



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.

Assistance for parents of people with severe disability

13 October: The Prime Minister, the Hon. John Howard MP, in conjunction with the Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator the Hon Kay Patterson and the Minister for Ageing, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, announced a \$200 million package to assist parents of people with severe disabilities to establish private trusts for the future care of their children. From September 2006, parents or other immediate family members of a person with a severe disability will be able to establish a private trust worth up to \$500,000 for the future care of that person without being affected by social security income tests and gifting rules. Income from the trust will not affect the person's Disability Support Pension. The \$500,000 limit will be increased annually in line with CPI. Senator Patterson has established an advisory group, including financial and disability experts, to advise on the implementation of the package.
More at: www.facs.gov.au

**RESEARCH:
Giving trends**

10 October: Australians are giving more money and volunteering more time than ever before, according to a report coordinated by the Australian Council of Social Service. *Giving Australia* stated that money, goods and services given to non-profit organisations by individuals and business was estimated at \$11 billion in 2003/04, excluding giving in response to the Asian Tsunami appeals. Of this, \$5.7 billion was donated by 13.4 million people, 87% of adult Australians, in the year to January 2005. The average donation was \$424 pa. A further \$2 billion was provided by 10.5 million individuals

through 'charity gambling' or support for events. \$3.3 billion was provided by 525,900 businesses, 67% of all businesses in 2003/04. Business giving consisted of 68% in money (\$2.21 billion), 16% in goods (\$0.52 billion) and 16% in services (\$0.52 billion).

More at: www.acoss.org.au

**Overnight respite carer services:
funding round open**

6 October 2005: Minister for Ageing, Ms Julie Bishop MP, called for funding applications from community organisations that provide overnight respite care services to increase their services. From October 2005, Government will invest up to \$59 million over four years to increase respite availability. Applications close 10 November 2005.

More at www.health.gov.au/tenders

**Family Relationship Centres:
funding applications invited**

22 October: The Department of Family and Community Services and the Attorney-General's Department are seeking applications for funding for the provision of family relationship services from July 2006. Government expects to offer funding under the Family Relationships Services Program to establish: 15 Family Relationship Centres, 33 Early Intervention Services including men and family relationship services, family relationship counselling, family relationship education and skills training services and specialised family violence services, and post-separation services. Applications close 19 December 2005. See also www.ag.gov.au/family which contains information about the development of Family Relationship Centres.

More at: www.facs.gov.au

Industrial relations

9 October: The Government announced its proposed changes to Australia's industrial relations system, 'WorkChoices'. The proposed new system covers single national system; Australian Fair Pay Commission; awards; agreement-making; the Office of Workplace Services; and, unlawful termination.

More at: www.dewr.gov.au

Help for carers

20 October: In conjunction with National Carers Week, the Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator the Hon. Kay Patterson, launched an 'Advice for Carers Information Kit'.

More at: www.facs.gov.au

RESEARCH:

Mental health care

19 October 2005: The Mental Health Council of Australia's report *Not For Service: Experiences of Injustice and Despair in Mental Health Care in Australia* found that "Australians with a mental illness and their carers are suffering every day because they cannot get the help they need". The report calls for leadership, accountability and investment, a whole-of-government service model to be developed and agreed to by the Heads of Australian Governments, and real increases in funding over the next five years. The report was compiled by the Mental Health Council of Australia and the Brain and Mind Research Institute (University of Sydney), in association with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

More at: www.mhca.org.au

Research: Mental illness amongst clients in employment programs

10 October: According to Mission Australia, 76% of clients from its Personal Support Program and 26% of those participating in its Jobs Placement Employment and Training Program suffer mental illness. The results are contained in *Mental Health: A Critical Contemporary Issue*.

More at: www.mission.com.au

New suicide assessment tool

13 October: A new e-Learning tool was launched by the Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator the Hon. Kay Patterson, to help reduce the suicide rate and the impact of suicide on families. The *Suicide Assessment and Intervention: Men at Risk e-Learning* tool will assist in addressing the significant suicide risk factor for men following relationship breakdown.

More at: www.facs.gov.au

RESEARCH:

Health spending grows to \$78.4 bn

28 September: Health expenditure in Australia in 2003/04 was \$78.4 billion or \$3,919 per person, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. This represents a \$6.1 billion increase from 2002/03, or \$267 more per person than the previous year. The majority of spending in health was funded by governments (67.9%), while the non-government sector funded 32.1%. Out-of-pocket spending on health by Australians grew, in real terms, 6.2% in 2003/04 compared to 5.0% the previous year.

More at: www.aihw.gov.au

Over 50s Alliance formed

12 October 2005: The 'Over 50s Alliance' of the Council on the Ageing (COTA) was launched in Canberra by the Minister for Ageing, Ms Julie Bishop MP. The Alliance aims to represent 500,000 older people and will have a national policy secretariat based in Melbourne.

More at: www.health.gov.au

RESEARCH: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

October: A report by the Social Policy Research Centre (University of New South Wales) analysed current data on children in SAAP, those who accompany their families and those who are unaccompanied, and discussed policy development and possible further research. The Report stated: "one of the key points that emerges is the importance of recognising them [children] as people with service needs of their own, distinct from those of their parents/guardians".

More at: www.sprc.unsw.edu.au

National Child Protection Clearinghouse

October: Updated information and reports on prevention of child abuse are provided on the National Child Protection Clearinghouse website, including on police clearances and checks, and the Victorian Child Wellbeing and Safety Bill.

More at: www.aifs.gov.au

Community business partnerships awards

19 October: Six winning partnerships of the 2005 Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships were announced. The Large Business Award was won by Lend Lease and the Abraham Mott Centre - City of Sydney; PMI Mortgage Insurance and Habitat for Humanity Australia won the Medium Business Award; and the Small Business Award was won by Prime Television, WAVE FM and the Illawarra Division of General Practice. BHP Billiton won the Special Award for Impact on a Community for partnerships with the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre, the Foundation for Young Australians, the Melbourne Business School, the Powerhouse (Victoria) and Reconciliation Australia.

More at: www.pm.gov.au

New direction for ethnic disability services

21 October: The National Ethnic Disability Alliance strategic plan was launched, setting out future directions in supporting people with a disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

More at: www.facs.gov.au

RESEARCH:

Corporate giving helping Indigenous communities

10 October 2005: A report by the Australian Institute of Family Studies showcasing 14 Indigenous initiatives supported by Telstra Foundation's Community Development Fund has reinforced the importance of corporate funding and its role as a positive change agent for Indigenous Australians. The report demonstrates that community-identified programs are creating positive opportunities for Australia's Indigenous children and young people.

More at: www.aifs.gov.au

RESEARCH:

Indigenous homelessness

21 October: Indigenous Australians are more likely to rent than to own their homes, and are more likely to be homeless and live in overcrowded conditions than non-Indigenous Australians, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, *Indigenous Housing Needs 2005, a Multi-measure Needs Model*. In 2001, just under 2% of Indigenous Australians were considered homeless. The rate of homelessness was 18 per 1,000 or 3.5 times higher than for non-Indigenous people.

More at: www.aihw.gov.au

