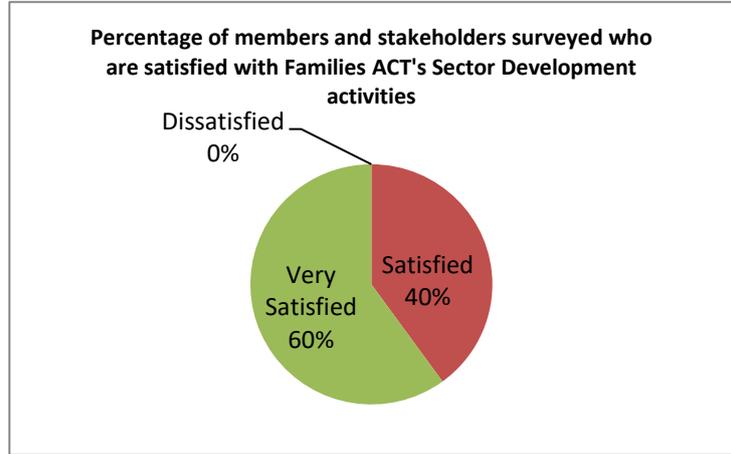
Families ACT aims to support workers and services to build their capacity to work with children, young people and families in the ACT. Our activities in this area have included:

- Delivering introduction to the Practice Framework workshops
- Playing an active role on the CYFSP workforce development sub-committee implementing initiatives like the Action Learning for Leaders courses, including shortlisting applicants for the training.

**2016-2017**



**2015-2016**



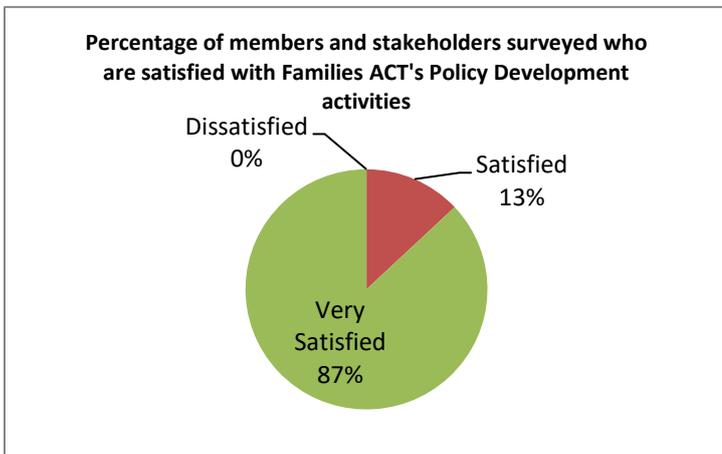
## 3. Policy Development

Each year Families ACT funds one key piece of research to support its policy agenda. This year we commissioned the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) to produce a paper of case studies illustrating examples of parent engagement in ACT schools. Effective parent engagement remains a key determinant of positive educational outcomes for children and young people.

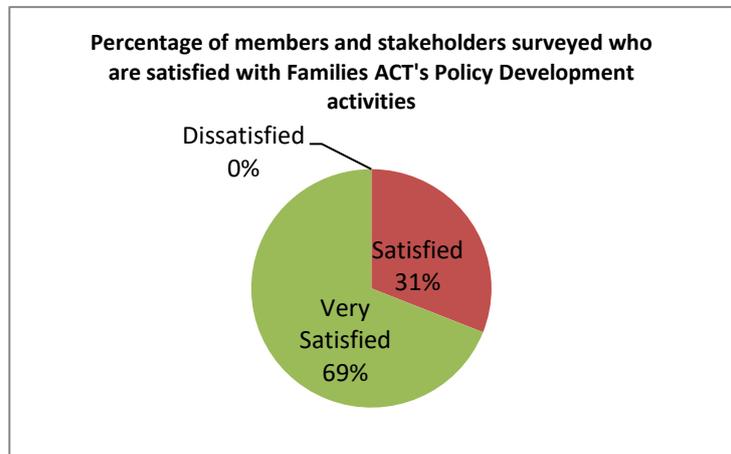
Other activities have included:

- Participation in a workshop to prioritise the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviours
- Involvement in a review of the Working with Vulnerable People Check
- Membership of the Growing Healthy Families Reference Group.

**2016-2017**



**2015-2016**



## 4. Leadership and Innovation

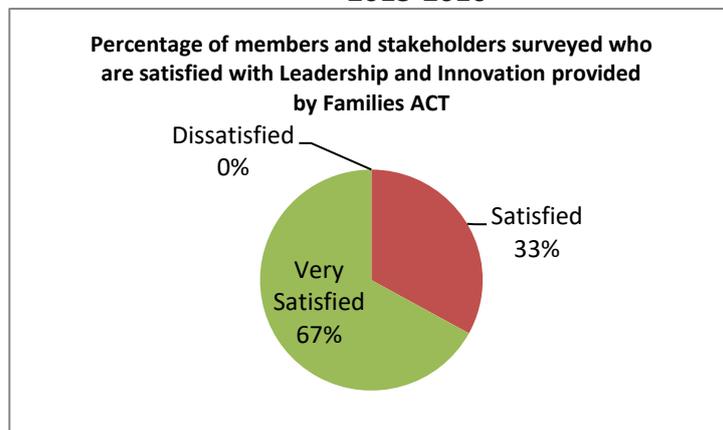
As a peak body, Families ACT has an important role to play in leadership and innovation. Promotion of preventive and early intervention approaches continues to be the underlying value in all our work. Leadership and innovation activities undertaken include:

- Running a forum on the Middle Years addressing the lack of services for 8-12 year olds
- Co-presenting a paper on our parent engagement project at the National Parent Engagement Conference
- Holding a member breakfast with the Minister for Community Services during Families Week.

**2016-2017**



**2015-2016**



## 5. Information and Advice

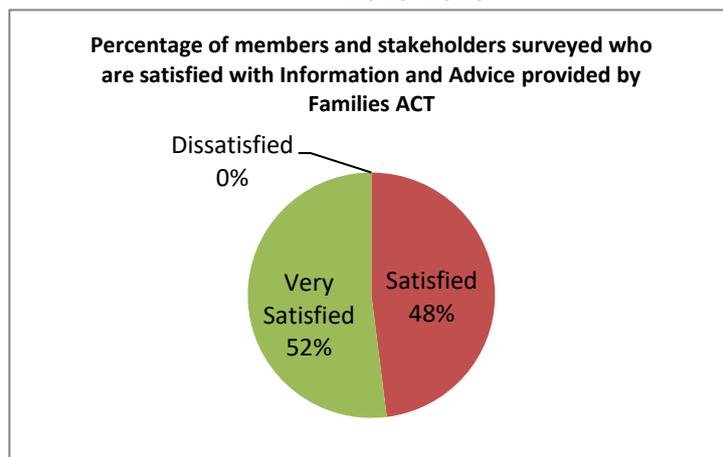
A core function of Families ACT is to communicate information and provide advice to members and stakeholders. Examples of our work in this area have included:

- Member email communications
- Including links to video from our Middle Years Forum on our website
- Participating in networks and forums.

**2016-2017**



**2015-2016**

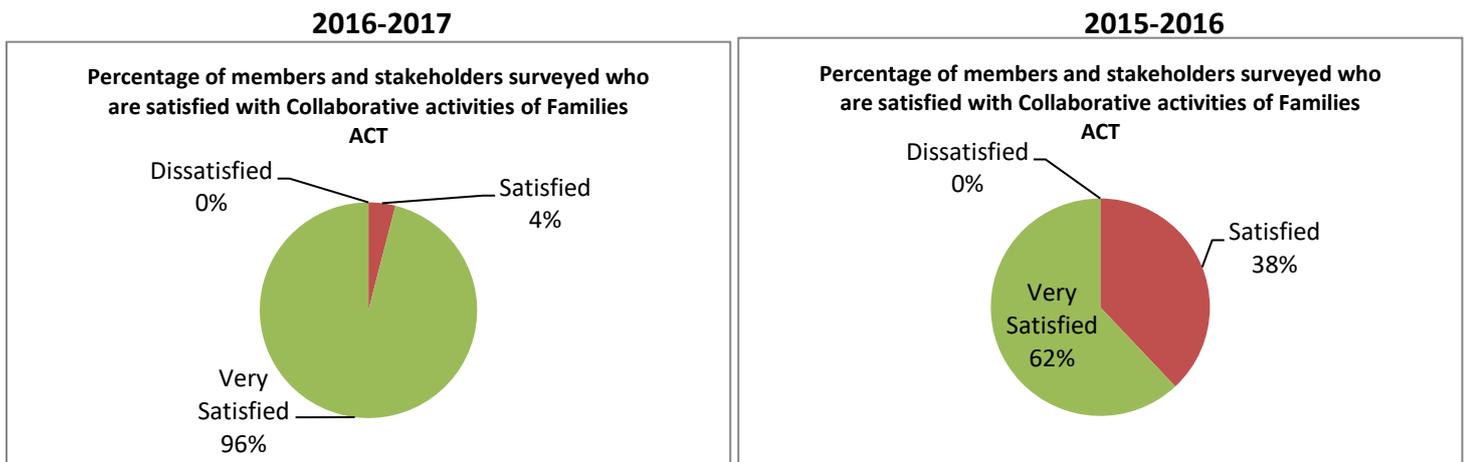


## 6. Collaborative Approaches

Families ACT supports the development of collaborative approaches and partnerships with members, peak bodies, government agencies and other services. Families ACT's co-location with the Youth Coalition continues to deliver benefits for both organisations.

Other partnership activities have included:

- Continuing work with ACTCOSS on a united community sector advocacy to address homelessness and affordable housing
- Collaborating with the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN), the Institute of Child Protection Studies and the Youth Coalition to hold a forum during Child Protection Week
- Providing financial support for CREATE's Sibling Day event.



### Member Feedback

The breakdown of responses to our members' survey was: 8% frontline workers, 44% program coordinators/team leaders, 32% senior managers and 16% CEOs/Directors.

### Strengths

Feedback from survey respondents was very positive. Some of the comments received were:

- It's great to see that Families ACT has a particular focus on advocacy, policy development and research; which complements the work that other peaks do in sector development
- Families ACT has done well in balancing...priorities over the last year, and maintaining that balance is key to meeting the needs of stakeholders, funding requirements, and ultimately the families in our community
- The ability to flow with the current needs of the community whilst also maintaining strong advocacy for the on-going struggles that families in our community face on a day-to-day basis has been a strong asset for Families ACT in the past 12 months. It will be great to see them continue to address and advocate for these issues into the future.
- Although Families ACT is small in size, the quality of the work is very high and well prioritised; and is also well communicated to stakeholders, including through social media
- ...The increased communications, additional media and social media presence over the last year or so is great, as it is important to highlight what you do.
- Your Thank you Breakfast was a brilliant idea and it was a wonderful example of quiet leadership in action. Please continue to be innovative and an example of unbiased leadership in our sector

## Areas for Improvement

While no one area was singled out as needing improvement, suggestions included:

- Increased focus on the areas of unmet need: families who are homeless; services for 8-12 year olds; children and young people who are disengaging from Education; advocacy to push for funding for intensive family support programs that develop life skills such as setting routines, budgeting, managing the household and have the aim of providing parenting support and strategies to build positive family relationships
- Political Arena and advocacy through the media.

## Priorities

Respondents identified advocacy activities and capacity building as the main priorities for Families ACT to work on. The following areas were mentioned specifically:

- Anything that leads to keeping children safe in the environment in which they live
- The communication and cooperation, or lack of, between government service providers that impact on families. The shortage of funding to services that support families and community, and expectation for agencies to deliver services on shoestring budgets
- Ongoing commitment to developing best practice in frontline Community Services workers  
Ongoing commitment to leadership development in potential future leaders across the Community Services sector
- Sector Training on emerging issues
- Advocacy around homelessness and families especially the availability and timeframes to access public housing.

## Conclusion

This year all members and stakeholders who responded to our survey suggest were satisfied or very satisfied with Families ACT's performance. Respondent feedback continues to provide valuable guidance about future activities. It is important to recognise however that the work that members would like to see expanded on and prioritised by Families ACT currently exceeds the organisation's capacity. Families ACT's Board and Advisory Council will therefore need to make decisions on which areas to prioritise in future planning.