



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.

Family Law Violence Strategy

24 February: The Australian Government will fund the Australian Institute of Family Studies to conduct independent research on how allegations of family violence and child abuse are raised and addressed in the family law system. The Family Law Council will be asked to examine strategies to make sure Commonwealth and State and Territory laws and agencies can work together better in these cases.

The Family Law Violence Strategy aims to gain a better understanding of how allegations of family violence and child abuse are dealt with in family law proceedings, work with the responsible State and Territory agencies to ensure allegations of violence and abuse are promptly and thoroughly investigated, work with the courts to improve court processes for cases where family violence and child abuse allegations are raised, and ensure the family law reforms and proper screening at the new Family Relationship Centres help people experiencing violence or abuse access appropriate support and services.
More at: www.ag.gov.au/publications

Family Relationship Advice Line

February: The Attorney-General's Department is seeking proposals to establish and deliver the Family Relationship Advice Line – Legal Advice Services over a three year period commencing 1 July 2006. Applications close 17 March.
More at: www.ag.gov.au (tenders)

Workplace Giving

February: Under the Workplace Giving Australia program, an initiative of the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership, free

workshops are being conducted to assist businesses to develop an in-house workplace giving program. Workshops will be held around Australia over the next year and will provide an opportunity for participants to hear the business case for workplace giving.

More at: www.partnerships.gov.au

Family Law Reform

7 February: The Senate referred the Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Bill 2005 to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 27 March 2006.

More at: www.ag.gov.au.

Family Counselling and Mediation Services – application sought

1 February: The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs is seeking applications for funding from eligible organisations to provide family counselling and mediation services for parents with a son or daughter with a severe disability. The invitation to submit an application was released on 4 February 2006. Applications close 31 March.

More at: www.facs.gov.au

New Child Support Agency Publications

The Child Support Agency has released two publications: 'Me, My Kids and My Ex: Forming a workable relationship for the benefit of your children' and 'Getting Started Information' about child support for separated parents.

More at: www.csa.gov.au

*****SPECIAL FEATURE*****

National Health Survey shows mixed results

27 February 2006: More Australian adults were overweight or obese and more drank alcohol at risky or high risk levels in 2004-5 than in 2001, according to the 2004-05 Australian Bureau of Statistics National Health Survey. Main report findings were:

- **Overweight:** When body mass index was calculated from reported height and weight, 62% of men and 45% of women were classified in the overweight or obese groups.
- **Alcohol:** The majority of adults (71% of men and 54% of women) consumed alcohol in the week prior to interview, and most of these (78%) had consumed alcohol at a level which would constitute a low risk to their health. The proportion of adults who had consumed alcohol at levels which, if continued, would be risky or a high risk to their health was 13%, compared with 11% in 2001.
- **Smoking:** Approximately one in four adults (23%) were smokers in 2004-5 and in 2001.
- **Exercise:** Two thirds of adults (66%) had exercised for recreation, sport or fitness in the two weeks prior to interview. Almost half (49%) reported they had walked for exercise, 36% exercised at a moderate level and 15% did vigorous exercise. Men were more likely to do moderate or vigorous exercise than women, while women were more likely to walk for exercise than men.

More at: www.abs.gov.au

Retiree Numbers

6 February: According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there are three million retirees aged 45 years and over in Australia. At retirement, the main source of income for almost half (44%) of these people was a 'government pension or allowance'. Slightly more women (1.7 million) than men (1.3 million) are retired.
More at: www.abs.gov.au

Juvenile justice report

20 February: An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report found that during 2003-04 there were 12,992 young people under juvenile justice supervision in Australia, with males representing around 83%. Approximately two-thirds (67%) of young people under juvenile justice supervision were aged 16 years or older with less than 8% aged 13 years or younger. About 30% of young people under juvenile justice supervision were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. The rate for Indigenous young people aged 10-17 years who were under juvenile justice supervision was over ten times that of their non-Indigenous counterparts - approximately 34 per 1,000 for Indigenous youth compared with about 3 per 1,000 for non-Indigenous young people.
More at: www.aihw.gov.au

Nutrition

22 February 2006: According to Australian Institute of Health and Welfare over 50% of people in Australia are not meeting minimum recommendations for fruit and vegetable consumption. In 2001, one in two adults reported eating the recommended level of fruit per day and just one in three reported eating the recommended level of vegetables. The report, *Towards national indicators for food and nutrition-an AIHW view*, examines a variety of existing measures for and nutrition indicators in Australia and compares them with available data from countries with established indicators for monitoring food and nutrition.
More at: www.aihw.gov.au

Young people and human rights

24 February: A new human rights webpage for secondary students was launched. 'Information for Students' is an online education resource for secondary school students to help them gain an awareness and understanding of human rights.
More at: www.humanrights.gov.au/info_for_students/index.html

Younger people in aged care

13 February: The Federal Government will contribute up to \$122 million over five years to a program to assist younger people with a disability living in residential aged care as part of a \$244 million plan agreed at the Council of Australian Governments' meeting. Younger people with disability currently living in residential aged care will be offered a care needs assessment, and where appropriate, alternative accommodation and care options can be made available.
More at: www.facs.gov.au

Centrelink customer records

15 February: An Australian National Audit Office performance audit found that Centrelink could significantly improve the accuracy and integrity of data stored on its customer database, ISIS. The audit found that up to 30 per cent of customer 'proof of identity' information recorded on ISIS was insufficient or unreliable in terms of uniquely identifying or substantiating the identity of customers.
More at: www.anao.gov.au

National Families Week 2006

February: National Families Week will be held between 14-20 May 2006. Special themes this year are young people aged 12-18 and parenting. National Families Week is an opportunity for all Australians to celebrate the importance of families. The Week is run by Families Australia and sponsored by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.
More at: www.familiesaustralia.org.au

SPECIAL FEATURE

Child care among barriers to labour force participation

6 February: Child care, lack of training and disability were among the most common barriers preventing people from working or working extra hours, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

ABS estimated that 6.3 million people had the potential, but not necessarily the desire, to fully participate in the workforce. These were people who were either unemployed, working less than 16 hours a week or who were not in the labour force.

Almost three-quarters (72% or 4.5 million people) of these people did not want to work or did not want to work additional hours. However, 28% (1.8 million people) did want to work or work extra hours but faced a range of barriers to achieving this. Of these people:

- 35% (627,000 people) were seeking a job or extra working hours and could start work within four weeks. The most common difficulty these people had in finding work was that they 'lacked the necessary training, qualifications and experience' (17% said this was their main difficulty). These were mostly people who did not have university, TAFE or other non-school qualifications.
- 19% (348,500 people) would have preferred to work or work more hours, but were not available to start within four weeks. The main barrier for men in this group was 'long-term sickness or disability', while the most common barrier for women was 'child care, pregnancy or home duties'.
- 45% (813,700 people) did want to work or work additional hours but weren't seeking anything due to other commitments, mainly 'child care, pregnancy or home duties' (22%) or 'study commitments' (13%).

More at: www.abs.gov.au

