



**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.**

**Ministerial changes**

27 January 2006: Amongst a number of Ministerial changes, the Hon. Mal Brough MP has been appointed as Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs. The Minister for Community Services is the Hon. John Cobb MP, and the Hon. Julie Bishop MP is the Minister for Education, Science and Training and Minister assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues. The Hon. Dr Sharman Stone MP is Minister for Workforce Participation.  
*More at: [www.pm.gov.au](http://www.pm.gov.au)*

**Senate Inquiries: Forgotten Australians and Protecting Vulnerable Children**

10 November 2005: The Australian Government tabled its response to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Reports, *Forgotten Australians* and *Protecting Vulnerable Children: A national challenge*.

As part of its response, the Government has indicated support for the proposal for a conference of service providers to identify ongoing needs of care leavers and make recommendations about the most effective ways of meeting those needs.

Government will also convene a National Summit on Child Protection in Melbourne in the first half of 2006 to bring together child protection practitioners, researchers and policy makers from all jurisdictions to identify a practical way forward in developing a national approach to child protection.

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

**\*\*\*SPECIAL FEATURE\*\*\***

***Australia's Welfare***

28 November 2005: the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's report *Australia's Welfare 2005* focused on ageing and aged care, disability and disability services, housing, homelessness, community services labour force and expenditure, as well as children and youth.

The report showed that people aged 65 and over have increased as a proportion of the population from 10% in 1984 to 13% in 2004. There is increasing diversity of family and household types as well as changes in patterns of labour force participation.

The proportion of couple families where both parents were employed increased from 51% in 1993 to 59% in 2003. The proportion of families where neither parent is employed has declined from 11% to 6% in the same period.

The number of children in Australia increased rapidly until the mid-1970s, remained steady until the 1990s and has increased gradually since that time. One third of the Australian population is aged under 25.

Between 1991 and 2004 the number of Australian Government supported child care places has more than doubled to over 530,000. Residential aged care places increased from 82.2 per 1,000 people aged 70+ in 2001 to 84.2 in 2004.

Disability support services were provided to 187,800 people during 2003-04, with more than half of the expenditure under this program used to fund accommodation support services. Government funding for

welfare services grew, in real terms, at an average rate of 5.7% per year between 1998-99 and 2002-03, and the most rapid growth by far was in welfare services for families and children.

Finding affordable, secure and appropriate housing continues to be a problem for lower income Australian households, as demand for affordable housing has risen at the same time as the level of public housing stock has dropped. For people without secure housing, government funded homeless services support over 150,000 people each year. However, demand for accommodation still exceeds supply, with over half the adults and children requesting accommodation turned away on an average night.

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

**Out-of-home care: latest figures**

16 January 2006: The number of Australian children in out-of-home care has risen steadily over the past decade according to an Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, *Child Protection Australia 2004-05*. Nationally, the number of children in out-of-home care rose each year from 1996 to 2005, and the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care was over six times the rate of other children.

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

**Child Friendly Community Action Kit**

September 2005: The NAPCAN Foundation released a *Child Friendly Community Action Kit* which provides information on child abuse and neglect, and step-by-step advice on forming a Child Friendly Community Action Group and planning child



friendly initiatives. Lists of further resources and examples of child friendly initiatives are included. The kit can be downloaded from the NAPCAN website.

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

#### **Mental health service report**

19 December 2005: an the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report on mental health services in Australia, *Mental Health Services in Australia 2003-04*, provided details of care by community mental health services, hospitals, general practitioners and private psychiatrists. It also included information on mental health-related disability support services and supported accommodation services.

The report showed that there were over 4.9 million mental health service contacts in community-based mental health services and public hospital outpatient clinics in 2003-04 and that there were more service contacts for male (51.7%) than for female patients.

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

#### **Adoptions: latest figures**

30 November 2005: An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, *Adoptions Australia 2004-05*, showed that the number of adoptions from overseas countries reached a new high, with 434 intercountry adoptions recorded in 2004-05, compared with 370 in 2003-04.

Total adoptions recorded in Australia in 2004-05 numbered 585, with the majority of those (74%) being intercountry placement adoptions. Just under a third (32%) of all children adopted in 2004-05 were from China, while 22% were from South Korea, 14% from Ethiopia and 11% from the Philippines.

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

#### **RESEARCH:**

##### **Children at risk**

November 2005: A VicHealth Research Report, *Children at risk in families affected by parental mental illness*, estimated that there are between 21.73% and 23.52% of children living in Australian and Victorian households where at least one parent has a mental illness - just over one million children in Australia and just over a quarter of a million in Victoria.

*More at: [www.vichealth.gov.au](http://www.vichealth.gov.au)*  
(type copmi in search section)

##### **SIDS and Kids**

7 December 2005: The SIDS and Kids *Safe Sleeping in Child Care Kit* was launched, giving advice on safe sleeping practices, as well as emergency plans and responses. It contains safe sleeping literature, including a safe sleeping policy, video, brochures and posters - a valuable resource for anyone who is involved in the care of babies.

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

##### **\$2.6 million for Community Child Care Centres**

21 December 2005: The Australian Government announced an additional \$2.6 million to upgrade essential services in not-for-profit community-based long day care centres. The funding comes from the \$226 million *Child Care Support Program* and is part of the 2005 Minor Capital Upgrade round, providing child care services with funds to address urgent health and safety issues. Eligible services are able to apply for funding of \$5,000 to \$100,000 to help child care centres undertake the repair and renovation of buildings and playgrounds or to upgrade essential facilities such as air conditioning, shade structures, bathrooms and kitchens.

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

##### **Diabetes**

9 December 2005: Death rates from diabetes-related causes increase dramatically with increasing socioeconomic disadvantage and distance from major cities, and men are more likely than women to die from diabetes or related causes, according to a new report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Diabetes-related deaths in Australia 2001-2003*. Over the period 2001-2003, there were nearly 21,000 diabetes-related deaths registered for people aged 25 years and over in Australia, representing 5.4% of registered deaths in that period.

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

##### **Family Relationship Clearinghouse**

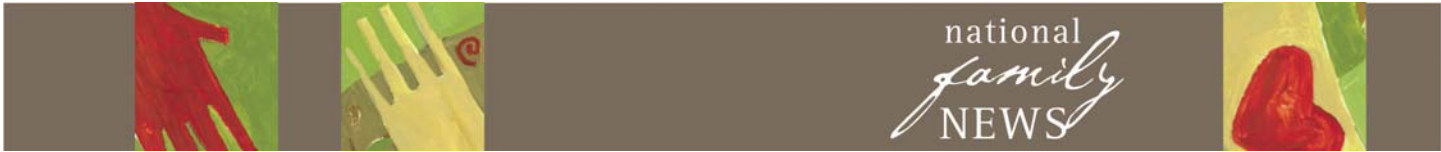
1 December 2005: The Australian Government announced funding of \$800,000 over two years to establish the Family Relationship Clearinghouse to collect and deliver the latest relevant research and best practice to family relationship services and practitioners across Australia. The Australian Institute of Family Studies will operate the Clearinghouse.

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

##### **Youth Mental Health Foundation**

12 December 2005: The Australian Government announced that a consortium led by the University of Melbourne will establish the Youth Mental Health Foundation. The Foundation will have access to \$54 million in funding over four years to improve the coordination of mental health services for young people. It will provide a centre of excellence for evidence-based practice in youth mental health, improve the skills of GPs and other service providers in helping mental health patients, increase community awareness and encourage young people to seek help when needed.

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



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