



families australia UPDATE



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THINK FAMILIES, STRENGTHEN FAMILIES, CELEBRATE FAMILIES NO. 3, AUTUMN 2010

Welcome

In this issue, we highlight Families Australia's Federal election proposals, the signing of the National Compact between the Federal Government and the NGO sector, the latest news on Forgotten Australians, progress with the implementation of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children and planning for National Families Week 2010. We also highlight the work being done by three Families Australia Members.

As always, we welcome your feedback on our work and thoughts on issues we may be able to pursue at the national level.

Please contact us on 02 6273 4885 or admin@familiesaustralia.org.au



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Established in 2001, Families Australia is an independent, peak, national, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the needs and interests of families. With around 400 member organisations from across Australia, Families Australia seeks to promote a national policy environment in which the needs and interests of families, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, can be heard and addressed. We envision a society that recognises the central role of families in our community and embraces its responsibilities for the development, nurturing and wellbeing of all families.

Federal election policy proposals

Thank you to the scores of Families Australia Members who participated in consultations over the past few months. The feedback has been extremely helpful in developing the following set of overarching and specific 2010 Federal election policy proposals, recently endorsed by the Families Australia Board.

At the broadest level, Families Australia strongly believes that there should be:

- A substantial increase in resources devoted to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020. We propose that an additional \$120 million be provided over four years especially to support targeted family and child-related services.
- Growth in real terms in the Federal Family Support Program over the next four years, ideally by a minimum of 10–15%, and for FSP activities increasingly to focus on early intervention and integrated service delivery initiatives.
- A substantial increase in funding for all Federal Government 'Closing the Gap' programs and for programs to be designed and delivered in an ongoing and close partnership with Indigenous peoples.
- An improvement in the overall remuneration of community sector workers as a result of the Pay Equity Test Case 2010, with the Federal Government fully supporting NGOs in meeting the anticipated wages gap.

Specifically, we propose:

- The establishment of a pilot parenting program for young mothers and fathers with special

attention to the needs of Indigenous people and those in, or leaving, out-of-home care.

- A national grant program for local grandparent and other kinship carer support groups.
- The placement of dedicated grandparent/kinship/foster care liaison officers in at least 20 Centrelink offices around Australia.
- Free TAFE or university training for young out-of-home-care leavers.
- Doubling of the Transition to Independent Living Allowance to \$3,000 per person leaving care.
- The provision of leaving care plans for all young people leaving care.
- Support services (referrals, advice and support, training and drop-in centres) for Forgotten Australians in every State and Territory.
- A national NGO coordination service that links siblings of children or young people who have a disability or chronic illness, and their families, to early intervention and support services, and the development of a national strengths-based service delivery model.
- A pilot child and family support program which identifies the needs of, and provides targeted support for, children and families of offenders.

In addition, Families Australia will actively support campaigns by other organisations, including the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children and the Alliance for Forgotten Australians.

Families Australia signs the National Compact

Families Australia was pleased to be one of 20 initial signatories to the National Compact between the Federal Government and the NGO sector. Families Australia's Chair, Sandie de Wolf AM (photographed), signed the Compact at a special event at Parliament House, Canberra, on 17 March 2010. The Compact, which has taken two years to develop, reflects the commitment of the Federal Government and the NGO sector to find new and better ways to work together. The Compact's Shared Vision is "to work together to improve social, cultural, civic, economic and environmental outcomes, building on the strengths of individuals and communities. This collaboration will contribute to improved community wellbeing and a more inclusive Australian society with better quality of life for all."

More information is available at:
<http://www.nationalcompact.gov.au/>



Sandie de Wolf AM, Chair, Families Australia.



This picture shows the current membership of the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) at our recent (8–9 February 2010) meeting in Melbourne. AFA promotes the interests of Forgotten Australians through advocacy and educates the community through awareness-raising projects.

Forgotten Australians

Among other matters, the Forgotten Australians and their Advisory Group discussed and contributed to planning around the new Australian Government projects following the Apology last year:

- Aged Care: the Australian Government is committed to introducing special aged care measures for Forgotten Australians, understanding that many people who suffered abuse or neglect in institutions as children are terrified of returning to an institution.
- Access to records: the Government's Find and Connect service will assist Forgotten Australians to find their own records and to track down family members.
- Historical projects: the National Library of Australia will conduct an oral history project, and the National Museum of Australia will mount an exhibition about Forgotten Australians.

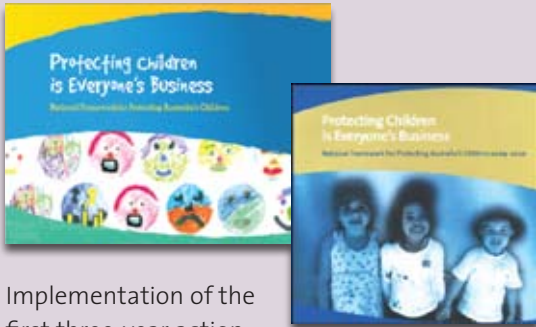
AFA representatives attended receptions in Melbourne, Perth and Sydney to hear the UK Apology to Former Child Migrants. The Apology and £6M Family Restoration Fund are welcome moves in acknowledgment of the abuse and harm caused by these failed government schemes. There is still much to do for Forgotten Australians, and Families Australia will continue to support AFA as it lobbies for better services, redress and support across all States and Territories. See AFA's website at: www.forgottenaustralians.org.au or order a copy of our information booklet by calling Families Australia on 02 6273 4885.

News about Families Australia

- A National Grandparent and other Kinship Carers Conference will be co-hosted by Families Australia and Grandparents Australia in Melbourne on 6–7 October 2010. More information will be posted on our website soon.
- National Families Week 2010 will be held between 15 and 21 May 2010. Please see www.familiesaustralia.org.au for more information.
- A Families Australia members' forum was held in Melbourne in March 2010. Participants heard from the Australian Services Union about the latest developments in industrial relations awards.



National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children



Implementation of the first three-year action plan of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020 is now well underway.

Key developments in the past couple of months include:

- Commencement of work to develop National Standards for out-of-home care. In February and March 2010, KPMG conducted nationwide consultations about the national standards discussion paper. The final standards are expected to be announced by mid-2010.
- Advancing work on a Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support (CAARS) through a series of consultations around the country.

In the coming few months, work is expected to commence on a national priority project to examine options for better support to grandparent, kinship and foster carers. Priority attention is also being given to developing substantive proposals under the national project relating to Indigenous children, families and communities.

The Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children, which represents the NGO sector in the Framework implementation phase, now comprises 90 major organisations and prominent academics who work in areas such as disability, nursing, justice and welfare. Families Australia is the secretariat for the Coalition.

Families Australia in the news

In the past couple of months, we have been active in the media, especially in relation to the needs of grandparent and other kinship carers, child protection and the needs of young people who are leaving out-of-home care.

National Families Week May 2010 “The best start: supporting happy, healthy childhoods”



Families Australia is pleased to announce that National Families Week will be held between 15 and 21 May this year. The aim of the Week is to celebrate the vital role that families play and particularly to highlight the importance of giving every child a happy and healthy childhood. This year's theme is: “The best start: supporting happy, healthy childhoods”. Tens of thousands of people participate in National Families Week activities each year.

To find out more or register your event, go to www.familiesaustralia.org.au

Campaigns we support

Families Australia is proud to support a number of important causes on behalf of its Membership.



Families Australia supports the establishment of a **National Disability Insurance Scheme**, which would provide no-fault insurance for anyone who has, or acquires, a significant disability. A National

Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) would be a landmark social and economic reform, transforming the lives of Australians with disabilities and their families. Please see: www.ndis.org.au/



Families Australia supports the campaign to drive smoking rates down, extend

smoke-free areas and end tobacco promotion. Smoking is Australia's no.1 preventable cause of death and disease. Families Australia is a member of the **Coalition for Protecting Children from Tobacco**, a national grouping of health, medical, child welfare, educational, church, social equity, community and research organisations.

Please see: www.ashaust.org.au/default.htm



Families Australia has been actively engaged in efforts to tackle the problem of violence against women and children, particularly through our leadership role in the **White Ribbon Day** campaign.

Please see: www.whiteribbonday.org.au

Meet some Families Australia members



Yorganop Association Incorporated

is an Aboriginal community managed non-profit organisation with a commitment and responsibility to ensure the protection and care of Aboriginal children. It is contracted by the WA Department for Child Protection to provide placements for Aboriginal children and young people with Aboriginal foster carers. Our service recruits, assesses, registers, provides training and supports Aboriginal carers to ensure quality placements for children.

Yorganop Indigenous Professional Support Unit (YIPSU) is a federally funded program that assists Aboriginal child care services, throughout the state, to provide experiences for children that help them grow strong and healthy in their families, their communities and their culture.

Yorganop is also a Registered Training Organisation and registered to deliver the Certificate III in Children's Services (CHC30708) with customised learning material for Aboriginal learners. Yorganop relies on the professional standards and cultural diversity of its staff to ensure best practice is achieved at all times in the provision of a service which is flexible and responsive, yet proactive.

Websites: www.yorganop.org.au
www.ipsuwa.org.au
Phone: 08 9321 9090
Email: admin@yorganop.org.au



Grandparents Australia is a federation of fifteen independent grandparent organisations drawn from across Australia. The majority of member organisations represent grandparents who are raising grandchildren. However, there are also small support groups, focussing on the issue of grandparents being denied access to grandchildren, being formed.

Grandparents Australia is active in promoting the positive benefits of "grandparenting", especially the benefits for children and young people. These benefits are now being documented, providing powerful arguments in favour of national action to ensure that the relationship between older people and young people is encouraged and facilitated. The benefits will roll in across all families and through time.

At the same time, Grandparents Australia is active in advocating for better support for grandparents in difficult circumstances. The needs of grandparents raising grandchildren have been given priority attention in the last couple of years because the connection between the work of grandparent carers and the prevention of child abuse is clear.

Irrespective of their circumstances, grandparents across Australia have a shared commitment to shaping a happy and healthy future for all grandchildren. Issues such as access to education and a safe environment are crucial.

Phone: 03 9372 2422



Victorian Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders (VACRO)

is a non-government, non-denominational organisation established in 1872. Our mission is to provide support and information for individuals charged with a criminal offence, for offenders, prisoners and their families. VACRO also offers leadership, education, training and research on the criminal justice system including targeted capacity building in local neighbourhoods.

VACRO's contact with families and children of offenders as secondary, 'invisible' victims of crime reveals the impact that incarceration can have on all family members, old and young. VACRO services include information tailored to meet the needs of families and children, counselling for family members and practical assistance with transport, accommodation or referral to specialist services. In addition to providing services and support, our research and policy work actively investigates issues confronting families and children of offenders. We aim to improve professional and academic awareness, ensuring that our accumulated knowledge and expertise can provoke more active and effective responses to the needs identified and can ultimately support and strengthen family relationships.

Website: www.vacro.org.au

