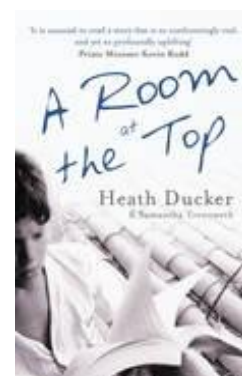


## Heath Ducker visits Stretch-A-Family

Early in May Stretch-A-Family was honoured by a visit from Heath Ducker hosted by Stanmore House. Heath generously took time out of his busy schedule to come and talk to some of our residents and staff. Heath is the author of the book launched in 2009 *A Room at the Top*.



Heath Ducker is a truly inspirational young man in his late twenties. Having graduated in Law from Sydney University, he worked with one of the top 10 Legal firms before being appointed to his current role as Ministerial Advisor to the Minister for Housing.

What makes Heath Ducker so remarkable is the fact that he achieved his educational and career goals from a severely disadvantaged and underprivileged background. He was the second eldest of ten children born to a single mother who was emotionally fragile. Most days there was nothing to eat but breakfast cereal. Just after his twelfth birthday, Heath was sexually abused by the father of the only real friend he had.

Heath was determined not to let his circumstances defeat him. The *Aunties and Uncles* program linked him with a couple that encouraged and supported him, but Heath developed his leadership skills through his involvement with *Youth Insearch*. Heath was so determined to succeed that as a teenager, he would often climb onto the roof of his house with his books as this was the only quiet place he could find to get on with his schoolwork.



Heath Ducker at SAF

In 2006, Heath appeared on the ABC TV in an episode of *Australian Story* providing inspiration for thousands of viewers. In May 2008 the Prime Minister of Australia, The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, presented him with ADC's Leadership Award 2008, presented to only 26 people from across Australia. Heath wrote his life story, story of courage, endurance and resilience to inspire other young people in similar circumstances.

The young people that were present when Heath visited us were clearly inspired by his responses to their questions. They all listened very attentively to a young man they could clearly identify with. Heath was able to join us for a lovely lunch courtesy of Stanmore House and continue to chat with young people and staff throughout the visit.

Heath continues to strive to champion the cause of disadvantaged young people. He has also lead treks for young people along the notorious Kokoda Trail with Adventure Kokoda. I am sure that we shall hear a great deal more about this young man in the future. *A Room at the Top* is a very good read and the book is available from the ABC Bookshop.

## Staff News

The last three months have been very stable staffing wise, with very little staff movement.

*Simone Blake* moved from the role of Casual Relief Youth Worker to the role of Part-time Caseworker at Stanmore House. Simone had the distinct advantage of already having a good relationship with the young people in the program for whom she is now caseworker. She is enjoying her new role.



On the 14 May 2010, the CEO of SAF *Lilian Camenzuli* celebrated the twentieth anniversary of her appointment to this position. Lilian recalls that SAF is a very different agency today to the one that she commenced working for during May 1990. The last two decades also brought considerable changes to the sector. Lilian especially welcomes the increased emphasis on agencies delivering positive outcomes for young people in care. Stretch-A-Family presented Lilian with some beautiful flowers to mark this special occasion.

*SAF CEO Lilian Camenzuli*

## Stanmore House news

During April 2010, residents and staff from the Stanmore Program attended an outing to *Goat Island*.

The outing was hosted by the *Babana Aboriginal Men's Group* with whom the Stanmore Program is affiliated due to their Mentoring Program. Staff and young people in attendance were treated to displays of aboriginal art and painting, cultural dancing and a Corroboree along with a traditional bush BBQ. This was a fantastic experience for young people who attended. Events such as this serve to enhance the cultural exchange between our services and the wider indigenous community, and this helps to break down barriers and build understanding, tolerance and an appreciation of the richness of our history and hope for the future. Young people were especially impressed with the beauty of Goat Island and Sydney Harbour and the greetings and hospitable service they were treated to upon arrival by members of the *Babana Men's Group*.

*Goat  
Island  
outing*



Stanmore Program also attended an Anzac day commemoration service hosted by *The Coloured Digger Project*, NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans and the *Babana Aboriginal Men's Group*, held at Redfern Park on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2010. This commemoration service acknowledged the spirit of Anzac day and the contributions of aboriginal diggers who fought in the major wars and campaigns and for a time were not permitted to march with their comrades on Anzac day. They also did not receive recognition or equal recompense. The NSW Premier, *Kristina Keneally*; the Hon. *Tanya Plibersek* MP Federal member for Sydney, *Clover Moore* MP, Lord Mayor of Sydney, *The Hon, Linda Burney*, Minister for Community Services, Minister for the State Plan were all in attendance and were part of the formal proceedings. There was entertainment and free pies supplied by *Harry's Café de Wheels*. This was an event of cultural and community significance, and the young people in attendance enjoyed the event and learning more about the Anzac history and traditions within Australia.



*Anzac Day Black Diggers March*

## Foster Care News

The Foster Care division has had a very busy three months getting on with the assessment of new foster carers. Our ongoing off and on advertising on *Radio WSFM* has led to a number of new enquiries and we have now completed the process of approving two new foster carers with a third expected to be approved by the end of May.

We welcomed *Anne Mc Fadden* to our team of foster carers. Anne who is originally from Ireland, lives in the inner west area and has extensive experience working with young people both in Ireland and in Australia. She is a committed, caring, and down-to-earth person who is excited at the prospect of welcoming a young person into her home. We wish her a long and happy association with SAF! We also welcomed new carer *Laura Williams* and her son *Julian* who is just as committed to the fostering process as his mother. Laura is a teacher at an International School and has a great respect for diversity and different cultures.

Our Foster Carer Get together and training night during March was well attended and enjoyed by all. It was a good opportunity to present our carers with awards acknowledging their significant contribution to young people in their care.



*Left: Renee Clout presents Anitta Kyto with a certificate.*

*Right: Carers and staff at the Training night at Bankstown Sports Club*



## On Track News

Thanks to the organisers of the *Royal Easter Show*, who donated for our young people to attend this years. Three On Track young people took advantage of this donation and had a great day out in the sun and spending their dollars on show bags!

We also received free tickets from *OzHarvest* to attend a Rugby Union game at ANZ stadium. Two young people attended and experienced the atmosphere for the first time. They had a wonderful time cheering on the NSW Waratah team!



*Police Youth Liaison officer Emma Davis meeting On Track residents*

During March, *Emma Davis*, the Police Youth Liaison Officer from Campsie Local Area Command was invited to On Track for a *Meet and Greet*. All residents attended the discussion and were able to ask Emma questions about her role, how she is different to the other uniformed police and talked briefly about how to keep as safe as possible within the community.

We are very appreciative of the support and cooperation we receive from *Campsie Police*. They work very closely with our staff to ensure that our duty of care to young people is met at the highest possible standard.

## Thanks to our generous sponsors

The generosity of our sponsors continues to overwhelm us. In April 2010 we received the welcome news that the State Street Foundation approved a grant of \$17,700 to support the On Track program delivering specialist tutoring services to young people in care. We have employed two trained teachers to deliver these services and they are already having a great impact on the educational outcomes of young people.

The State Street Foundation is the charitable grant making arm of the *State Street Corporation* whose head office is based in Boston US. The Foundation works to generate and sustain positive change in the communities where they operate. They do this by supporting charitable organizations that provide economically disadvantaged citizens with the skills they need to be successful. In 2009, State Street Foundation grants totalled US\$15.8 million

The Foundation has 36 individual contribution committees in 24 countries responsible for establishing programs and managing relationships with local recipient organizations. We were nominated for this grant through our association with *United Way Sydney*. United Way are also organising some extensive house upgrades at On Track for us later this year in partnership with staff from *Pfizer*



Our good friends at *Macquarie Capital Advisers* had a chocolate fundraising drive on our behalf at Easter time and donated \$870. The donation was matched by the *Macquarie Bank Group Foundation*. We decided to use the funds to upgrade the antiquated TV sets in each house so both Stanmore House and On Track now have a new LCD Digital TV. The young people are delighted to not only have a new LCD TV but to also have access to digital channels. It is donations such as these that put the “icing on the cake” for young people in our care.

*One of the new digital TV's at On Track*

## Planning for Stretch-A-Family's future

We have commenced the process of developing a new Strategic Plan for Stretch-A-Family for the three years from July 2010 to the end of June 2013. Grace Leotta from *Affirm* is assisting us with this planning process, and some of you may have received a survey asking you to submit your ideas for the future directions of the agency. If you have already received and responded to this survey, thank you. If you missed out on receiving a copy of the survey and have some ideas to contribute for the future directions of the agency, please email [grace@affirm.net.au](mailto:grace@affirm.net.au). Alternatively you can contact Grace on (02) 9816 3691. We value your opinion and viewpoint!

We shall publish the findings of the Strategic Planning Process in a document which will be available on our website.