

# News in brief

## Coming soon

### **AFRC Briefing No. 6, 2007, *Stepfamilies: Understanding and Responding Effectively*. Margaret Howden, Stepfamily Association of Victoria (SAVI).**

Stepfamilies in Australia are beginning to be recognised as a unique and important contemporary family form. This paper will combine literature and research with the experiences of staff at the Stepfamily Association of Victoria (SAVI) in delivering counselling, support and education to stepfamilies over the past 25 years. The paper discusses problems in defining and quantifying the number of stepfamilies, the complexities inherent in the contemporary stepfamily, and key differences between stepfamilies and nuclear families. Some ideas for change and early intervention strategies are outlined, and resources for stepfamilies are highlighted.

This publication will be available from: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/pubs.html#brief>

### **Family Matters No. 77, 2007, *Family relationships: Strengthening and supporting families*.**

Articles in this issue of Family Matters cover topics ranging from relationship and family dynamics, family law, Family Relationship Centres, post-separation services, and responses to the Institute's recent publication on allegations of family violence.

This publication will be available in early December 2007 from: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/>

## Australian Institute of Family Studies publications

### **Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault**

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa>

#### **ACSSA AWARE Newsletter No. 14, June 2007**

This edition contains two feature articles. *Sexual pressure and young people's negotiation of consent*, by Anastasia Powell, discusses young women and men's perceptions and experiences of negotiating sexual encounters in contemporary Australia. *Judging rape: Public attitudes and sentencing*, by ACSSA's Haley Clark, discusses average sentences for sexual assaults, and connects public attitudes towards sexual assault, and the influence of myths and stereotypes, to sentencing decision-making. The 'News in Brief' section contains overviews of recently-released reports and events both here and overseas. We also provide a review of a seminar on specialist courts in Australia, and a profile of the Preventing Prisoner Rape Project in Adelaide, South Australia.

Available from: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/pubs/newsletter/n14.html>

#### **Issues No. 7 June 2007. *'Ripple effects' of sexual assault*. Zoë Morrison, Antonia Quadara and Cameron Boyd, Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.**

This paper is about how the effects of sexual assault are wide reaching. As well as the profound effects of sexual assault on victim/survivors, a victim/survivor's family and friends, workers in the sexual assault field and society as a whole are affected by sexual assault in detrimental and still under-recognised ways. These 'ripple effects' of sexual assault are the subject of this paper.

Available from: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/pubs/issue/i7.html>

## Other reports and publications

### ***Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: A snapshot, 2004–2005***

Australian Bureau of Statistics Catalogue No. 4722.0.55.002

This report provides an overview of the health and social circumstances of older (aged 55 years and over) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Topics covered include family and community, culture and language, health status, long-term health conditions, disability, health risk factors, immunisation, service use, hospitalisation rates and mortality.

Available from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4722.0.55.002?OpenDocument>

***The Gordoncare Parent Orders Program: An evaluation. Thea Brown with Sarina Smale, Monash University.***

Creating and sustaining workable post-separation and divorce parenting and contact arrangements can be difficult in cases where there are high levels of hostility and conflict between the parents. The Parent Orders Program was set up by the Commonwealth Government in a small number of sites throughout Australia to help and support parents to find ways of resolving conflict and managing their parenting responsibilities as cooperatively as possible. Gordoncare (located in Victoria) was among the first agencies to run this program. This report covers the evaluation of the program objectives, explores the impact of the unique features of the Gordoncare program, and examines the profile of program clients. The evaluation includes contributions from parents involved in the program as well as staff members, and also touches on the implications for the agency of undertaking this work.

***Family Carers and Mental Illness. Research Bulletin 5 (July 2007), SANE Australia.***

According to the responses of the 529 family carers who responded to a SANE survey, those who care for a family member with mental illness receive little support for themselves or the affected family member, despite recent government policies and initiatives. Based on the survey data, this report sets out a series of recommendations for improving the lives of people with mental illness and their carers including financial, legal and practical day-to-day support, access to more frequent respite care, greater public education about mental illness and funding of mental health services, provision of effective family interventions as part of clinical treatment, and education for mental health professionals.

The bulletin is available from: <http://www.sane.org/information/information/research.html>

***The problem of stigma during end-of-life care at a psychiatric institution. Dr P. McGrath & V. Jarrett. International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation.***

Lack of research on palliative care in a mental health setting led to this qualitative attempt to document the experience of providing end-of-life care for patients in an institutional mental health setting. Eight healthcare professionals involved in caring for terminally-ill patients in a mental health institution described the impact of the stigma surrounding mental health patients, and those who care for them, on providing end-of-life care. A range of issues were reported, including difficulties accessing palliative care for mentally-ill patients, lack of understanding of mental illness, the patients' need for familiar surroundings, and the ad hoc and often limited nature of the assistance. The findings point to the need for links to be developed between the palliative and mental health care systems.

Source: Australian Policy Online, 12 July 2007.

Citation: McGrath, P., & Jarrett, V. (2007). The problem of stigma during end-of-life care at a psychiatric institution. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*, 11(2), 19–30.

***Work, Life and Time. The Australian Work and Life Index 2007. B. Pocock, N. Skinner & P. Williams. Centre for Work and Life, Hawke Research Institute, University of South Australia.***

This report sets out the key results of the first annual survey of Australian work-life interaction, conducted by the University of South Australia, and the South Australian and Western Australian governments. The survey examined how participating in paid work affects aspects of employees' lives, including personal, household and community health and wellbeing. Results are described in terms of work-to-life interaction, life-to-work interaction, time stress and job characteristics (such as type of employment and working hours). Comparisons are also made across categories of other geographic, personal and household characteristics including age, education, caring responsibilities, income, health, experience of stress, and satisfaction with relationships.

The report is available from: <http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/cwl/documents/AWALI2007.pdf>

Source: Australian Policy Online, 20 July 2007.

***Mothers and fathers with young children: Paid employment, caring and wellbeing. J. Baxter, M. Gray, M. Alexander, L. Stradzins, & M. Bittman. Social Policy Research Paper No. 30. Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.***

The lack of large-scale, nationally-representative surveys of Australian families with young children means that large gaps exist in our understanding of how these families deal with various recent demographic changes, in particular the increased participation of mothers in the labour force. Using data from *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*, a study involving some 5,000 infants and 5,000 children aged 4–5 years and their parents, the authors examine: how having children impacts the employment patterns of parents; the relationship between parental employment and the use of child care and early education services; the time stresses arising out of combining paid work and the care of children; and the relationships between paid work and families' financial wellbeing and the physical, psychological and relational wellbeing of the parents.

The report is available from [http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/research/prps-prps\\_30.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/research/prps-prps_30.htm)

***Children's Fears, Hopes and Heroes. Modern childhood in Australia. J. Tucci, J. Mitchell, & C. Goddard. Australian Childhood Foundation. June 2007.***

Children's views are seldom recorded in the research literature, but this study – comprising an online survey of 600 10–14 year-olds – gives voice to their thoughts about their own lives, their parents and families, the world in which they live, and their needs and desires for their future. The data show that for many children their sense of place in the world, their sense of community and of themselves is threatened. Relationships with their peers and parents are of paramount importance to them, but for one particular group, identified and insular and disconnected, there is a need for greater support from and attachment to an adult.

The report is available from <http://www.childhood.org.au/research/reports.asp>

Source: Australian Policy Online, 9 July 2007.

***Youth Mentoring Network Australia. Lesley Tobin. Dusseldorf Skills Forum, NSW. Paper presented at the Youth Mentoring Trust conference, Auckland, New Zealand, 25–26 May 2007.***

The Dusseldorf Skills Forum is one of five partner organisations that make up the Youth Mentoring Network in Australia. In this paper, Ms Tobin discusses several characteristics of the mentoring programs provided by the Network that contribute to their success: a) program design and planning and evaluation; b) program governance and management; and c) the core practices of recruitment, selection and screening, training and development, matching, monitoring, supporting and closing the mentoring match. She also describes the function of the network, and some of the issues and challenges it confronts and will continue to navigate in order to continue to grow as an integral aspect of community life.

The paper is available from <http://www.dsf.org.au/papers/196.htm>

Source: Australian Policy Online, 9 July 2007.

***Barriers to Service Delivery for Young Pregnant Women and Mothers. A Report to the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) 2007. Deborah Loxton, Jenny Stewart Williams & Lyn Adamson (University of Newcastle).***

This project was conducted to increase knowledge and understanding of access to and use of services by young pregnant women and mothers. Participants – service providers, and young pregnant women and mothers – attended focus groups or completed phone or face-to-face interviews. Barriers to and facilitators of service delivery clustered into three groups: common barriers; those specific to a particular service; and those relevant for vulnerable subgroups. From these, a set of best practice principles was derived highlighting the importance of the relationship between the young women and service providers and the range of pathways into the service for the young women. The report also highlights the critical role played by inter-service networking and collaboration in contributing to the wide dissemination of information about services available to young women in general, not just those who are pregnant.

The report is available from [http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/youth-young\\_pregnant.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/youth-young_pregnant.htm)

## **Other clearinghouse publications**

### **Domestic Violence & Incest Resource Centre**

<http://www.dvirc.org.au>

***Behind Closed Doors: Family Dispute Resolution and Family Violence. DVIRC Discussion Paper 6, 2007.***

The new family law system requires separating parents participate in family dispute resolution before their parenting dispute proceeds to court. Concerns have been raised in various quarters as to how the new requirements will impact on victims of family violence who participate in the process. This report sets out these concerns and discusses a range of the issues and dilemmas for practitioners and service providers.

The report is available for purchase from the DVIRC (<http://www.dvirc.org.au>). The Executive Summary of the paper can be downloaded free from <http://www.dvirc.org.au/PublicationsHub/DiscPapers.htm>.