



family

FAMILIES AUSTRALIA'S BULLETIN ABOUT NATIONAL FAMILY ISSUES | Issue No 7, November 2006

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CEO's foreword

Welcome to *Family*, the renamed Families Australia bulletin. *Family* will be distributed to Families Australia members and other subscribers in May and November each year. *Family* complements Families Australia's other major publication, *National Family News*, which is emailed monthly (except January).

In this issue, we reproduce a speech given by the Australian Government Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Mal Brough MP, to the ACOSS National Congress. There are also articles on the themes of child protection, family wellbeing, Indigenous affairs, and work and family.

The past year has been busy and productive for Families Australia. Membership is growing – there are now over 350 member organisations across Australia. Families Australia has advanced the views of families and family organisations to Parliamentary Committees and a range of Australian Government agencies such as the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Australian Taxation Office, Centrelink, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and Medicare.

continued overleaf...

Families Australia is Australia's not-for-profit independent peak organisation dedicated to promoting the needs and interest of families.

Family is a free publication provided twice yearly (May and November) to members and other interested stakeholders. We welcome contributions about developments in the family sector from our member organisations. Unless otherwise stated, all articles are authored by Families Australia staff. Email your contributions to: admin@familiesaustralia.org.au or send to Families Australia PO Box 83, Campbell ACT 2612.



Families Australia has also been playing a leadership role in the development of the national child protection strategy by chairing the National Child Protection Forum (June 2006) which brought together leading political, government and community representatives.

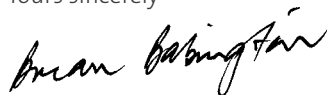
National Families Week in May 2006 was a particular success with over 105,000 people across Australia celebrating the vital importance of families in a wide range of community events. To advance discussion about work and family issues, Families Australia co-hosted the highly successful 'Work, Family and Wellbeing' Forum at the Australian National University in May 2006.

I wish to thank the Chair, Sandie de Wolf, and the Board for their leadership and enthusiastic support and to gratefully acknowledge the ongoing assistance to Families Australia by the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

The year ahead looks even more challenging as Families Australia plans to hold a series of expert forums on family policy issues, host a national symposium on family wellbeing, continue to run family focus groups, extend its representation to Government agencies, and hold National Families Week (May 2007).

We welcome feedback on Families Australia's work as well as suggestions about articles for future editions of *Family*.

Yours sincerely



Brian Babington
Chief Executive Officer



Ministerial address to the ACOSS National Congress



Transcript of the speech given by the Hon. Mal Brough MP, Australian Government Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, to the ACOSS National Congress in Sydney on 23 November 2006.

First of all let me Congratulate ACOSS on the occasion of your 50th Anniversary.

Thank you for the invitation to speak with

you today.

It is timely that I can share my thoughts with you and the Government's intention in relation to today's topic: A fair start for all children – who is responsible for protecting our children.

As parents, Sue and I see the responsibility for the protection of our children as our first and most important responsibility in life.

Giving them the best start in life was and continues to be our highest priority.

I believe that most parents feel exactly the same way. Of course most of us look for advice and assistance from a range of sources as we negotiate the obstacle course of parenthood.

Sadly not all children are fortunate enough to be part of a loving nurturing and caring family. It is these families that you, as members of ACOSS, and we, as Government, seek to assist in a range of ways from direct financial support to counselling. The Government provides substantial financial assistance to

Australian families. The Commonwealth will spend nearly \$28 billion on family assistance payments in 2006-07. This includes Family Tax benefit, Child care Benefit and Parenting payment.

We also help reinforce social cohesion and support communities to address local problems through a variety of programs like our Stronger Families and Communities strategy.

I believe that most parents use the benefits paid by the Federal Government to their families wisely. The majority of Australian families have strong values and use the money for the purpose it is intended for – to help raise their children.

But the fact remains that some do not.

Over the 5 years between 1999-00 and 2004-05 the number of child protection notifications in Australia has more than doubled from around 107,000 to 253,000. Perhaps more importantly, the number of substantiations has nearly doubled to 46,154 over the same period.

It is the human face of the parents and the



children behind these figures that State Child Protection Agencies and welfare workers come in contact with every day.

These are difficult, confronting and often complex situations that the State agencies attempt to deal with in the best interest of the children.

I acknowledge that this is a very difficult area of public policy and it is not a criticism to acknowledge that the State systems have been struggling.

The media is replete with examples of children being failed by these systems.

Can I change those systems, No I can't. Only the States can. My role today is to simply acknowledge that there is a problem and to suggest some help.

Suffice to say, it is a reality that there are often few policy options between removing a child OR leaving a child at risk with the very parents who are struggling to provide appropriate care.

Much recent media has surrounded the States efforts to bridge these two extremes or define the boundaries. For example NSW recently introduced legislation to remove new born children when there is a history of neglect and abuse in the family. In my home state of Queensland, recent media attention has focussed on the fact that the number of outstanding investigations into child abuse is continuing to rise despite there being fewer reports being made.

In Tasmania the review of child protection services was released earlier this month with the Government there endorsing a 12 point Way Forward document including 20 new case workers to reduce the 'unallocated' list. This was following the politically courageous admission that the State system was not coping.

I know there are no easy fixes here – it is a difficult area.

I am concerned, however, that despite the considerable financial and practical support from both the Australian and State Governments, we all know there is a small minority of our children who do not



receive the basic support they need.

Some of our children are not receiving the nutrition, secure housing, clothing and education that we would all consider a child's basic right.

The reality is, these children are often in families where drug and alcohol abuse is occurring or where gambling addictions have stripped the family of the cash required to support their children.

These concerns are not a reflection on the quantum of family payments it is about what that assistance is being used for.

Welfare is not for drugs, alcohol or gambling – but whatever the level of welfare, we will continue to have to confront what to do when that welfare doesn't go where intended – that is, to the very children it is provided to support.

Only this week a Doctor at the Royal Hobart Hospital called for further changes to the \$4000 baby bonus to protect children of drug addicted women. He pointed out that in cases of physical addiction their life revolves around the addiction not the child, and that paying large sums of money to these women is not a responsible action on behalf of society.

He wasn't demonising the parents – it's a simple statement of reality that their dysfunctions are also robbing their children of much deserved support.

I think his criticism is valid well beyond the Baby Bonus. It applies to all welfare delivered via parents for children, but where there is a risk the child will not get the benefit.

There is a view that if such high risk factors exist there is a need to remove the children to a safer place.

However, even if there are different views on where the line should be drawn for when a child should be removed, we all have to accept that for any number of practical reasons many kids at risk will be left with their parents by the state.

But then – what to do?

If it is agreed that a child should remain with a parent and if we do care about those children that are not being appropriately fed, clothed or housed; are we not obliged to do something to ensure the children at least receive the benefit of welfare already provided?

Surely it's the least we can do.

Today I am announcing an Australian Government proposal to assist those families identified as failing to look after their children through better income management.

Its not rocket science and I pre-empted it with a speech to the Social Innovations conference earlier this year – but it deserves cooperative consideration.

I have already written to my state and territory colleagues proposing to open discussion about these proposals.

Keeping in mind that the number of reported cases of abuse or neglect has doubled and the number of substantiations has also doubled to around 46,000 a year, the Australian Government is proposing to introduce provisions, in consultation with our state colleagues, to allow for a proportion of welfare payments to be diverted to directly pay for children's needs in certain cases.

Specifically, we are looking to work with State Child Protection to use this tool in those cases where there is an identified and substantiated risk to the child's

welfare, but not one that is sufficient to warrant that child's removal from the family.

Let me emphasise – because the practical issue of identifying these families is often cited in opposition to my proposal – These children are already known to State systems.

After receiving an interdepartment taskforce report that examined this issue, Federal Cabinet has agreed to support the principle of quarantining a proportion of welfare payments that are intended to benefit children to ensure it is spent on the child's welfare – and agreed this should be discussed in cooperation with the states and territories.

We have done considerable work on practical issues – albeit there is more to be done. For example we know what low income and welfare families do spend their money on.

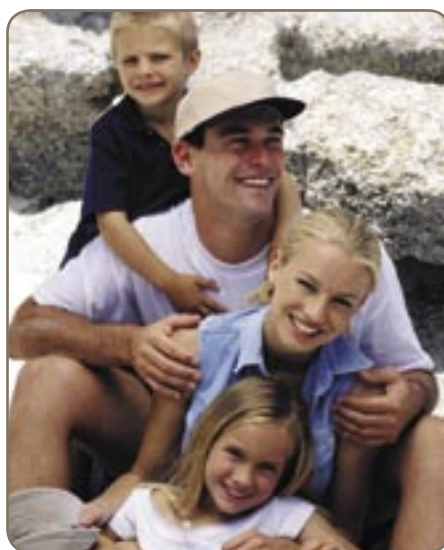
The ABS household expenditure survey tells us that on average, families with dependent children who rely on government transfers for 50 percent or more of their income incur 20 percent of their expenditure on housing; 20 percent on food; 11 percent on transport; 5 percent on clothing; 3 percent on utilities; 2 percent on health and 2 percent on education. That is, we can make a reasonable estimate of what proportion of payments would need to be quarantined where the need arises.

Technology currently exists to ensure that payments are directed to some basic needs – eg Centrelink's Centrepay system allows for deductions to housing and utilities. That is, we already do it on a voluntary basis for housing and utilities.

To that end the very first step is to simply allow use of an existing tool mandatorily in certain cases – and share that tool with state authorities who can use the help.

It is worth noting that a number of indigenous communities are already trying to this on a voluntary basis.

Ultimately, it's not the people prepared to do it voluntarily we have to worry about



– it's those with problems who can't or won't do anything about it.

This first step will be useful. However, in the Government's view the current tool does not go far enough.

We also want to further develop the quarantine model to allow for a more sophisticated differentiation of a family's needs. This might include quarantining funds for appropriate clothing and food. I am offering to work this option through with state authorities and external providers to develop these options – again this is a tool for people already identified as at risk.

This area of further refinement requires the active engagement of all concerned authorities and service providers – because there are any number of debit cards and other processes that can be applied, but there is no question this is a work in progress and I have determined that States and providers have to be involved.

IMPORTANTLY – AND LET ME MAKE THIS CRYSTAL CLEAR - THESE OPTIONS WOULD NOT REMOVE ONE CENT FROM THE FAMILIES INVOLVED.

Earlier this year I flagged that the proportion of quarantined payment might be around 30 percent. Based on our work, we could look at a minimum of 40 percent of the government transfer being directed to housing and food. This is an area that I wish to discuss with State authorities and

the community sector.

I appreciate that many people don't like these sorts of options – and I have considered some of the public comments. Let me address the main ones:

Are we punishing people? No.

I am not proposing to reduce funding levels, nor are we saying that they are not deserving of help. What I am proposing is rewarding the needs of children in cases where parents are struggling with their responsibilities.

Is this reducing the dignity of parents on welfare or demonising those with addictions? No.

Nonetheless, while the dignity of parents is important, it is worth noting there is very little dignity in addiction and in my view the dignity of the child takes precedence over other concerns about the parents.

Shouldn't welfare be free of obligations? In short, no.

Just two days ago, I heard an advocate for a drug abuse program argue that there is a limit to the degree to which we should dictate the use of welfare. That's a genuine debate in most cases – and the Government certainly took the view, in general, that Baby Bonus for those over 18 should not be limited to instalments albeit we restricted it for under 18s. However, there are some clear cut cases and when it comes to substance abuse it's a "no-brainer" not only are illicit substances just that – illicit, welfare is not for drugs.

The additional criticism was, whether in practical terms it can be delivered and who will make the decisions about who is in or out?

The simple answer is yes it can be delivered, although I readily acknowledge that more work is still required - hence the need to consult. What I will not do, however, is to accept the view of some nay sayers who argue these sorts of things are too hard.

If it is going to help our nation's most vulnerable children, and I believe it will,



then it would be a cop-out to do nothing and leave these children to fend for themselves.

The first step, through Centrepay, is already available today and the use of debit cards appear to be real alternatives. Many organisations represented here today already use similar products for Emergency Relief.

As to who makes the decision – we are not talking about an arbitrary process. The sorts of people who would become involved are already known to State systems.

However – I believe this aspect about how to trigger the provisions needs to be consultative – after all, I am simply offering another tool to the armoury of state protection authorities to do their difficult job.

Finally – there is the suggestion that this measure alone doesn't tackle all the problems. For example your own President of ACOSS - Lin Hatfield Dodds - said when I first mooted this proposal, "although more needed to be done to help families in trouble, problems such as truancy, substance abuse and violence could not be treated solely as financial issues"

I couldn't agree more. Today I am not suggesting this as a silver bullet or a fix-all – but rather another weapon in the armoury to protect our most vulnerable children.

I propose that this tool be used in conjunction with other interventions, not instead of other interventions.

And, who can deny the need for more options to tackle seemingly intractable problems?

I accept implicitly that we also need to reinforce longer term issues.

For example, school attendance and education is vital if we are to break cycles of poverty and welfare dependence.

At the most recent COAG meeting the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers agreed in principle with the need to reinforce compulsory school

attendance and States have already agreed to cooperate with the National Truancy Unit so we can better share information with a view to supporting improved school attendance.

I also note that a number of States have suggested "work or school" requirements – so, in principle, they agree with the need to keep kids at school or in employment.

Despite this good will and agreement; sadly, truancy remains a problem.

The children concerned might not recognise it, but ultimately they will pay the price so will the society in general. That's why we need to consider all reasonable options to ensure children go to school and the Australian Government believes there is a fit between the quarantining proposals I have outlined and reinforcement of school attendance.

To that end the Australian Government propose to build on the agreement at COAG by making provision for quarantining of welfare payments where a child is a serial truant. That is, where a child is a persistent truant, a portion of welfare should be mandatorily quarantined for essential needs. It is an on-balance judgement but, given the synergy between welfare cycles and non school attendance, and the synergy between truancy and neglect, this tool can underpin other efforts to support school attendance.

We should never forget that parents are required by law to ensure their children go to school. Serial truancy is also likely to be a high indicator for neglect.

If a parent is not ensuring children are going to school, is this really a fair start to those children and who is protecting them.

Clearly this requires State involvement and this is another area I propose to work through with and seek cooperation from State authorities.

The best outcomes for the children involved will be achieved if the Commonwealth and state and territory governments work together.

I accept that the states and territories have responsibility in policing child protection provisions and I don't propose to challenge that. But we know that these systems are under stress and "quarantining" provides these authorities with just one more tool to help with a very difficult task.

Today I am also offering representatives of the welfare sector a seat at the table along with State Authorities as we progress this measure.

In conclusion, this quarantining or income management initiative represents a new approach.

It recognises that parents should not be expected to stand alone to protect their children.

It recognises that we all have a role to play.

It recognises that what has occurred in the past has not been entirely successful.

We must do more than acknowledge that the welfare of the child should be of prime importance - it must be reflected in the policies we adopt. Through income management we will place the well-being of the child at the very pinnacle of our welfare policies.

It is a policy that deserves to be endorsed because it recognises the obligations our entire society has towards our children. With the co-operation of our state colleagues we look forward to taking this very important step along the path of protecting those who need our support the most.

Protecting Indigenous children: a view from SNAICC

By the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is the national non-government peak organisation representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with a particular focus on children's wellbeing, protection and early childhood development. SNAICC was established in 1981 to advocate on behalf of children at the national level and to seek a coordinated long term national approach to children's well being and development. SNAICC is a foundation member of Families Australia and is represented on the Families Australia Board.

In May 2006, SNAICC provided a briefing to State and Territory governments regarding Indigenous child abuse and neglect. An extract is reproduced below with the kind permission of SNAICC. For further information: www.snaicc.asn.au.

1. Overview

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child is six times more likely to be in the child protection system than a non-Aboriginal child but four times less likely to have access to a Commonwealth, State or Territory funded childcare or preschool service. This simple fact says a lot about what is and isn't happening for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children....

2. Preventing and Responding to the Abuse and Neglect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children

SNAICC's views can be summarised as follows:

Respond holistically to child abuse and neglect

Child abuse and neglect need to be dealt with through supports and interventions which span the continuum of family support, primary prevention, early intervention and statutory intervention.



As in the broader child protection field there is a growing recognition that insufficient emphasis has been placed on prevention and early intervention. Developing supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families which span this continuum is particularly important if long term change is to be achieved in the face of the volume, severity and complexity of presenting abuse and neglect cases and issues within remote and other communities.

Focus on child wellbeing and development

Evidence of the value to families, children and the broader community of investing in early childhood should not be ignored yet it is arguable that despite this evidence and wide spread community concern for the wellbeing of Indigenous children governments are failing to provide Indigenous children with equitable access to early childhood development programs. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are under-represented in all forms of early childhood services including preschools, kindergartens, childcare services and programs, playgroups and family support programs.

Expand community based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Welfare Agencies

Whilst the late 1970's and early 1980's saw some community based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family welfare agencies (known in many locations as Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies (AICCAs)) established, these organisations required additional capacity. In most states and territories however there has been a failure by governments to adequately support existing AICCAs or fund new AICCAs to meet community needs.

This failure is in part due to the lack of discussion, negotiations and agreement between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, SNAICC and State, Territory and Commonwealth governments on their respective roles and responsibilities in the area of child welfare and protection. In essence there is no agreement on what AICCA's should be focused on and no recognition from government that AICCAs and similar community based child and family welfare organisations are essential services which should be established, supported to develop and funded within all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

There are at present just over 30 such agencies operating in Australia, about the same number as two decades ago, and most of these are relatively small agencies with just a few staff and a restricted role focused on placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who have already been removed from home by state welfare authorities.

Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies need to be expanded in scope and number to provide community based services and programs focused on child abuse prevention, early intervention, family support and when required specialist advice and support for children that must be placed in out-of-home care.



Expand and broaden Indigenous Children's Services

By the 1980s early childhood education for Aboriginal children was becoming a national issue. The National Aboriginal Education Committee noted in 1985 that the early childhood education of Aboriginal and Islander children should strengthen their identity and the curriculum and methodology should be flexible and take account of the home life of the child. Assertions such as these and the movement for self determination and community management led to the development of Indigenous models of children's services including the Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS), a 1987 initiative funded by the then Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services. The MACS model provided the scope for an Aboriginal managed service with Aboriginal staff to provide a range of programs for Aboriginal children according to community needs including long day care, occasional care, play groups, after school care, vacation care, transport and support and information for parents.

From the start restriction of funding, licensing requirements and staff availability meant that there was often a large gap between the ideal of the MACS model and what could actually be achieved. This remains the situation today. Much work remains to be done before MACS and similar models of multifunctional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care services can achieve their potential and before all Aboriginal communities have a MACS or similar service to meet their early childhood and family support needs.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families should have access to a MACS or similar model of children's service to meet their child care, child development and family support needs, particularly during their children's early years.

SNAICC is looking to the development of the Australian Government's National Indigenous Child Care Plan later this year to indicate how the gaps in children's service provision in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will be filled.



The ongoing development of Indigenous children's services that provide culturally appropriate programs that build on families strengths and capacities is a major goal for SNAICC and much of our work is centred on supporting and resourcing these services to deliver programs and services focused on child abuse prevention, early intervention, family support and early childhood development.

Strengths based practice, family centred programs and Indigenous culture as a source of resilience

SNAICC believes that it is critical to work with communities, families and children in a manner which builds upon and extends their existing strengths. Even within the recently highlighted cases of remote communities gripped by the high incidence of violence and abuse there are families and programs which are achieving significant outcomes for children. The orientation of services and programs must be to support families to build on their strengths and enhance the capacity of families to care for their children. Services and programs must avoid undermining the role of families as the main source of nurturing and guidance for children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and child rearing practices should also be utilised as a key resource for building children's resilience, self esteem, sense of identity and self confidence.

Focus on underlying socio-economic issues that lead to child neglect

Whilst the recent focus on child abuse has brought national attention to the plight of many Indigenous children there is a risk that the underlying socio-economic causes of child neglect will continue to escape public attention and government action. Child neglect is the most significant and common reason for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be removed from their families and placed in care. As is the case for all groups of children, family poverty, inadequate housing, poor community infrastructure, high levels of unemployment and limited or no access to support services are the major causes of child neglect. The negative impact of these issues lies largely beyond the control of individual families and communities and requires action and investment from governments to be resolved or ameliorated.

Focus on Indigenous children's right to culture

SNAICC has throughout its history undertaken research and spoken out to raise community awareness about the issues that are of central concern to our members: child abuse and neglect; child poverty; family violence; child protection; out-of-home care; and early childhood development. SNAICC has also maintained a broad agenda and spoke out on a range of national issues including: national land rights legislation; native title; child poverty; the need for a National Apology; compensation for the Stolen Generations; and the application of United Nation's human rights conventions within Australia such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

One of SNAICC's core values is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should have unique rights within Australia as the Indigenous people of this land. The birthright that each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child is privileged to inherit is a unique cultural and spiritual heritage that stretches back over 40,000 years. The Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child can only inherit their culture and allow their spirituality to emerge through the experience of culture, connection to family, community

and place and experiencing the spiritual awareness that evolves from these experiences and connections. All the key portfolio areas of government such as health, education, community services, employment, income support and law and justice share the responsibility with SNAICC of making sure that, whatever their family circumstances, no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child is denied this birthright.

Sustain a planned and coordinated response across and between governments at the national level

Issues such as children’s wellbeing and development cut across all portfolios of government and involve significant policy and programs areas where States, Territories and the Commonwealth have overlapping responsibilities. It is well established that there is high population growth within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and a higher proportion of children in the population.

Celebrating Indigenous culture

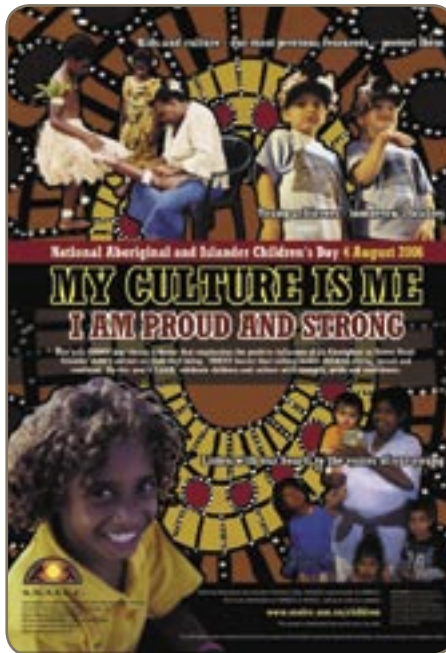
By the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

National Aboriginal and Islander Children’s Day (NAICD) was celebrated across Australia on 4 August. Organised each year by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), the theme for 2006 is ‘My Culture is Me – I am Proud and Strong’.

“My Culture is Me – I am Proud and Strong”

SNAICC knows that culture makes children strong, proud and confident and this year’s theme was chosen to emphasis the positive influence of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child’s culture on their wellbeing.

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child must be given the opportunity to allow



their culture and spirituality to develop and emerge during their childhood as cultural identity and a sense of belonging can guide and protect them through adolescence and adulthood.

SNAICC Chairperson Muriel Bamblett, AM said, “We need to tell our Indigenous kids that they are valued and loved and that their culture is valued and respected. The best protection we can offer any child is to give them a sense of belonging. Culture can provide that sense of belonging and through that belonging, resilience.”

As part of NAICD, children’s services, schools and community groups across Australia were encouraged to hold activities that brought kids and families together to share stories, experience Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, showcase Indigenous arts, dance

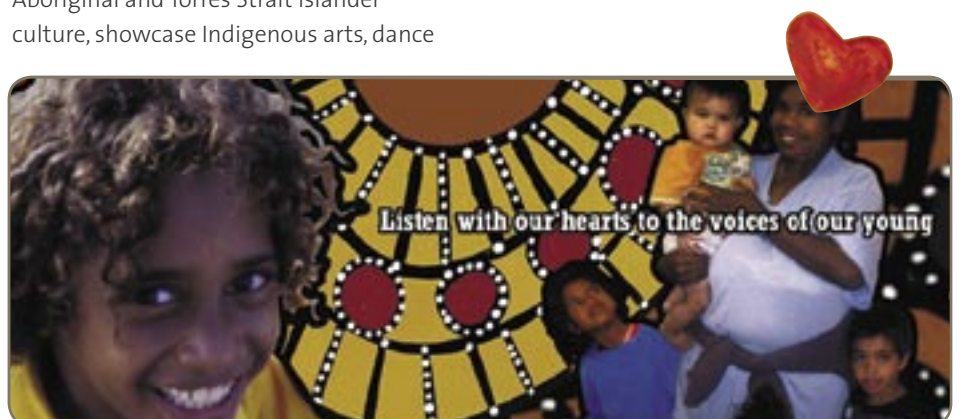
and music and build pride amongst Indigenous children in their culture.

Ms Bamblett said, “The day is typified by the efforts of hundreds of small community services that make a big difference to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.”

Some highlights of the day

- On the Gold Coast 600 children gathered to enjoy cultural activities, Aboriginal dancers, wildlife talks and exhibits
- Hobart kids enjoyed traditional foods, including mutton bird, at a children’s cultural activity day
- The Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Milla Milla playgroup in Geelong celebrated with cultural face painting, boomerang and clap stick painting and a mural for kids to do
- Port Adelaide children’s services hosted a ‘stay and play day’ in childcare for parents and their kids
- Gurlongga Njinyinj MACS in Perth worked with the kids to create a mural on the day’s theme using natural materials, vegetation, calico, and hand-prints.

More information about NAICD and details of the celebrations held around the country, including a gallery of children’s artwork is available on the SNAICC website at www.snaicc.asn.au/children.





The Child Protection Crisis in Australia - a Way Forward

By Professor Dorothy Scott, Director, Australian Centre for Child Protection
University of South Australia

Address to Parliamentarians Against Child Abuse, Parliament House,

Canberra, September 5, 2006

Child Protection – Systems in Crisis

Most of the statutory child protection services in Australia are in crisis. They are potentially harmful to the children and families they are designed to serve. The dedicated people doing this excruciatingly difficult work operate under hazardous conditions. Media moral outrage which erupts when children die or are hurt, and which politicises that which should be above politics, further weakens fragile services and exacerbates staff vacancies. In some States child protection systems are imploding. They have become like huge Casualty Departments unable to cope with a flood of referrals.

Australia has the second highest rate of reports of alleged child abuse in the world (52.4 notifications per 1000 children each year), even higher than the US (47.8 per 1000 children each year). In England the figure is 6.2 reports per 1000 children and in Scotland it is 8.6. Child Protection notifications in Australia increased from 107,134 in 1999-2000 to 252,831 in 2004-2005. One in five was substantiated as child abuse. There is no evidence that child abuse is a more serious problem in Australia than in the UK, and the number of children in State care is not markedly different from other English speaking countries, with Australia having 4.9 children in care per 1000 children, England 5.0, Scotland 6.6 and the US 7.1. So is part of the problem that too many Australian children are caught unnecessarily in the net of our child protection systems and could this be making them unworkable? I believe so.

In some parts of the United States the situation has reached an absurd point. In Cleveland, Ohio, half of all African-American children and one fifth of all white children will at some stage in their childhood be the subject of a child protection notification. In some Australian jurisdictions it is now estimated that one in five children will be the subject of a child protection notification. This is completely unsustainable.

Bringing children into State care is necessary in some cases but it is no panacea, as our out-of-home care systems are also in crisis. On June 30, 2005, there were 23,695 children in out-of-home care, mostly in foster care and relative care. This represents a 70% increase in the number of children in out-of-home care in less than a decade. There is such a shortage of placements that in some States children are now put in motels. The number of foster families is rapidly decreasing while the number of children coming into care continues to increase. The out-of-home care system is thus under tremendous pressure and also at risk of collapse.

Children in care are exposed to multiple placements, two thirds having had four or more previous placements. Not surprisingly recent research shows that the mental health of children in care is appalling. Their physical health and educational outcomes are also very poor.

The single most significant factor in the increase of children in care is parental alcohol or drug dependence – over two thirds of the children in care have parents with an alcohol and/or drug dependence. This is a serious national problem with massive inter-generational consequences.

Over two thirds of substantiated child protection cases in Australia are neglect and emotional abuse cases, with physical abuse and sexual abuse comprising less than a third. Very few substantiated cases fall into the domain of criminal law and most substantiated cases do not reach the threshold of significant harm required by child welfare laws to justify removal from their families.

Australian child protection services have thus become demoralised, investigation-driven bureaucracies which trawl through huge numbers of low income families to identify the small minority of cases which reach the criteria for statutory intervention. Why? The answer is that the community has been encouraged to think that making reports is the best way to protect children. This is reinforced by legislation requiring professionals to report their concerns.

In contrast, Europe, including Ireland and the United Kingdom, has policies based on a strong voluntary professional duty of care to report child abuse. They also have more integrated systems in which health and education services undertake assessments of children's needs before consulting with child protection services.

While there is no child protection system which can prevent all child abuse deaths, just as there is no mental health system that can prevent all suicides, some systems are better than others. While international comparisons are problematic due to differences in child abuse data and broader social and economic factors, it is worth noting that in the 1990s the US had three times the rate of reports and four times the rate of child abuse deaths as the UK.

Dangers of Overloaded Child

Protection Services

Like an overloaded Casualty Department in a hospital, an overloaded statutory child protection service is very dangerous.

- Children who are in serious jeopardy can be missed like the proverbial needle in the haystack, as the system struggles to avoid collapsing under the weight of escalating notifications by doing superficial assessments and/or prematurely closing cases.
- Children who are at risk of abuse or neglect but below the threshold for statutory intervention are put at greater risk. For example, in NSW, when the number of notifications doubled several years ago (coinciding with the introduction of a centralised telephone intake system and increases in penalties for failure to fulfil mandatory reporting requirements), the number of referrals to family support services actually decreased due to the incapacity of the child protection service to make referrals. Thus families were denied the assistance that may have prevented abuse and neglect.
- The impact on children of the alienation, humiliation and fear felt by many parents in the wake of an unsubstantiated investigation is rarely considered. Parents left suspicious about who in their family, neighbourhood or local services may have notified them to the authorities are likely to become anxious and to withdraw. Given that parental stress and social isolation are strong correlates of child abuse and neglect, and given the scale on which child protection surveillance is now occurring in Australia, it is very likely that current child protection services are actually adding to child abuse and neglect.
- Children and young people already in State care are also adversely affected when resources are redirected to deal with more investigations. The careful,



intensive work required to reunite those children who might return home is left undone. Their health and educational needs are neglected, placements break down which could have been prevented, and children who should be adopted wait years or are deprived of a family entirely.

A Public Health Model of Child Protection

So what can be done to reform such dangerous and unsustainable systems? While a legal model of child protection is necessary to protect a small number of abused and neglected children, a public health model has the greater potential to reduce the level of child abuse in the community.

A public health approach is multi-layered. Thus, in relation to a problem such as skin cancer, primary prevention strategies are population-wide strategies which include tackling the hole in the ozone layer, creating shaded areas in playgrounds and educating the public through health promotion such as 'slip, slop and slap' campaigns. Secondary prevention strategies are efforts directed at those groups in the population at greater risk of skin cancer - for example, regular screening by GPs. Tertiary prevention is focused on reducing the harm of conditions already established such as early identification and treatment of skin cancers. Child protection needs a similar

multi-stranded strategy.

Child maltreatment is part and parcel of other social problems and so the prevention of child abuse and neglect needs broad strategies. Nowhere is this more obvious than in some remote Indigenous communities. Poverty, overcrowded housing, expensive food, parental despair, substance dependence, family violence and child abuse compound one another. And while the media and political attention has been on child sexual abuse and family violence, it is child neglect and in particular "failure to thrive" or malnutrition in very young children, which is the major reason that Indigenous children are removed from their families.

To measure the effectiveness of any public health strategies, one needs sound population-based data. In relation to child abuse, this does not mean the number of notifications or substantiations as these tell us more about reporting behaviour than the wellbeing of children in a community.

It would be much better if we used the rates of the following to assess our success in tackling child abuse:

- foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, drug withdrawal symptoms and/or low birth weight
- non-organic failure to thrive



(malnutrition) in infants

- hospital admissions for non-accidental physical injuries
- death resulting from child abuse and neglect
- STD rates in children and adolescents

Primary Prevention

Primary prevention describes interventions aimed at the whole community. These include health promotion campaigns and universal services. Experience in relation to smoking, drink driving and skin cancer prevention suggests that extensive and sustained programs are required to change social attitudes and behaviour.

Parental alcohol abuse urgently requires a broad approach, including alcohol advertising restrictions, supply control, health promotion campaigns and family centred treatment services. "Children and alcohol don't mix" could make a good national health promotion campaign, on similar lines as drink driving and domestic violence campaigns. It would have to be sustained to change social norms and behaviour.

There is also great potential to broaden children's universal health and education services so that they reduce the known risk factors associated with child maltreatment by working more effectively with vulnerable families and communities. The two most important services for children under school age are maternal and child health nurses, and early childhood education and care. For older children it is their school. In the UK they are tapping the potential of such services to reach the most vulnerable children and families better than we are doing in most parts of Australia.

Secondary Prevention

Universal services provide a non-stigmatising platform from which to reach higher risk sub-groups. For example, from the platform of its universal maternal and child health service, South Australia has recently introduced a sustained nurse

home visiting service to all Indigenous mothers and all mothers under 20 years as well as other groups. The very high take-up rate and low dropout rate of this program is most encouraging.

Early childhood education and care services can also reduce the effects of child neglect and reach out to vulnerable parents if funded to do so and if the children who need them most can get access to them.

General practitioners providing whole of family care also have a central role in working with vulnerable children and parents, especially where parents have a mental illness.



The Commonwealth Stronger Families and Communities initiative funds some excellent programs but in its current form it does not have coverage across all the areas it is needed, and there is no strategy for "scaling up" successful models. Moreover, it is based on short term funding and is therefore unsustainable. The plethora of pretend pilots is becoming a paddock full of petals. Good programs have lost funding so that new ones can be created. These deficits need to be urgently addressed.

If adequately resourced, these sorts of services have the capacity to assess and

respond to many cases now referred to statutory child protection services.

Tertiary Prevention

Under such a system, statutory child protection services could then focus on those children who need statutory protection and those who are already in care. This is the rationale of the Victorian child protection policy which has been successful in curbing the increase in notifications. Child and adolescent mental health services also need to give priority to families where child abuse has occurred.

Specialist domestic violence, mental health and drug treatment services need to become more sensitive to the needs of children. The Commonwealth funded Children of Parents with a Mental Illness initiative has enhanced the capacity of adult mental services to respond to the needs of children. The same could be done for alcohol and drug treatment services.

There is so much we could do to reduce child abuse and neglect. A large body of research now exists on effective policies and strategies. There is also a growing political and community awareness that we need all children to become healthy, literate, and law abiding tax payers so there are good economic reasons for preventing child abuse and neglect. But children are not just a future economic resource. They are precious for who they are now. They are our harbingers of hope. And that is the real reason we cannot stand by and let beautiful young lives be destroyed.



Toward a national child protection strategy

A national gathering in June 2006 of around 100 leaders from the government, community and research sectors took important first steps to devise Australia's first National Child Protection Strategy.

The National Child Protection Forum, held in Melbourne on 27-28 June, was initiated by the Australian Government in response to the Senate inquiry into children in institutional or out-of-home care, which resulted in the so-called "Protecting vulnerable children: a national challenge" report (2005).

The Forum showcased best practice, updated participants about projects being undertaken under the auspices of the Community Services Ministerial Advisory Council, and discussed a national child protection framework.

The Hon. Mal Brough MP, Australian Government Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, opened the Forum. The Forum was also attended by Queensland's Minister for Child Safety, the Hon. Mike Reynolds MLA, and the Western Australia Minister for Community Development, the Hon. David Templeman MLA.

After an intensive two days of working groups and plenary discussions, the Forum agreed to a draft strategy framework containing a working vision "That all children are safe, loved and cared for and fulfil their potential as fully participating citizens", principles, and ideas in relation to six content areas – namely, primary, secondary



and tertiary services, Indigenous issues, national standards, and research.

"That all children are safe, loved and cared for and fulfil their potential as fully participating citizens"

A small working group chaired by Families Australia and comprising representatives from Australian and State Governments, and the community and research sectors, has been refining Forum outcomes and expects to present the finalised draft strategy to Federal, State and Territory decision-makers in late 2006 after further consultation with Forum participants.

Expectations are high for the finalised draft strategy. If supported by all relevant stakeholders, it could provide a comprehensive framework which will guide future policy development, service delivery and research and give greater coherence to the range of child protection regimes currently in operation across various Australian jurisdictions.

For more information contact Families Australia, on 02 6273 4885 or brian.babington@familiesaustralia.org.au





National Child Protection Clearinghouse update

By Prue Holzer, Research Officer, NCPC

The National Child Protection Clearinghouse (NCPC), based at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, is funded by the Australian Government to offer advice, conduct research and collect, share, monitor and distribute information and resources on the latest developments in child protection and child abuse prevention.

NCPC performs specialist advisory functions relevant to the child protection sector, such as: the provision of research advice and information; the moderation of an email discussion list, *childprotect*; representation on committees and forums; and presentations and invited addresses. In addition, NCPC has a well-resourced library, the content of which is accessible through inter-library loan or by becoming a Clearinghouse library member (there is no cost involved in library membership for non-government organisations). NCPC librarian can assist in conducting literature searches upon request.

To facilitate the link between research and practice the Clearinghouse produces four regular publications each year—two editions of the *Child Abuse Prevention Issues Paper* and two editions of the *Child Abuse Prevention Newsletter*.

The *Child Abuse Prevention Issues Paper* provides readers with an accessible and comprehensive overview, update, and critique on issues in the fields of child abuse prevention, child protection, child maltreatment and out-of-home care.

Previous topics have included: a national comparison of child protection systems; child welfare approaches for Indigenous communities; and accessibility issues in child abuse prevention services. Past Issues Papers are all available on the Clearinghouse website.

The *Child Abuse Prevention Newsletter* provides up-to-date information on

child abuse prevention, child protection, child maltreatment and out-of-home care, as well as summaries of recent government reports, discussion pieces, program profiles, conference overviews and literature highlights. Contributions for the *Child Abuse Prevention Newsletter* are received from child protection practitioners, welfare groups, researchers, and advocacy groups.

Further to the services provided by the Clearinghouse, child protection service professionals and policy makers working in statutory child welfare departments in each Australian State and Territory receive copies of the latest Clearinghouse publications. The Clearinghouse recognises the important role of community-based service providers within the sector and the need for information and resources to be made available to these organisations to facilitate the link between research and practice. Thus the Clearinghouse has sought similar distribution arrangements with Families Australia.

Members of the Families Australia network now receive “email alerts” each quarter as new Clearinghouse publications become available. The staff of the Clearinghouse are delighted that Families Australia is assisting us in resourcing the community-based child welfare sector with information and materials that facilitate the link between research and practice.

Recent research undertaken by NCPC includes:

- The publication of two papers resulting from the Australian Council for Children and Parenting Indigenous Out-of-Home-Care research project: “*The Recruitment, Retention, and Support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foster Carers: A Literature Review*”; and “*Enhancing Out-of-Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People*”. This year,

the Clearinghouse, in collaboration with the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, will continue to further profile and evaluate “promising practice” initiatives identified in the earlier reports and disseminate the research findings in culturally appropriate ways.

- Research conducted for the Community Services Ministers’ Advisory Council (CSMAC) National Foster Care Plan Working Group and the CSMAC Child-Safe Organisations Working Group resulted in two substantial reports being prepared for CSMAC: “*Out-of-Home-Care in Australia: Messages from Research*” and “*Understanding Organisational Risk Factors for Child Maltreatment: A Review of Literature*”. The first report identifies key messages from Australian research into out-of-home care and highlights priorities for future research, while the latter informs a national framework for creating safe environments for children via pre-employment screening checks for child-related employment. The first report will be available on the Clearinghouse website in the coming months.

On behalf of the Australian Centre for Child Protection, NCPC recently undertook and published the “*National Audit of Australian Child Protection Research 1995-2004*”. The audit identified child protection and early intervention research that has been conducted in Australia in the past decade. The audit builds on the work by Associate Professor Judy Cashmore and Dr Frank Ainsworth in completing the “*Audit of Australian Out-of-Home Care Research*” in 2004 (Available at www.acwa.asn.au/cafwaa/ResearchAudit2004.pdf).

All papers are available on the NCPC website at: www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/keyreports.html unless otherwise stated.



Building a Child Friendly Australia – National Child Protection Week

By the NAPCAN Foundation



Child abuse and neglect is a wide spread problem in Australia with 40,416 substantiations of abuse and/or neglect; that is, 1 child substantiated every 11 minutes¹. Yet, a national study by the Australian Childhood Foundation: *Out of Sight – Out of Mind*² has found that Australians are more concerned with rising petrol prices and public transport than the issue of child abuse and neglect. For this reason NAPCAN Foundation encourages Australians to take part in National Child Protection Week each year and collectively work together everyday to create a safer environment for children.

National Child Protection Week promotes the wellbeing and safety of all children by raising public awareness about the problem of child abuse and neglect.

This year NAPCAN shifted the focus to the children themselves by encouraging adults to give them the chance to freely express themselves, and play a part in making their local communities child friendly. NAPCAN believes that children really do have a good understanding and knowledge of what is meant by 'child friendly' and that child friendly communities can best be created by listening to, and acting upon, children's ideas.

Every Australian belongs to many communities. Neighbourhoods, sporting clubs, businesses, work places, cultural groups, religious groups, social groups, friends, professional and interest groups, are just some examples of communities in our everyday lives.

Research shows that strong, healthy communities have less child abuse and neglect. The qualities of such communities include:

- having services and social networks to support families
- involving and respecting its children
- modelling appropriate parenting behaviour
- taking pride in its people and culture

Communities with these qualities provide a web of support across all aspects of a child's life - enhancing their development, wellbeing and resilience against harm.

NAPCAN knows that the wellbeing and safety of children impacts directly on the wellbeing of families. Families Australia and its network played an important role in National Child Protection Week this year by encouraging the wider community to get involved and make local communities child friendly, and so provided for the development, nurturing and wellbeing of families throughout Australia.

“Australians are more concerned with rising petrol prices and public transport than the issue of child abuse and neglect.”

In 2005 approximately 250,000 Australians directly participated in at least one of the registered 2,500 community activities - a two-fold increase on 2004. Activities during the week included community breakfasts, information forums, fundraising events, community building workshops, and simple family fun days.

This year's National Child Protection Week also launched the *Capture a Child Friendly Moment Campaign*. People sent photographs and stories of child friendly moments, which NAPCAN is sharing with the wider community on their website, and together are building a picture of how a child friendly Australia can look. Capturing and sharing child-friendly moments also act as a reminder as to how simple child-friendly communities are to create.

More information about the NAPCAN Foundation and to view the child friendly moments go to: www.napcan.org.au.

¹Child Protection Australia 2004-05, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2006

²<http://www.childhood.org.au/research/reports.asp>



Strides for the 'Forgotten Australians'

A national coalition of 'Forgotten Australians' - people who had been in institutional or out-of-home care - is expected to be formed as a result of the "Forgotten Australians: healing the past, building the future" conference in Sydney on 5 and 6 June.

The conference was funded by the Australian Government in response to the second report on the Senate inquiry into the "Forgotten Australians: Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children" (2004). It brought together over 100 care-leavers and representatives from government, former care providers, and the community and research sectors.

The aims of the conference were to exchange ideas and thinking to promote and focus efforts to support care leavers, identify the existing and ongoing needs of Forgotten Australians, build a shared understanding of good practice, and find ways to work to address these needs in the future.

The Hon. Mal Brough MP, Australian Government Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, opened the conference. Other speakers included Dr Joanna Penglase, social historian and Care Leavers of Australia Network (CLAN) co-founder, Commissioner Ted Mulligan QC, Children in State Care Commission (South

Australia), Paul Linossier, Chief Executive Officer of MacKillop Family Services, and Professor Patrick Parkinson, Law School, University of Sydney.

A wide range of issues were covered, including access to records, compensation, education and training for workers, databases and data collection, commemoration, and access to services.

The care-leavers resolved to form a national coalition to represent their interests at the national level. Planning of next steps is currently underway.

For more information contact Brian Babington, Families Australia, on 02 6273 4885 or brian.babington@familiesaustralia.org.au

New publication on child abuse and neglect prevention

A new publication, *Towards a better future for children: preventing child abuse and neglect*, commissioned by the NAPCAN Foundation (Queensland), has implications that are relevant for all Australians who are committed to keeping children safe and creating a brighter future for all children.

Recognising the increase in notifications of suspected child abuse and neglect and the numbers of children in care, the publication argues that unless primary prevention interventions are supported, we will continue on a path that is economically unsustainable and socially unacceptable. There is a call for a comprehensive response to preventing child abuse and neglect, with a renewed focus on community-wide responsibility and action to increase the resilience and wellbeing of all children.

In lieu of the traditional three level 'public health' prevention model, the paper explores a model originating from the mental health field which removes the 'tertiary level' from conceptualisations of prevention (services treating children who have already suffered abuse), shifting the focus onto preventing abuse "before it happens".

The paper highlights the need for prevention activities in addressing the high rates of reported abuse for Indigenous children. It argues that the focus on community level interventions is consistent with Indigenous cultural frameworks and urges an evidence-based and consistent approach to prevention and the need for a balanced child protection system. The paper can be downloaded at www.napcan.org.au.



Family wellbeing: ideas and a symposium

The 2005 Australia Institute 'Manifesto for Wellbeing' opened with the words: *Australians are three times richer than their parents and grandparents were in the 1950s, but they are no happier.*

Documents like the Manifesto reflect growing interest in the concept and measurement of national and personal wellbeing, but there has been little work done about wellbeing at another vital level: the family. This is an area of need given that, despite overall national economic buoyancy, there are families which continue to struggle on several fronts - witness, amongst other indicators, still worrying rates of domestic violence, relationship breakdown, substance abuse, and child abuse substantiations.

Families Australia's view is that family wellbeing refers broadly to a state of family health, happiness and prosperity: it goes beyond the notion of standard of living based on financial or material wealth, and includes the extent of happiness or satisfaction about life as a whole, including its social, cultural, spiritual and emotional aspects.

We think that family wellbeing has four main interconnected aspects:

1. physical safety and physical and mental health,
2. supportive intra-family relationships, including effective conflict resolution skills, opportunities to learn values, traditions, languages, ideas important to their family, and receipt of support and encouragement for achievement from within the family,
3. social connections outside the family, including in the local community, and
4. economic security and independence.

Families Australia wants to stimulate public discussion about the nature and measurement of family wellbeing. One thing we are going to do is hold a national symposium in Canberra in June 2007, bringing together experts to discuss the nature and measurement of family wellbeing in Australia. We will also be asking community leaders, the media, unions and employers to include family wellbeing in their policies and actions.



Advance notice – National Family Wellbeing Symposium

June 2007

Families Australia will host a national symposium on family wellbeing in Canberra in June 2007. The symposium will bring together leading experts. Families Australia members and other interested stakeholders will be invited to participate. More details will be provided in late 2006.

Fundamentally, however, we are calling on a larger group of experts - Australian families themselves - to stock-take their own state of wellbeing. They might consider questions such as: Are we spending enough time together? Do we have good enough connection with family members not living with us? Have we given enough encouragement to our children or grandchildren? Families Australia thinks it would be time spent *well*.





family

Family wellbeing - Families Australia's VISION

Our wish for families

Families are Australia's most important resource. They are society's most enduring basis for raising children, caring for family members, providing and receiving love, meaning and support, and for transmitting values, culture, language and traditions between generations.

Families Australia has a vision that all Australian families enjoy the greatest possible state of wellbeing. Families Australia believes that family wellbeing is a concept that goes beyond economic prosperity to include things such as physical and emotional health and safety, social connectedness and quality relationships.

Family wellbeing contains an assumption that families work best and contribute optimally to society when there is a balance of economic and non-economic factors. While the task of deciding on that balance is a matter for each family to some extent and is ongoing as circumstances change, it also reflects the influence of the social environment.

Why wellbeing?

In the past 30 years in particular, Australian families have undergone enormous change. Many are better off financially, but many struggle or have collapsed.

There are signs that pressures will continue given that, among other things, there will be relatively fewer young people to provide family and informal support and care for an increasing number of older people, and the expected increase in the number of lone person households may make it more difficult to maintain community connectedness.

The increase in the proportion of smaller families and the prevalence of families in which both parents work seems set to increase household incomes but may also keep pressure on time spent together, potentially complicating the tasks of transferring values, traditions, language, and ideas to children.

What can be done?

A great deal is known about family life, in particular, economic status, but Australia does not yet have a comprehensive picture of how families are travelling - beyond economics to include social factors such as the quality of our relationships.

Families Australia encourages:

- Families to take stock of their overall wellbeing;
- Government at all levels to develop family wellbeing frameworks in consultation with families, giving emphasis to ways of measuring wellbeing;
- Employers, unions and the business community to review employment practices to enhance work-family effectiveness;
- Community organisations to promote greater discussion and sharing information about the dimensions of family wellbeing in their respective areas;
- Political parties to adopt specific family wellbeing policies and objectives;
- Researchers to intensify work on the nature and measurement of family wellbeing; and
- The media to increase coverage of family wellbeing issues.



Statistics on families under review

What is a family and why are families important? How do they function and how stable are they? These are some of the basic questions that lie at the heart of a new project to develop an Australian framework for family statistics, being undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The aim of the Family Statistics Framework Project (FSFP) is to map the conceptual territory that should be covered by family statistics. Documenting the field of family statistics in this way will help to identify data gaps as well as promote standards, consistency and comparability across data collections. The project will provide an opportunity to re-examine the current basis of official family statistics and will shape the development of family statistics for years to come.

When asked 'what is a family?', people are likely to give different answers in different contexts. At times they might think of the stereotypical 'nuclear' family of a couple and their dependent children sharing a household. At other times they may think of some form of extended family, whether or not they live together in the same household. A young unmarried couple who have not yet had children may not think of themselves as a family unit, yet they are considered a family in official statistics. Similarly, a father who is separated from his spouse and has custody of his children for less than half the time may consider his children to belong to his family, yet in official statistics, the children are only regarded as belonging to a family in the household in which they spend the most time. Some couples live apart some or all of the time, but still relate to each other as marital partners. Given this diversity,

there is a need for statistics which support multiple views of families.

Families have been changing over recent decades in response to wider social changes. Young adults are living at home with their parents for longer, as increasing numbers go on to tertiary education. Many children now experience the separation or divorce of their parents, and may spend some of their time with one parent and some with the other. Young adults are living together before marrying, delaying childrearing and having smaller families. Such changes have affected the time people stay in certain living arrangements and have led to an increased interest in the factors affecting family transitions and family stability.

In the midst of changes in family structures, the family continues to be a very important source of practical, financial and emotional support for individual family members. The ways in which families function, which include matters such as how partners share paid and unpaid work activities, parenting styles and modes of conflict resolution, can have a significant impact, whether positive or negative, on the wellbeing of individual family members.

The FSFP will detail the concepts that are important to understanding what families look like, how they function, the changes they undergo and the exchanges that take place between families and the wider community. An important aspect of the project is to give greater recognition in official statistics to family relationships beyond the household and the support that family members provide to others outside the household.

The FSFP is being undertaken by the Family Statistics Unit in the Family and Community Statistics section of the ABS with support from the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. It will be the major project of the Family Statistics Unit for the next 12 to 18 months. The Family Statistics Unit sees its role as a leader in the field of family statistics - by undertaking important national surveys (e.g. Child Care, Family Characteristics, Pregnancy and Work Transitions, Family Transitions and History), assisting others to undertake data collections and by projects such as the FSFP. By developing family-related concepts and definitions and promoting data standards, this unit also seeks to improve the quality of family-related data generally. Better data should translate into better informed decisions on issues affecting families.

Consultation on the FSFP has begun, with a meeting of the Family Statistics Advisory Group (FSAG). This group is made up of policy makers and experts in the field of families, and includes Families Australia. Two papers were prepared for this meeting; 'An Overview of Family Related Issues, Policies and Programs' and 'Towards an Australian Framework for Family Statistics'. These papers were discussed at the FSAG meeting and members were invited to provide written feedback. The Family Statistics Unit welcomes feedback from other interested people and organisations. For these papers or for more information about the FSFP and/or the work of the Family Statistics Unit, please call Heather Crawford on (02) 6252 5742.





National Families Week sets record

Over 105,000 people got involved in National Families Week activities around Australia between 14 and 20 May – a record number in the four years of the event.

Held in May each year, National Families Week focuses attention on the vital role played by families. This year special attention was given to parenting and young people aged between 12 and 18 years.

National Families Week was launched on 17 May by the Hon. Mal Brough MP, Australian Government Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs at Sydney's Powerhouse Museum in conjunction with the launch of the Australian Parenting Website (www.raisingchildren.org.au).

This year's special theme was 'TLC – take time for talking, listening and connecting' within families. Participants were encouraged to spend more time within families to listen and understand each other.

Families Australia runs National Families Week on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Centrelink is also a major supporter of the Week.

People all over Australia celebrated National Families Week in amazing and unique ways. There were morning teas, barbeques, sausage sizzles, playgroup visits, family picnics, artwork displays, family information days, drawing competitions, dances, art displays, photo competitions, seminars and workshops, breakfast gatherings, story-telling events, services displays, and movie nights.

This year we appointed several National Families Week Ambassadors including Aboriginal entertainer Jimmy Little, scientist Sir Gus Nossal, children's advocate Barbara Holborrow, TV celebrity David Koch and several members of the Australian Government's Youth Roundtable.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies released a publication 'Snapshots of Australian Families with Adolescents'.

National Families Week 2006 also set a record in terms of media coverage with extensive national and local television, print and radio coverage.

A very big thank you from Families Australia to all organisations and individuals who participated in the Week. We will shortly let Families Australia members and other participating organisations know about plans for National Families Week 2007.



Brian Babington & Jimmy Little



A dozen good parenting tips was developed for National Families Week 2006 by Parentline (ACT), a Families Australia member organisation:

1. Listen to feelings as well as words
2. Talk about your child's feelings with your child
3. Spend time together
4. Understand the world from your child's point of view
5. Notice and applaud the positives
6. Avoid blame and put-downs
7. Use words of encouragement
8. Connect with your children and others
9. Think first before you act or speak
10. Celebrate and accept the differences in each person
11. Share the jobs and the responsibilities
12. Involve your child in solving the problems

Raising Children website launched

Raising Children website was launched on 17 May 2006 by the Australian Government Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Mal Brough MP to help parents and carers raise young children. The Australian Government contributed \$4 million over four years towards the website.

The website provides essential information and practical tools on child health, safety, nutrition, learning, parental wellbeing, family management

and children's activities. It is designed for parents, carers, professionals and volunteers who support parents and includes a 'Parenting in Pictures' guide for people who have English as a second language.

Users are able to access discussion forums, where they can interact with other parents sharing similar experiences. Users will also be able to access information on the location of services such as their local Medicare and Centrelink offices.



A valuable section of the website is the A to Z Health Reference, which includes a guide to more than 100 common health issues and information on when to see a doctor.

There is information such as recipes and meal ideas, a special section on fathering and an area dedicated to professionals, GPs, child care workers and others working with families and children.

The Raising Children website can be found at www.raisingchildren.net.au

Snapshots of Australian families with adolescents

By the Australian Institute of Family Studies

To support the 2006 National Families Week, the Australian Institute of Family Studies prepared this Facts Sheet about families with adolescent children aged 12 to 18 years - the group given special emphasis in this year's celebrations.

Over the last few generations the composition of families and the roles and responsibilities of parents have changed substantially. Despite these transformations, the family unit remains the foundation of society and the place in which children are nurtured as they grow to maturity.

The statistics presented in this Facts Sheet are drawn from the 2001 Census, Wave 4 of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey (2004) and several Australian Bureau of Statistics publications.



Families with adolescent children

Young people aged 12 to 18 years are going through a crucial transition period - from childhood to adulthood. This period involves marked physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioural changes, with issues of independence and freedom coming to the fore. It can be a challenging time for both young people and their parents. The way this transition progresses has important long-term repercussions



for the emerging adult, their parents and society at large.

Family type in 2001

- There were 1.1 million Australian families with adolescent children aged 12 to 18 years
- 76% were couple families and 24% were sole parent families
- 83% of sole parent families were headed by mothers
- 40% of families with adolescent children also had caring responsibilities for children aged less than twelve years

Parents' employment circumstances

- 68% of mothers and 85% of fathers were in paid work
- In 66% of couple families, both parents were in paid work
- In 21% of couple families, the father was the sole breadwinner
- In 5% of couple families, the mother was the sole breadwinner



- Dual joblessness (where neither parent was in paid work) applied to 9% of couple families
- 57% of sole parents were in paid work
- One-third of employed fathers worked more than 48 hours per week

Residential location and country of birth

- 60% of families were living in metropolitan areas ¹
- In most families, both parents were born in Australia, though migrant families were not uncommon
- In 26% of families, both parents were born overseas and in 14% one parent was born in Australia and the other was born overseas
- Among migrant families (where at least one parent was born overseas), 44% of mothers and 45% of fathers were from European countries or New Zealand
- 32% of mothers and fathers in migrant families were from Asian countries
- Dual joblessness was more common among migrant families than other families - 15% compared with 6%

Adolescent children

Education and work

- In 2005, 1.9 million Australians were 12-18 years old, accounting for 9.6% of the Australian population, down from 12.7% in 1971
- Over the last few decades, an increasing proportion of adolescents have completed secondary education
- In the 1970s, about one-third of students who entered secondary school completed Year 12
- By the late 1990s three-quarters of those who entered secondary school had completed Year 12
- In 2001, 52% of adolescents aged 15-18 were studying and not in paid work, 26% were studying and in paid work, 12% were work only, and 7% were neither studying nor in paid work

Issues seen as important: now and in the future

In 2004, young Australians aged 15-18 years old were asked to indicate how important 12 life issues were to them currently and how important they felt these issues would be to them when they were 35 years old.²

Figure 1 shows the issues that were considered as currently important by adolescents.

- At the top of the list for both girls and boys were keeping fit, getting more education, and having lots of friends
- Boys also saw engaging in sports and hobbies as important (69% of boys compared with 49% of girls)
- Boys were more likely than girls to attach high importance to the things that would help them to get ahead in life such as having a successful career, making a lot of money and saving and investing
- Forming relationships and having children tended to be emphasized more by girls than boys, although few considered these issues to be currently important to them
- Travelling overseas was considered important by more girls than boys (33% versus 24%)

Figure 1. Adolescents aged 15-18 years: Proportion of boys and girls who attached importance to various issues *

Figure 2 shows that adolescents believed that their life priorities would change considerably by the time they were 35 years old.

- The most commonly predicted priorities for both boys and girls were having a successful career, saving and investing, and making a great deal of money
- While few adolescents currently attached importance to family formation, most expected that these matters would be important to them at age 35

- Boys were more likely than girls to see themselves as attaching high importance to living in a long-term relationship (76% of boys compared with 65% of girls)
- Around 60% of boys and girls felt that they would attach high importance to having children by age 35
- Keeping fit was rated as very important by most adolescents at the time of the survey (73% of boys and 64% of girls) and was expected to remain important at age 35 (69% of both boys and girls)
- Over 60% rated having many friends as currently important but this fell to less than 50% when adolescents rated importance at age 35
- Boys were more inclined than girls to emphasise sports and hobbies both currently and in the future, but again the importance of this issue was expected to diminish by age 35
- Most adolescents currently emphasised the need for more education but did not expect to attach high importance to this issue when 35 years old

Figure 2. Adolescents aged 15-18 years: Proportion of boys and girls who believed they would attach importance to various life issues when they were 35 years old *

Satisfaction with family relationships

In the same 2004 survey, parents of adolescents aged 12-18 years and adolescents aged 15-18 years were also asked to indicate how satisfied they felt with relationships in the family.

Figure 3 shows: (a) the proportions of boys and girls aged 15-18 years who were very satisfied with their relationship with their parents and step-parents; and (b) the proportions of fathers and mothers living with adolescents aged 12-18 who were very satisfied with their relationship with their partner, children, and step-children, and with the relationship between the children living with them. Many of these households also included children younger or older than 12-18 years.

- 70% of boys and 62% of girls were very satisfied with their relationship with their parents
- Only 45% of boys and 24% of girls expressed high satisfaction with their relationship with step-parents
- For parents, mother-child relationships were the most likely to be viewed in a very favourable light
 - 74% of mothers expressed high satisfaction with their own relationship with their children
 - 78% of fathers expressed high satisfaction with their partner's relationship with their children
- Father-child relationships were also considered very favourably
 - 59% of mothers expressed high satisfaction with their partner's relationship with their children
 - 73% of fathers expressed high satisfaction with their own relationship with their children
- 73% of mothers and 65% of fathers were also very satisfied with their relationship with each other
- 63% of mothers and 59% of fathers were very satisfied with the relationships between the children who were living at home
- 59% of fathers and 45% of mothers indicated high satisfaction with their relationship with their step-children (most step-fathers, but not step-mothers, would have been living with their step-children)

- In general, higher proportions of males (fathers and sons) than females (mothers and daughters) indicated high satisfaction with family relationships, with this difference being most marked for step-relationships and for fathers' relationships with the children

Figure 3. Parents and adolescents: Percentage indicating high satisfaction with various family relationships*

Conclusion

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. While it can be a difficult time for the adolescents themselves and their families, this snapshot suggests that most Australian adolescents are 'travelling' well. The vast majority of young people are actively engaged in study and/or work, and most are focusing on being fit, furthering their education and having many friends. These pursuits are likely to stand them in good stead for the future - with most setting their sights on achieving a successful career and financial security, and having a partner and children. In the meantime, most adolescents appear to get on well with their families, with parents and their adolescent children deriving much satisfaction from their relationships with each other.

Sources

Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2001 Census 1% Household Sample File.

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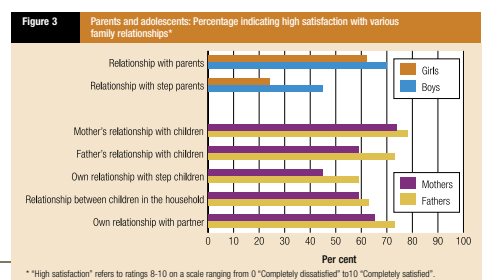
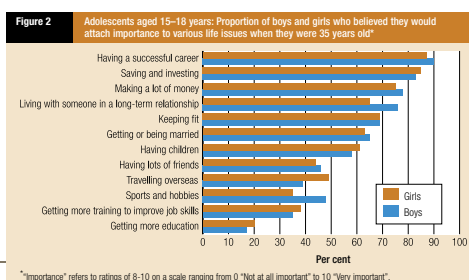
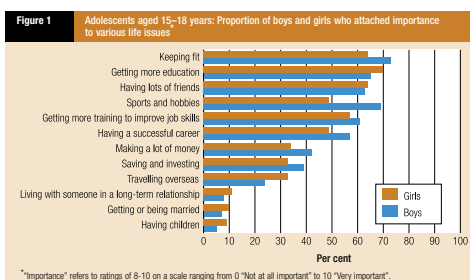
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The analysis for Issues seen as important and *Satisfaction with family relationships* is based on Wave 4 of the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. The survey is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. It is managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (the lead agency), in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Australian Council for Educational Research.

¹ Tasmania, Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory are considered as metropolitan areas in this analysis.

² Children under 15 years were not interviewed in this survey.





Work and family focus at ANU Forum

Australia needs enhanced information and greater public discussion about work and family issues, according to several speakers at the 'Work, Families and Wellbeing' Forum held in Canberra May 2006.

The Forum, which was hosted by Families Australia and the Australian National University's National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health (NCEPH), brought together 60 leaders from the government, research, community and business sectors from Australia and overseas to examine best practice and to discuss ways ahead to improve work and family practices.

Amongst the presenters were Professor Linda Duxbury, Carleton University Canada, Dr Willem Adema, OECD Paris, Pru Goward, Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Maxine Lacey, AMP, Professor Alan Hayes, Director, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Sharan Burrow, Federal President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, and NCEPH Research Fellow, Dr Lyndall Strazdins.

Many speakers argued that demographic changes in Australia will add pressure on employers to offer better work/family conditions as is already happening in some overseas countries where incentives are offered to employment in low labour supply markets. A major issue ahead for Australia will be coping with the ageing population and elder care – increasingly, men will find they are confronted by the need to decide about work/life/family balance issues.

The major drivers of poor work/family balance appeared to be workload, managers' attitudes, and workplace culture. Australian research pointed to a strong link between high quality jobs (in terms of perception of control) and high levels of ability to cope and lower levels of depressive illness. Research also suggested

a link between non-standard work hours and heightened levels of work/family stress.

“Gender remains an important factor in the work/family debate”



Young people's attitudes to work appeared to be changing – older notions of loyalty to one or a limited number of employers may be reducing and increasingly dependent on employer ability to offer better work practices. The 'baby boomers' are finding that they are increasingly sandwiched between child-rearing and elder care responsibilities.

Mothers still bore the brunt of household responsibilities. Without major attitudinal changes (especially amongst younger men), women will be hindered in finding work and continue to bear disproportionately high costs of juggling work and family responsibilities. Gender remains an important factor in the work/family debate – it is a matter of concern that women enter retirement with far less savings than men, due mainly to having to undertake part-time work as a result of child care responsibilities.

Governments were widely encouraged to take a leading role in an integrated approach to work/family issues. There

were suggestions for subsidisation of the costs of improved family/work practices on the part of businesses (especially small business).

Many participants considered that a more robust and comprehensive business case needs to be developed in Australia to highlight the financial and human costs and benefits of better work/family practices. The business case should be made at industry level as well as whole-of-economy level. This work should include consideration of the costs of doing nothing and the costs of better practices.

Others suggested more work to identify and fill research gaps, for example, on elder family care needs. Attention should also be given to the needs of people without partners who have elder care responsibilities. It was recommended that the 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relation Survey should be repeated, and that a clearinghouse for information on practice and research (one-stop-shop) should be established.

The Forum heard strong calls for children's services to be funded by employers as in some other OECD countries, and for paid universal maternity leave, including in the private sector.

Many participants argued that high quality, accessible and affordable child services were vital to improved workforce and work/family outcomes. Good family/work policies required cross-government approaches, and greater thought should be given to offering a continuum of support to parents and carers at various stages of the caring lifecycle. More attention was required on the needs of low-income families in the work and family debate.

The report of the Forum can be viewed at: www.familiesaustralia.org.au

About Families Australia



Established in 2001, Families Australia is Australia's peak independent not-for-profit organisation concerned specifically with family-related issues.

Families Australia:

- Provides advice to government and other stakeholders on behalf of families;
- Informs our members and the community about directions in national family policy, services and research; and,
- Actively promotes and celebrates the importance of families, including through National Families Week.

We strive to represent the interests of families in Australia, working from a network of services, organisations, carers, consumers and communities, which takes in a rich diversity of families and communities. Families Australia envisions a society that recognises the central role of families in our community and embraces its responsibilities for the development, nurturing and well-being of all families in Australia.

Our journey so far

Families Australia has:

- A *membership base* of over 350 family and community sector organisations across Australia (with a combined estimated 100,000 workers), including 34 General Members, many of which are peak organisations in their own right. As well as national bodies, Families Australia also represents many local and regional community service organisations;
- *Mobilised around 300,000 people across Australia* to celebrate the vital importance of families during National Families Week in May each year;
- *Raised national awareness of family issues*, especially child abuse and neglect, work and family, and family wellbeing via representations to Parliamentary Committees, Ministers and Members of Parliament, as well as by hosting national conferences such as the 2006 'Work, Family

and Wellbeing' Forum, the 2004 'Globalisation, Work and Family' Conference, and the 2004 National Child Abuse and Neglect Summit;

- *Advanced the views of families and family organisations* to a wide range of Australian Government agencies and advisory bodies such as the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Australian Taxation Office, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Child Support Agency, Centrelink, Medicare, and the Australian Council for Children and Parenting;
- *Taken leadership* in developing Australia's first national child protection strategy by chairing the National Child Protection Forum (2006) which brought together leading political, government and community representatives;
- *Increased the flow of information* to family and community sector organisations about latest developments in national family policy, practice and research through *Family* and *National Family News* as well as the Families Australia website (www.familiesaustralia.org.au); and
- *Increased the flow of information* to government and the family and community sector about the issues facing families by running focus groups for members of the public across Australia.

Future directions

Our main activities in 2006/07 will be to:

- Run expert forums on key family policy issues;
- Hold community and family forums across Australia to elicit views about family issues which will be provided to government and the family sector;
- Run National Families Week in May 2007; and
- Host a national symposium on family wellbeing (June 2007).

The Families Australia Board comprises 11 members who represent major community sector organisations and/or provide expertise in specific areas. The current Board comprises:

- Sandie de Wolf, *Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia*
- Bev Orr, *Australian Foster Care Association*
- Anne McLeish, *Grandparents Australia*
- Adam Blakester, *NAPCAN Foundation*
- Jennie Hannan, *Family Services Australia*
- Marie Leech, *Mission Australia*
- Mary Mertin-Ryan, *Relationships Australia National*
- Bob Nicholson, *YMCA Australia*
- Paul Rajan, *Chief Ministers Department, NT Government (co-opted)*
- Prue Warrilow, *National Association of Community Based Children's Services*
- Sharron Williams, *Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care*

The Chief Executive Officer is Brian Babington. Jennifer Horsfield is the Office Manager and Manager of National Families Week. Grace Concannon is the Manager of Policy and Projects.

Notice to Families Australia General Members

The Families Australia 2006 Annual General Meeting was held in Canberra on 24 October 2006.

For further information, please contact Jennifer Horsfield on 02 6273 4885.



families australia



FAMILIES AUSTRALIA IS A NON-PROFIT NATIONAL PEAK ORGANISATION DEDICATED TO PROMOTING THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF FAMILIES.

FAMILIES AUSTRALIA REPRESENTS AND MAINTAINS A STRONG POLICY VOICE ON BEHALF OF ALL AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES.

ADVICE FROM FAMILIES AUSTRALIA IS WIDELY SOUGHT BY A RANGE OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, POLITICIANS, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS.

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Families Australia is funded through the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), and is the first national non-government peak organisation specifically concerned with family-related issues.

Families Australia's mission is to improve policies and programs affecting families through advocacy and representation at all levels of government.

We plan to achieve this by working from a network of services, organisations, carers, consumers and communities, and developing policy and research that is informed by the rich diversity of families and communities.

The objectives of *Families Australia* are to:

- Ⓢ be a leading organisation in the field of family policy by working in collaboration with other stakeholders;
- Ⓢ work towards the recognition of, and support for, the needs of families, young people and children;
- Ⓢ provide a strong national voice and advice to government on issues that impact upon families, as well as facilitate the voices of families when they speak about family policy;
- Ⓢ improve policy, programs and service delivery with a particular focus on the interface between Commonwealth and State/Territory responsibilities;
- Ⓢ advocate for adequate resources for and ensure that family policy reflects the diversity of family forms, addresses disadvantaged circumstances experienced by many families, and has a primary emphasis on the best interests of children and young people; and
- Ⓢ initiate or undertake research that contributes to improved knowledge, policy, programs and service delivery practice.



JOIN *Families Australia*

Families Australia is a broadly representative organisation with over 300 Members. A current list of our national members is on our website.

If you are interested in joining *Families Australia* or in obtaining more information you can visit our website at www.familiesaustralia.org.au email us on admin@familiesaustralia.org.au or ring us on 02 6273 4885. You may also fill out and return the application form below.

YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

ORGANISATION:

CONTACT PERSON:

MAILING ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE:

FAX:

EMAIL:

Please tick to receive email correspondence from *Families Australia*

We are applying for GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

Please tick this box for GENERAL Membership

To be eligible to become a General Member, your organisation must:

- be an incorporated national body, be in the process of incorporation, or be a body constituted by statute;
- provide services in or have member organisations from at least three states and/or territories; and
- demonstrate support for the aims of *Families Australia*.

General Membership Fee (Please tick appropriate box below)

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Our organisation receives no Funding | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$50 + GST = \$55* |
| Our organisation receives \$50,000 or less | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$125 + GST = \$137.50* |
| Our organisation receives greater than \$50,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$250 + GST = \$275* |

* General Membership fees are based on your organisation's annual income, including Grant and Project Funding, as appears in your most recent Annual Report.

For further information about General or Associate Membership eligibility, please see the Constitution and Rules of Families Australia on www.familiesaustralia.org.au or send us an email with your question on admin@familiesaustralia.org.au.

We are applying for ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Please tick this box for ASSOCIATE Membership

Any individual, group, alliance, or organisation may apply to become an Associate member.

Associate Membership Fee Total (Please tick appropriate box below)

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Full Fee | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$50 + GST = \$55 |
| Concession Fee | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$25 + GST = \$27.50 |



Events calendar 2006 - 2007

13 November -15 November 2006

5th Australian and New Zealand Adolescent Health Conference - Young People's Health: what's it going to take
Sydney, NSW
www.youthhealth2006.org

23 November -24 November 2006

ACOSS Congress Australia Fair- Advance or Retreat?
Sydney, NSW
www.acoss.org.au

25 November 2006

White Ribbon Day - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

27 November-29 November 2006

4th National Indigenous Education Conference - Getting on with the job: Indigenous Engagement in Education
Newcastle, NSW
www.pco.com.au/niec

27 November-29 November 2006

Transformations Conference - Culture and the Environment in human development
Canberra, ACT
<http://dt6.cgpublisher.com/welcome.html>

30 November 2006

8th Australian Conference on Quality of Life
Malvern, Vic
http://acqol.deakin.edu.au/Conferences/ACQOL_Conference

1 December 2006

World AIDS Day

3 December 2006

International Day of Disabled Persons

23-25 January 2007

15th Annual Australian Research in Early Childhood Education Conference
Melbourne, Vic
www.education.monash.edu.au/research/news/arececonference.html



21-22 February 2007

From Welfare to Social Investment - Reimagining Social Policy for the Life Course
Melbourne, Vic
www.public-policy.unimelb.edu.au/conference07

21-23 February 2007

Kindling the Flame: Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing
Perth, WA
www.cliffordbeersfoundation.co.uk/perth.htm

7-10 March 2007

9th National Rural Health Conference
Albury, NSW
<http://9thnrhc.ruralhealth.org.au>

8-9 March 2007

Partnerships for Better Health Outcomes: Carers and Professionals Working Together
Cockle Bay, Sydney, NSW
www.carersnsw.asn.au

1-2 May 2007

National Youth Conference - Are We There Yet?
Melbourne, Vic
<http://www.yacvic.org.au/>

13-19 May 2007

National Families Week

15-17 May 2007

Their Lives, Our Work - building hope through practice excellence
Brisbane, Qld
<http://www.cafwaa.org.au/Symposium2007.html>

7-8 June 2007

Behind every person there is a long journey - Meeting the aged care needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse community.
Melbourne, Vic
<http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/Default.aspx?tabid=58>

Disclaimer: Information about these conferences has been obtained from a variety of sources. No liability for the accuracy of dates or other content is assumed. For further information please refer to the respective contact organisations.



families australia



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