



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.

**Same-Sex: Same Entitlements
National Inquiry**

April: The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission will conduct a National Inquiry into discrimination against same-sex couples in accessing financial and work-related entitlements.

The Inquiry will conduct an audit of Commonwealth, State and Territory laws in order to develop a full list of circumstances in which same-sex couples may be denied financial and work-related benefits and entitlements that heterosexual couples enjoy.

The Inquiry will also be collecting individual stories about the impact of such laws on people in same-sex couples, and any children of same-sex couples and will make recommendations to the Federal Attorney-General, Philip Ruddock, and Federal Parliament as to how to address any discrimination. A discussion paper has been released and public submissions are due by 2 June.

More at:
http://www.humanrights.gov.au/samesex/discussion_paper2006.html

Low Pay Project

6 April: New research shows that the working poor have increased in Australia as a percentage of the Australian workforce, with more employed people unable to afford basic necessities such as dental care and petrol. The Low Pay Project, funded by the Australian Research Council, trade unions and the Brotherhood of St Laurence, found the number of working Australians who make less than two-thirds of median earnings (or less than \$533 a week and \$27,716 a year) has increased by

600,000 over the past decade. This is a 50 percent rise to 1.8 million in 2003 from 1.2 million in the mid 1990s. The research also found that the feelings of social isolation and humiliation experienced by low-paid workers had increased as the gap between poor and rich widened.

More at:
<http://www.lowpayproject.com.au/>

**Measuring poverty in an era of
prosperity**

March: Results of the first stage of a new research project highlighting the problems facing individuals and families living on a low-income in Australia were recently released. The project funded by the Australian Research Council involved the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), ACOSS, Mission Australia, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Anglicare Sydney. The second stage of the project will assess public opinion on the essentials of life in Australia today, as well as the things people need to participate effectively in society. The report *Experiencing poverty: The Voices of Low-Income Australians* is now available at SPRC.

More at:
<http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/>

\$1.8 billion for mental health

March: The Commonwealth Government has announced it will contribute \$1.8 billion, in new funds, to a five-year mental health action plan, to improve services for people with a mental illness. The plan involves cooperation between the Commonwealth and the States.

Major areas of reform include: more primary health and clinical services; an increase in supported accommodation for people with a

mental illness living in the community; improvements in emergency and crisis services; and improvement in hospital and prison care.

More at: <http://www.health.gov.au>

**The Psychological Health of Sole
Mothers in Australia**

20 March: A report published in the Australian Medical Journal has found that Sole mothers are more likely than other women to experience debilitating psychological health problems and that their poor economic status partly accounts for their poorer psychological health.

http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/184_06_200306/lox10718_fm.html

Health Inequalities

7 April: Disadvantaged groups experience more severe and more long-term health problems than other Australians, according to a report released jointly by the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The report, *Health Inequalities in Australia: morbidity, health behaviours, risk factors and health services use*, looks at where people live, their income, education and occupation, and finds that being disadvantaged puts people at much higher risk for health problems.

This report is the second in a series that focuses on different aspects of health inequalities in Australia. Other reports in the series examine health inequalities in mortality, and the measurement of socio-economic position in population health. *More at:*
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10272>

National Public Health Expenditure Report 2001-02 to 2003-04

15 March: Public health activities are aimed at preventing illness and enhancing the present and future wellbeing and quality of life of a nation's population. As such, current outlays by governments on public health activities are investments that aim to minimise future preventable expenditure on illness. This publication is the fourth in a series that reports expenditure on public health activities by governments in Australia and provides detailed estimates of expenditure for the years 2001-02 to 2003-04, as well as some revised estimates for 1999-00 and 2000-01. The report summarises estimates of expenditure and funding from key health departments and agencies of the Australian Government and each state and territory government by nine public health activity categories.

More at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10176>

Demand for SAAP assistance by homeless people 2003-04

28 February: The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, 'Demand for SAAP Accommodation 2003-04' provides information on the wide range of substantial support services provided by SAAP agencies to people experiencing homelessness or who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. An analysis of one-off or casual assistance provided by SAAP agencies on a daily basis is included but a major focus of this report is the level of unmet demand for accommodation. According to the report, SAAP housing services accommodated almost 60,000 children who turned up on the door with their parents, the majority of whom were mothers escaping domestic violence.

More

at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication/index.cfm/title/10191>

WorkChoices

March: The Department of Workplace Relations and the Office of the Employment Advocate are holding a series of free information seminars to provide an overview of the legislation and information about the practicalities of making workplace agreements. Bookings are essential.

<https://www.workchoices.gov.au/ourplanning/events/>

Centrelink seeks Financial Case Managers

March: With the introduction of the Welfare-to-Work changes and the new compliance regimes Centrelink is calling for interested NGOs to register as Financial Case Managers. Managers will assist customers, who are serving an eight-week non-payment period, with the payment of essential expenses up to the level of income support they would otherwise have received. Interested NGOs need to complete the form available on the Centrelink website.

More at: www.centrelink.gov.au

PM's Awards for Excellence

3 April: Nominations have been called for the 2006 Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships. Nominations close on 5 May and the kit and nomination forms are available at www.partnerships.gov.au Note: the nominations must be in hard copy and cannot be submitted electronically.

Australian framework for family statistics

March: The ABS is conducting a project to develop a widely accepted framework for national statistics about families. The framework will support the process of determining the most relevant statistics to be collected and presented with respect to contemporary and emerging aspects of families into the future. The project is in its infancy and is being developed

in consultation with the Family Statistics Advisory group. A national consultation with will be held later in the year.

Government response to the Senate Inquiry on Poverty

March: The response to the Senate Inquiry report *A hand up not a hand out: renewing our fight against poverty* is now available. The inquiry conducted in 2003 made 95 recommendations.

More at:

http://www.facs.gov.au/Internet/facsinternet.nsf/News/responce_to_carc_report.htm

National Families Week 15 - 21 May

March: National Families Week 2006 will be held between 14 and 20 May 2006. As in past years, *National Families Week 2006* encourages organisations and individuals to take time to think about families, whatever shape they take, and to celebrate the role they play in our lives and community. In 2006 there will be a particular focus on families with children aged between 12 and 18 years, with an additional emphasis on parenting. Organisations may register events to celebrate National Families Week 2006.

More at:

www.familiesaustralia.org.au

National Volunteers Week 15 - 21 May

March: National Volunteer Week provides a national focus for organisations wanting to recruit volunteers and promote the value of volunteering to the community. The theme for this year is *Change your world...start now.*

<http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/conferencevents.html>