



**Families Australia publishes *National Family News* (NFN) ten times per annum. NFN contains information about latest major developments in national family policy, services and research.**

#### **Work and family: AIRC ruling**

8 August: The Australian Industrial Relations Commission handed down its decision on the work and family case brought by the Australian Council of Trade Unions. The decision included provisions for employees under Federal awards to have the right to seek an extension of unpaid parental leave from 12 months to 24 months and 10 days' leave each year to care for sick family members. An employee may also request his or her employer to permit return from parental leave on a part-time basis until the child reaches school age, and to allow a father up to eight weeks of unpaid leave after the birth of a child, instead of one week.

*More at: [www.airc.gov.au](http://www.airc.gov.au)*

#### **Grandparents provide around one-third of child care**

12 July: An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey revealed that, in a typical week in 2002, one in five children (aged 11 and under) had spent some time in the care of grandparents, and grandparents provided almost a third of the total hours of child care. There were 22,500 families in which a grandparent (or grandparents) were the primary carers of their grandchildren aged 0-17 years in 2003.

*More at: [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)*

#### **Census of Child Care Services**

30 June: The 2004 Australian Government Census of Child Care Services was released by Senator the Hon. Kay Patterson, Minister for Family and Community Services. Findings included that there are estimated to be over 589,500 families and around 753,000 children now accessing approved child care (a 2.8% increase since 2002).

*More at: [www.facs.gov.au](http://www.facs.gov.au)*

#### **Child Care Inclusion and Professional Support Program Funding**

25 July: The Department of Family and Community Services is seeking applications for funding from eligible organisations to provide Inclusion Support Agency (ISA) services for 67 regions Australia wide. FaCS will select one provider for each region.

*More at: [www.facs.gov.au](http://www.facs.gov.au)*

#### **Ageing**

29 June: Federal Minister for Ageing, Ms Julie Bishop MP, announced \$10 million in Australian Government funding for research on the impact of the ageing population. Applications close 2 September 2005.

*More at: [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au)*

#### **National Child Protection Week**

4-10 September: This year's theme is "Child Friendly Communities Prevent Abuse and Neglect of Children". The week seeks to focus community awareness on the problems of and solutions to child abuse and neglect.

*More at: [www.napcan.org.au](http://www.napcan.org.au)*

#### **Poorer health, higher risk outside major cities**

13 May: Australians living outside major cities have shorter life expectancy, higher death rates, and are more likely to have a disability compared to city dwellers, according to a report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

*More at: [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)*

#### **Welfare services spending \$17.1 billion, up 8.2%**

26 July: Spending on welfare services in Australia in 2002-03 was \$17.1 billion, equivalent to 2.3% of Gross Domestic Product. This averaged \$867 per person, according to *Welfare Expenditure Australia 2002-03*, a report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Real growth in expenditure between 2001-02 and 2002-03 was 8.2%, appreciably higher than the average real growth between 1998-99 and 2002-03 of 5.7% per year.

*More at: [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)*

### **Emergency Relief (ER) Programme**

20 July: Senator the Hon. Kay Patterson, Minister for Family and Community Services, announced that over \$30 million for the Emergency Relief (ER) Programme, announced in the 2005-06 Budget, is to be distributed to the existing network of 900 agencies delivering services through around 1400 outlets nationwide.  
*More at: [www.facs.gov.au](http://www.facs.gov.au)*

### **Youth Mental Health Foundation to be established**

22 July: A new Youth Mental Health Foundation to better assist young Australians who suffer from mental illness is to be established by the Australian Government. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing, Christopher Pyne MP, said the Foundation would provide a national, coordinated focus on youth mental health and related drug and alcohol problems in Australia.  
*More at: [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)*

### **Helping carers: latest audit findings**

29 June: The Australian National Audit Office tabled in Parliament its report, *Helping Carers: the National Respite for Carers Program*.  
*More at: [www.anao.gov.au](http://www.anao.gov.au)*

### **Senate Inquiry on Aged Care**

23 June: The Senate Community Affairs References Committee handed down its report, *Quality and equity in aged care*.  
*More at: [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)*

### **Family law reform: report to Parliament**

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs is scheduled to report to Parliament in August 2005 about the Family Law Amendment (Shared Responsibility) Bill 2005. Some of the aims of the Bill are to encourage parents to reach agreement on parenting arrangements after separation outside the court system, and to make the court processes easier to navigate.  
*More at: [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au)*

### **Work and family: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission paper launched**

22 June: Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Pru Goward launched a discussion paper *Striking the Balance: Women, men, work and family* exploring men's and women's choices for balancing work and family responsibilities. Submissions close 30 September 2005.  
*More at: [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)*

### **Residential aged care**

19 July: The number of residential aged care places in Australia and the ratio of places to people aged 70 years and over both increased in 2003-04, according to a report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. The report, *Residential Aged Care in Australia 2003-04: A statistical overview*, shows there were 156,580 residential aged care places at the end of 2003-04, up from 151,181 places the previous year.  
*More at: [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)*

### **Disability Support Services**

3 August: Around 188,000 Australians used disability support services funded under the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement in 2003-04, according to a new report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. A total of \$3.3 billion was spent by governments in 2003-04 on services provided under the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement.  
*More at: [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)*

### **Vision Problems Among Older Australians**

22 July: The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare released a report presenting up-to-date estimates of the prevalence of major vision problems among older Australians.  
*More at: [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)*

### **Disability support pensioners**

15 July: A Commonwealth Parliamentary Library report found that between 1984 and 2004 there had been a significant rise in both the number and proportion of the population that is in receipt of the Disability Support Pension (DSP).  
*More at: [www.aph.gov.au/library](http://www.aph.gov.au/library)*

### **Trafficking in women for sexual exploitation**

5 July: The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault released a briefing paper on trafficking in women for sexual exploitation, which examines the current legislative, policy and service responses to trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.  
*More at: [www.aifs.gov.au](http://www.aifs.gov.au)*