



Families Australia, a national, independent, peak organisation promoting the interests of families, publishes *National Family News* on the first week of each month (except January). *NFN* contains information about the latest major developments in national family policy, services and research from across government and the non-government sectors. Back issues can be viewed at: www.familiesaustralia.org.au

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Top stories: *Australian Social Trends*; *Home Truths* report; Government supports the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

VIEWS & NEWS FROM FAMILIES AUSTRALIA...

National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

Families Australia has continued to work closely with the 64-member Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children to advocate for the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. It is now expected that COAG will announce the Framework in April or May 2009. In January 2009, the Coalition made public calls for Federal and State/Territory Governments to announce a package of initiatives valued at least \$500 million for child protection and safety over the first three years of the Framework. More information: <http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au>

Report on UK, Irish, Canadian and US child protection systems

March: An examination of child protection systems in the UK, Ireland, Canada and the US was undertaken by Families Australia's CEO Brian Babington in February and March 2009 under the auspices of a Winston Churchill Fellowship. His report contains several recommendations for the early implementation phase of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, including in relation to early intervention, data collection and workforce development. More at:

<http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au/publications/pubs/churchillreport22march2009.pdf>

National Families Week 2009 – Register your event

National Families Week 2009 will be held from Sunday 10 May to Saturday 16 May 2009 (coinciding with UN International Day of Families on Friday 15 May and Mothers' Day on 10 May). The central aim of *National Families Week 2009* is to encourage all Australians to think about and celebrate the many different people who make families united and strong and the many different types of families across society, each deserving respect and acknowledgement. The theme is: *National Families Week –*

Celebrate how everyone makes a difference. Register your event at: <http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au/familiesweek/index.htm>

TOP STORIES...

Australian Social Trends

25 March: The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has released the latest Australian Social Trends. The first issue (of four) for 2009 features articles about couples in Australia, noting a rise in *de facto* relationships, the continuing uneven share of household work and increased energy use by households. Other articles focus on Australia's ageing population, including future population trends, retirement and superannuation.

More at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4102.0?OpenDocument>.

Home Truths report

20 March: Minister for Housing, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, launched the Mental Health Council of Australia's *Home Truths* report. The report highlights the importance of housing in successfully treating Australians with a mental illness and discusses the intersection of housing and mental health policy. More at:

http://www.ursulastephens.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/ursulastephens.nsf/content/mental_health_council_19mar09.htm

Exploring Measures of Low Social Capital

March: This ABS Research Paper, based on the 2006 General Social Survey, explores a range of measures of social capital to see how they are related to each other. More at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1351.0.55.024?OpenDocument>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Home Ownership

25 March: This snapshot from the ABS provides information about rates of home ownership for Indigenous and other Australian households and about the characteristics of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians according to selected tenure types. The topics covered in this snapshot include: comparisons of tenure type in the states and territories and in remote areas; family composition and housing choices; and the association between housing tenure and educational attainment, labour force status, income, health and well-being. More at:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4722.0.55.005?OpenDocument>

Government supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

3 April: Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, has announced the Australian Government's decision to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. More at:

http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/un_declaration_03apr09.htm

International Group for Indigenous Health Measurement 2006, Canberra

20 March: Significant health disparities exist between indigenous and non-indigenous populations in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. But how can policy makers reduce these disparities if high-quality data isn't available? The International Group for Indigenous Health Measurement is committed to the highest quality collection, dissemination, and use of data related to indigenous health. This publication from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) contains the proceedings of that group's second meeting, including abstracts and biographies and also information on how these different countries identify, collect and count data on their Indigenous populations. More at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10719>

Homeless people in SAAP

3 April: This SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2007-08, from AIHW, provides an overview of assistance given to clients and their children by the SAAP Program in 2007-08. More at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10662>

Mobile phone use by children and young people

Two stories:

6 April: Research undertaken by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People, with the University of Sydney and University of Technology Sydney, involved surveys and conversations with more than 1,500 children and young people in Years 6 and 9 across New South Wales to learn more about how mobile phones fit into their lives. There are some positive findings about the ways in which mobiles help children and young people and their parents to maintain stronger relationships across greater distances, and an acknowledgement of some of the challenges. More at: <http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/kids/resources/publications.cfm?itemID=6A42C371DF67CB63BA92FD2D72DFB82C>

2 April: This ABC *Lateline* story addresses issues relating to research into a link between long-term mobile phone use and brain cancer. It outlines the changing policies of some countries and refers to Australia's part in the biggest ever study of mobile phone safety. More at: <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2008/s2533725.htm>

The geography of disability and economic disadvantage in Australian capital cities

How is severe disability distributed within Australian capital cities? What is the relationship between the percentage of people with severe disability living in a local metropolitan area and the socioeconomic disadvantage of the area? This AIHW report presents data on the geographical distribution of severe disability among people aged less than 65 years living in Australian capital cities, based on analysis of the 2006

Census of Population and Housing. More at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10703>

Crisis Accommodation Program 2007-08

31 March: This AIHW report shows that, at 30 June 2008, over 7,500 dwellings were funded under CAP and were used by governments, churches and other welfare organisations to assist people in situations of actual or impending crisis or

homelessness. Limited information on the households assisted in CAP dwellings is also reported. More at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10708>

Health and community services labour force 2006

6 March: This AIHW report contains information on geographical distribution, country of birth and qualifications held by workers in health and community services occupations. It shows that, between 2001 and 2006, the health workforce and community services workforce increased by 22.8% and 35.6% respectively. More at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10677>

Enhancing the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set: counting clients and reporting comorbidity

17 March: The Enhancement Project of the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set (AODTS-NMDS) examined the feasibility of introducing the components of a statistical linkage key and one or more indicators of mental health comorbidity into the AODTS-NMDS. After consultation with jurisdictions and alcohol and other drug treatment agencies, four new data elements were piloted in three jurisdictions. This AIHW bulletin presents the findings of this project. More at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10691>

Building a Fair Australia in Tough Economic Times

2 April: This speech by Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, to the ACOSS Conference in Sydney, can be found at:

http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/acoss_speech_2april_09.htm

Updating mychild.gov.au

26 March: Minister for Education, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP, and Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Child Care, the Hon. Maxine McKew, today encouraged child care service providers to update their service and fee information on mychild.gov.au. The website is designed to provide all Australian families with easy access to early childhood education and child care information. More at:

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090326_1112_13.aspx. Website at: <http://www.mychild.gov.au/>

Teen dental scheme

The Medicare Teen Dental Scheme enables families to claim up to \$153.45 (in the 2009 calendar year) for the cost of an annual preventative dental check up. More at: <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/public/services/files/2207-dental-brochure-dl.pdf>

The enabling state

Attitudes to people with disabilities are changing in Britain, but the progress is uneven, writes Frank Bongiorno in *Inside Story*. More at: <http://inside.org.au/the-enabling-state/>

OPPORTUNITIES...

Applications open for National Disability Conference Funding

3 April: Applications are now open to organisers of disability conferences to be held between 1 July 2009 and 30 June 2010. Applications close on 5 May 2009.

Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, the Hon. Bill Shorten MP, said funding will help empower people with disability by enabling them, their families and carers to attend and be involved in disability conferences held within Australia. More at:

http://www.billshorten.fahcsia.gov.au/Internet/billshorten.nsf/content/disability_conference_funding_03apr09.htm

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