



**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.**

***'Local Answers': funding round open***

19 August: Senator the Hon. Kay Patterson, Minister for Family and Community Services, announced up to \$20 million was available for communities across Australia under the *Local Answers* initiative, part of the Federal Government's \$490 million Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, which helps strengthen disadvantaged communities by funding local, small-scale, time limited projects. Applications close 23 September 2005.

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

***Young carers assistance***

18 August: Senator the Hon. Kay Patterson, Minister for Family and Community Services, launched the Young Carers website and information kits, which will act as a portal for information, advice and referral services. The website includes details such as dealing with emergencies, coping with school and stress, the impact on relationships and finding the right service, such as respite care. With Carers Australia, the Federal Government has also developed a Young Carers information kit, containing an information booklet for young carers and their parents, and a Primary School Education Kit.

More at: [www.youngcarers.net.au](http://www.youngcarers.net.au)

***Child Care Tax Rebate update***

5 August: A Commonwealth Parliamentary Library report outlined the main features of the new Child Care Tax Rebate (CCTR) and how it interacts with the existing Child Care Benefit (CCB).

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

***Welfare expenditure: latest figures***

28 July: The Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (AIHW) report on estimates of expenditure on welfare services in Australia found that total expenditure on welfare services during 2002/03 was \$17.1 billion or 2.3% of GDP; expenditure on welfare services in 2002/03 increased, in real terms, by 8.2% over the previous year; on a per person basis, expenditure on welfare services in current price terms in 2002/03 was \$867; up from \$642 in 1998/99; and, in 2002/03, more than two-thirds of all funding of welfare services by the Australian Government was directed to services for older people (34.0%) and family and child welfare services (35.3%).

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

***Youth employment website***

12 August: A new website was launched by the Hon. Pat Farmer MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training, to assist young people choose a career. It provides information for young people, including Indigenous youth, on employment services, apprenticeships, career options, and links to further education and training.

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

***Household net worth***

4 August: According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the wealthiest 20% of households in Australia account for 59% of total household net worth and have an average net worth of \$1.4 million per household. In comparison, the poorest 20% of households account for 1% of total household net worth and have an average net worth of \$23,000 per household.

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

***National Inquiry into Employment and Disability***

19 August: The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission released its Interim Report of the National Inquiry into Employment and Disability, *WORKability: People with Disability in the Open Workplace*. The Inquiry highlighted the importance of education and training as the foundation for participation in the workplace. The Inquiry aims to identify the primary reasons for low participation and employment rates for people with disabilities, and to work towards practical, achievable solutions.

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

***Household expenditure up***

11 August: Almost half the money Australian households spend on goods and services goes on food, housing and transport, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The *Household Expenditure Survey* showed the average Australian household spent \$883 per week on goods and services in 2003/04, up 26% (\$184 per week) compared with five years earlier.

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

***Monitoring children's development***

22 August: Senator the Hon. Kay Patterson, Minister for Family and Community Services, launched an initiative to track the progress and development of young children in Geelong. The Geelong community will participate in the Australian Early Development Index: Building Better Communities for Children (AEDI) Project to measure young children's development. AEDI will involve 60 communities and 35,000 children across the country. Results from 39 communities will be released later this year.

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

### **\$35 million for parent carers in Victoria**

5 August: Older parents who care for their children with a disability will gain further support following signing of the \$35 million Commonwealth-State Bilateral Agreement over four years between the Federal and Victorian Governments. The agreement will provide additional respite services in Victoria.

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

### **National Work and Family Awards**

9 August: The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, announced the short-list for the National Work and Family Awards. The Awards recognise work and family achievements, and provide public recognition to businesses that lead in promoting greater balance between work and family.

More at: [www.workplace.gov.au/WorkFamily](http://www.workplace.gov.au/WorkFamily)

### **Old businesses recognised for community service**

23 August: Senator the Hon. Kay Patterson, Minister for Family and Community Services, presented four Queensland community business partnership awards under the 2005 Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships. The partnerships were recognised for outstanding contributions to the community covering a wide range of social issues. National award winners will be announced in late 2005.

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

### **Chronic respiratory diseases**

24 August: The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's *Report on Chronic Respiratory Diseases in Australia* found that an estimated 5.8 million Australians had at least one long-term respiratory condition in 2001. Respiratory disease cause thousands of deaths each year even though they are largely preventable and manageable.

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

### **Older people national media awards**

11 August: Minister for Ageing, Julie Bishop MP, launched the inaugural People's Choice Media Awards as part of the annual Older People Speak Out (OPSO) National Media Awards. Public nominations are invited for examples of positive media coverage of older people. Awards will be presented in four categories: photograph; advertisement; electronic (radio or television); and, print.

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

### **Alcohol and cannabis top drug list**

16 August: Alcohol and cannabis account for more than half of the drug treatment episodes provided in Australia, followed by heroin and amphetamines, according to a report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. The report, *Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services in Australia 2003-04*, profiles 137,000 closed (completed) treatment episodes across 622 government-funded alcohol and other drug treatment agencies. Alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern in 38% of these treatment episodes, with cannabis accounting for 22%, heroin 18% and amphetamines 11%.

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

### **\$1 million for Make-A-Wish Foundation**

22 August: As part of the 'Strengthening Cancer Care' Initiative, the Federal Government committed \$1 million to the Make-A-Wish Foundation to help support families of children with cancer. The Foundation has helped over 4300 families in the past 20 years and expects to grant 550 wishes in the next year.

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

### **Deductible gift recipients & donors**

26 July: The Australian Tax Office has updated *GiftPack for deductible gift recipients & donors* to take into account tax law changes since May 2003. The guide provides comprehensive information on tax deductible gifts for organisations and donors.

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

### **Rural homelessness research**

23 August: The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute report on models of good practice in meeting the needs of homeless young people in rural Australia showed that young people living in rural areas face many of the challenges confronting urban youth, but are also distinguished by a number of factors that make their experiences of homelessness distinctive.

More at: [www.ahuri.edu.au](http://www.ahuri.edu.au)

### **Smoking rates**

27 July: Australia has the lowest smoking rates of all OECD nations, according to a report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Statistics on Drug Use in Australia 2004*. The proportion of the population aged 14 and over who smoked daily fell from 19.5% to 17.4% between 2001 and 2004.

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

### **Communities for Children initiative**

14 August: The health and wellbeing of young children and families in nine communities across Australia will be enhanced under the new \$142 million "Communities for Children" initiative. Organisations appointed under this initiative will develop a four year Community Strategic Plan working with local communities to provide services to improve the health and wellbeing of children up to five years.

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

### **Foster caring recognised**

30 July: At the Australian Foster Care Association's (AFCA) national conference, the Parliamentary Secretary for Children and Youth Affairs, the Hon Sussan Ley MP, congratulated 48 winners of the National Foster Carer Recognition Awards. The Federal Government has also allocated \$50,000 for a national template for non-Indigenous foster carers caring for Indigenous children, and \$50,000 for AFCA to produce a booklet capturing the positive experiences of foster children, their carers and biological parents.

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