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## COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION



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The Institute's Communication and Information Program aims to improve public understanding and inform the policy process about factors affecting marital and family wellbeing through a comprehensive communication and information strategy.

The program is responsible for undertaking activities and achieving outcomes related to the broad communication objectives outlined in the Institute's *Strategic Plan 2006–2008*. As such, it is responsible for promoting the Institute – its role, research, products and capabilities. In the main, this is done through: publishing and disseminating Institute research; providing library and bibliographic services; maintaining and updating Internet and Intranet information; organising conferences and seminars; and coordinating media liaison.

The program also develops and maintains networks and resources, and provides print and electronic publishing support for the *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*, the National Child Protection Clearinghouse, the Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia, the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, and the Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse, all housed at the Institute.

### Publishing

One of the most visible outputs from a research agency is its contribution to the literature. Throughout 2005–2006, the Institute continued to publish relevant and timely information in the area of family research.

The publishing program includes the Institute's research journal *Family Matters*, and titles published under the Institute imprint in its series publications. In addition, research undertaken by Institute staff, or by external researchers using Institute data, is published in Australian and overseas journals and conference proceedings, or appears in major Institute reports.

To ensure maximum reach and the widest possible readership for Institute publications, most material published in print form is also published electronically on the Institute's website. This occurs simultaneously in the case of free publications, or subsequent to initial print publication in the case of the subscription-based *Family Matters*.

In accordance with the Institute's aim of presenting published material in a clear, accessible and attractive style, publications continued to adopt the highest editorial and design standards.

### Review processes

Again this year, works were published in accordance with the Institute's established publishing review policy. This policy, formulated and monitored by the Institute's Publications Committee, requires that drafts of all proposed new titles undergo

rigorous internal and external review. External reviewers use the Institute's *Guide for External Review of Manuscripts* in preparing their evaluation reports.

Acceptance of all *Family Matters* material is subject to a formal review and assessment process, with reference to the Institute's *Criteria for Acceptance of Family Matters Articles*.

### **Family Matters journal**

The research journal *Family Matters* is the Institute's main dissemination medium, its primary purpose being to keep local and international readers informed about Institute research and activities. The Institute places a high priority on its own research contribution to each edition.

It is also the role of *Family Matters* to keep its readership informed more generally of relevant family-related research by publishing articles from Australian and overseas sources. In accordance with this policy, in 2005–2006 *Family Matters* continued to publish the work of external authors as well as reporting directly on Institute work.

Although designed to be accessible to a broad readership, *Family Matters* is a fully refereed academic journal, which is recognised by the Department of Education Science and Training for the purposes of Research Data Collection, and is included in the Register of Refereed Journals. The Institute holds copyright to all articles published.

The content of *Family Matters* provides a diverse range of perspectives and analysis of family research and policy options. In addition to research articles on a comprehensive range of family-related topics, regular columns include analysis of family trends, relationship trends, information and discussion of new developments in family law, details of Institute activities and seminars, notes on new books, and details on forthcoming conferences.

In accordance with the Institute's *Strategic Plan*, three editions of *Family Matters* were published in 2005–2006.

- *Family Matters*, No. 71, 2005 (72 pages) contained several articles concerning child support. It also featured articles on: the experience of time with children after divorce; commitment in marriage in relationships; and mothers' employment transitions following childbirth. *The edition included six major research articles authored and co-authored by Institute researchers.*
- *Family Matters*, No. 72, 2005 (92 pages) contained a number of articles based on *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)*, drawing on the first wave of data. Included as part of the LSAC theme were articles on: young children and their grandparents; impacts of work on family life among partnered parents of young children; and an investigation of neighbourhood effects on Australian children's development. Also included was an article based on a study exploring the ways in which definitions of fatherhood and paternal identities are located within men's personal experiences of fatherhood. *The edition included eight major research articles authored and co-authored by Institute researchers.*
- *Family Matters*, No. 73, 2006 (72 pages) included articles on: the Institute's Research Plan 2006–2008; remote Indigenous households and definitions of family; assessing family and community life through the National Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey; the spread of innovative policies, programs and practice for child and family services; and socio-demographic characteristics and parenting of new mothers of different ages. *The edition included three major research articles authored and co-authored by Institute researchers.*

The Institute charges subscribers to *Family Matters* but, in accordance with the Institute's aim of reaching a wide and diverse audience, it is also distributed to an extensive free list comprising members of parliament, key policy makers and the media. Paid *Family Matters* subscriptions were maintained at about 2,000 over the year, with total distribution of about 3,500 copies per edition.

*Family Matters* always draws media attention with follow-up radio and press interviews and articles, and this year's three editions of the journal were no exception.

### **Family Matters online**

*Family Matters* continued to be available as an online subscription. All articles can be accessed in HTML and PDF format from RMIT Publishing's Informit e-Library, a specialist academic electronic publisher.

### **Series publications**

In addition to *Family Matters* and the Annual Report, the Institute produces two main series publications.

The Research Paper series is an important means by which Institute research findings and methodologies are made public. The series enables the dissemination of Institute research to policy makers, practitioners and researchers with the aim of encouraging dialogue with research and policy communities and thus obtaining review and feedback about the nature, direction and quality of Institute research.

Two new research papers were published in 2005–2006. Research Paper No. 36 is entitled *Parenting partnerships in culturally diverse child care settings: A care provider perspective* and Research Paper No. 37 is entitled *Reservation wages and the earnings capacity of lone and couple mothers: Are wage expectations too high?*

The Research Report series comprises more substantial, finished works that report on research findings at major milestones in a research project, or at the completion of a project. One research report was published in 2005–2006. Research Report No. 14 is entitled *The efficacy of early childhood interventions*, and is the main output of the completed project on the Efficacy of Early Childhood Interventions, which was commissioned by the then Department of Family and Community Services.

### **Contract publications and reports**

The Institute publishes issues papers, discussion papers, bulletins and newsletters that emanate from its various contract research projects. These are reported elsewhere in this Annual Report under the projects: *Growing Up in Australia*: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children; the National Child Protection Clearinghouse; the Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia; and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

During the year, the Institute also produced several commissioned and contracted reports, which are listed under the relevant research projects.

## Media liaison

The print and electronic media are an important means by which the Institute communicates its research findings to the community. Contact with the media is undertaken in accordance with the Institute's media policy, and generally takes three forms: provision of information or comment about Institute research; comment about current research on families not undertaken by the Institute, including overseas research; and referral to other researchers or relevant agencies outside the Institute.

In a year where there was renewed debate on issues such as work and family life, fertility, marriage and divorce, and child custody, *Family Matters* articles, research reports and research papers that touched on these themes were widely reported.

The release of *Family Matters* No. 71 in September resulted in some extensive coverage, particularly in relation to the Time to Rethink Time article about separated families. The family law reform package announcement in March led to extensive citing of Institute research, and requests for comment from the Institute.

The release of the ABS marriage statistics in September, showing a small rise in marriages, led to extensive coverage of the topic, with Institute researchers asked for their interpretation of the data.

With workplace and welfare reform in the news for much of the year, AIFS publications on work and family life were reported in print and electronic media.

Publications from the *Growing Up in Australia* study were positively reported, in particular those from *Family Matters* No. 72, summer 2005.

## Library

The library aims to provide a proactive information service based on a high-quality collection of electronic and hardcopy resources related to family wellbeing. With many unique resources the Institute's library contributes to the national research collection of scholarly literature by participation in the National Library of Australia's National Bibliographic Database, the fundamental networking resource for Australian libraries.

Primary stakeholders are Institute research staff and clients associated with the Institute's clearinghouse projects, but some services are provided to the wider community – the online catalogue from the Institute's website, interlibrary loans, and a reference service. The library is open to visitors by appointment during business hours.

### *Staff survey and library resources*

As part of an internal review of library resources and staff information needs a survey of research staff was conducted to identify key journal titles and bibliographic databases required, preference for online or print formats, use of alerting services, and user education needs. Use of current journal titles and bibliographic databases is being monitored and consortium subscription opportunities explored with the aim of providing the most cost-effective information service.

### Bibliographic databases

Australian Family & Society Abstracts (AF&SA) is a bibliographic database established by the Institute in 1983 with the aim of providing Australia-wide and international access to research and information on Australian family issues. The database offers citations and abstracts to the research, policy and practice literature about Australian families and the social issues that affect them. Family & Society Plus, an enhanced version of AF&SA database provides full text journal articles in addition to AF&SA's citations and abstracts and links to documents available on the Web.

Australian Family & Society Abstracts is an established information service in the social sciences and one of a number of national bibliographic databases providing access to Australia's research literature. Public access is via RMIT Publishing's Informit service, the major supplier of bibliographic and full text databases for Australian scholarly literature. Subscribers to AF&SA include all Australian universities and state libraries, state and federal government departments and agencies, non-government organisations and professionals.

During the reporting period, 3,290 new documents were indexed for the database bringing the total number of documents to 63,450. Of the documents indexed this year 45 per cent link directly to the full text report or article on the Web, demonstrating the growing trend for governments, tertiary institutions and non-government organisations to publish online.

### Websites and email lists

The Internet team is responsible for a range of projects including the design and development of websites, the Institute's Intranet, and a number of email alerting and discussion lists.

Six websites are currently maintained. These are the Institute's main website, three sites for clearinghouse/communication projects (the National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia, and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault), and two for research projects (*Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*, and the Australian Temperament Project). A further website is being developed for a new Clearinghouse on Australian Family Relationships.

**Table 5.1** Statistics of use of the Institute websites

	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06
<b>Requests (hits)*</b>	1,364,903	2,273,569	4,495,267	6,812,247	7,163,446	7,983,159
<b>Pages downloaded**</b>	951,572	1,363,555	1,650,658	2,601,564	2,458,789	2,925,634

\* 'Hits' is a statistic used to record website use. It refers to numbers of all successful requests for files, including pages, images and graphics.

\*\* Pages downloaded refers to downloading whole web pages or documents, which incorporate all the files that are counted separately under 'hits'.

During 2005–2006 statistics of web use across all sites showed an 11 per cent increase in "hits" and a 19 per cent increase in pages downloaded. Increases in pages downloaded for individual sites were as follows: AIFS site (19 per cent); Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (37 per cent); National Child Protection Clearinghouse (17 per cent); *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* (49 per cent); Australian Temperament Project (50 per cent).

The Institute's main website reports on Institute programs and activities, disseminates information from its databases, publications and resource collections, and promotes the development of networks with individuals and organisations concerned with family research and policy. New content during the year included: a fact sheet written to support the 2006 National Families Week titled *Snapshots of Australian Families with Adolescents*; several Institute research papers; three issues of *Family Matters*; and abstracts and reports from the Institute seminar series. Regular services such as the "Forthcoming Conferences" page, the collection of links to online publications and websites on family research and policy, and the weekly journal abstracts list selected from Australian Family & Society Abstracts continue to be in demand.

### **Alerting and discussion lists**

The Institute's email alerting service, *aifs-alert* keeps stakeholders up to date with the work and activities of the Institute. At the end of the financial year more than 1,230 people were receiving the fortnightly email. Other alerting and discussion lists are supported for Clearinghouse projects: *ACSSA-alert* and *ACSSA-discuss* for the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault; *childprotect* for the National Child Protection Clearinghouse; *CAFCA-chat* and *e-evaluate* for Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia.

### **Institute seminar program**

In addition to various informal lunchtime talks by invited researchers, in 2005–2006, the Institute continued its series of seminars presenting contemporary issues in national and international family research. The seminars are designed to promote a forum for discussion and debate, and are free and open to the public.

Particularly welcome are overseas visiting researchers, who are able to provide international perspectives, and researchers from other organisations, who can add to the depth of knowledge about family-related research in Australia.

Again this year, a range of topics was covered, with the majority being presented by researchers from outside the Institute. The seminars were attended by audiences from different backgrounds, attracting between 30 and 50 participants each time, and providing opportunities to share research and discuss ideas. Where papers have been provided by the seminar presenters, these have been placed on the Institute's website and actively promoted.

#### ***Seminars hosted by the Institute***

21 JULY 2005

**Is relationship separation a barrier to workforce participation? A Child Support Agency perspective**

**Mary O'Hanlon**

Director Business Strategy Child Support Agency and Leader of the Newly Separated Unemployed Parents Initiative

*Facilitator – Dr Bruce Smyth, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

18 AUGUST 2005

**What can we learn from the *Growing Up in Australia* study?**

**Carol Soloff and Sebastian Misson**

Survey Manager and LSAC Data Administrator, Australian Institute of Family Studies

*Facilitator – Prof. Alan Hayes, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

15 SEPTEMBER 2005

**The treatment of family violence in the family law 'system' in Australia: the implications of restorative justice explored**

**Dr Juliet Behrens**

Faculty of Law, Australian National University

*Facilitator – Dr Bruce Smyth, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

20 OCTOBER 2005

**The use of family-friendly work arrangements by Australian families**

**Dr Matthew Gray**

Deputy Director (Research), Australian Institute of Family Studies

*Facilitator – Prof. Alan Hayes, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

24 NOVEMBER 2005

**A sustainable work and family future in Australia: balancing family, state regulation and market-based solutions**

**Dr Barbara Pocock**

Associate Professor and QEII Research Fellow, Labour Studies, School of Social Science, University of Adelaide

*Facilitator – Michael Alexander, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

2 FEBRUARY 2006

**Nothing about us without us: exploring issues of researching the 'O/other'**

**Dr Erin Wilson**

Scope (Victoria)

*Facilitator – Helen Cheney, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

21 FEBRUARY 2006

**Changing the landscape for children: corporal punishment and family policy in Sweden**

**Associate Professor Joan Durrant**

Department of Family Social Sciences, University of Manitoba

*Facilitator – Dr Leah Bromfield, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

16 MARCH 2006

**Sexual assault prevention education: How far have we come?**

**Associate Professor Moira Carmody**

Social Sciences and Criminology, University of Western Sydney

*Facilitator – Dr Melanie Heenan, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

12 APRIL 2006

**Modern definitions of the family and the social benefit system in Sweden**

**Associate Professor Eva Ryrstedt**

Faculty of Law, University of Lund, Sweden

*Facilitator – Dr Bruce Smyth, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

3 MAY 2006

**Child support policy: some reflections on the past, present and future**

**Dr Bruce Smyth and Dr Matthew Gray**

Senior Research Fellow and Deputy Director (Research), Australian Institute of Family Studies

*Facilitator – Prof. Alan Hayes, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

25 MAY 2006

**The intergenerational effects of forced separation and forced relocation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families**

**Professor Sven Silburn**

Director of the Centre for Developmental Health, Curtin University of Technology and the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

*Facilitator – Dr Matthew Gray, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

22 JUNE 2006

**Effects of household joblessness on measures of subjective wellbeing**

**Dr Rosanna Scutella**

Brotherhood of St Laurence

*Facilitator – Michael Alexander, Australian Institute of Family Studies*

## Information technology

Information Technology staff contribute directly to the productivity of the Institute by developing and maintaining a secure, reliable, effective, efficient and easy-to-use computing and communications environment. This includes management of the Institute's Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) facility, Web server, email, telephone and security systems.

### Software

During the year the following software was upgraded to ensure that staff had access to the most secure, functional and reliable versions: MacOS X, Solaris, Windows server 2003, Greentree (accounting), SIRSI Unicorn (library), EtherShare (file server), Norton AntiVirus, Netscape (email & Internet), MS Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), Now Up-to-Date (calendar), FileMaker (database), Acrobat, BBEdit, PhotoShop, DreamWeaver (Web), MlwiN, Mplus, SPSS, SAS and Stata (statistics).

### Hardware

Forty-four new desktops and five portable Macs were purchased to continue the rolling program of replacement of equipment that is more than four years old.

The computing hardware at the Institute now consists of three Unix servers, one Windows server, 70 desktop Macs, eight Mac portables and three Windows desktop PCs. All computers are linked by a local area network, which is connected through a firewall to the Internet, thus ensuring security of Institute data.

### Development

A complex FileMaker database was created to facilitate data entry and analysis for the Family Violence Project and assistance was given to ACSA staff to extract data collected from the Victorian Police Leap database for analysis.

Considerable progress was made towards gaining accreditation to connect to the Australian Government secure Fedlink network.

Substantial changes were made to the *Family Matters* subscriber database to enable other Institute mailing lists to be integrated. The National Child Protection Clearinghouse (NCPC) mailing list has been successfully merged into the database as part of a review of the NCPC communication strategy.

### Survey operations and telephone interviewing

The only computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) project undertaken during the year was the completion of interviewing 500 parents of children in child care for the Child Care Choices project.

The interviewing for future waves of Child Care Choices will be outsourced in order to provide a more cost-efficient solution for the Institute and provide more capacity for the consortium managing the project.